

SOUTHEASTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
WAKE FOREST, NORTH CAROLINA

ENHANCING THE CALL TO RESPONSE IN THE EXPOSITORY PREACHING  
OF THE SENIOR PASTOR OF CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, TUPELO, MS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY  
CHRISTOPHER M. DEGEORGE  
MAY 2018

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**PROJECT REPORT APPROVAL SHEET**

Student Name: *Christopher M. DeGeorge* Student ID # *000-251331*

Ministry Project Title:

**ENHANCING THE CALL TO RESPONSE IN THE EXPOSITORY PREACHING  
OF THE SENIOR PASTOR OF CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, TUPELO, MS**

This Ministry Project Report has been approved.

Date of Defense: March 26, 2018

Faculty Supervisor/Chair: *Landon G. Dowden*

Dr. Landon G. Dowden  
Adjunct Professor

Faculty Reader: *David R. Beck*

Dr. David R. Beck  
Professor of New Testament and Greek  
Associate Dean of Biblical Studies

Field Reader: *B. Tate Cockrell*

Dr. B. Tate Cockrell  
Associate Professor of Counseling  
Assistant Director, Doctor of Ministry Programs

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To Celeste, Seth, Claire, and Sara.  
Your love and patience  
has helped make this possible.  
You make me better.  
I love each one of you.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You have given me reason to preach, to study, and to live. I pray you would be glorified through my life and ministry. Thank You to my wife Celeste. My partner in life, in ministry, and in everything. This would never have been possible without your constant sacrifice, encouragement, and joy. I am thankful for my children Seth, Claire, and Sara. You are my joy. Thank You to my Mom and Dad. Your support throughout my life has helped me to be who I am, and be where I am.

Thank you to Calvary Baptist Church, and Mount Zion Baptist Church. You have listened to me preach, and allowed me to be your Pastor, brother, and friend. I thank God upon every remembrance of you. To Dr. Landon Dowden. Thank You for your council, suggestions, advice, and wisdom. You have been a constant source of encouragement, guidance, and friendship. To Dr. Charles Harvey, Dr. Jim Shaddix, and Dr. Tony Merida. I am thankful for your devotion to the Lord. You have helped me to be a better leader and preacher through your instruction and encouragement.

## ABSTRACT

The project director sought to enhance the call to response (CTR) in his expository preaching. The CTR is a part of a sermon's conclusion that exhorts the hearer to respond to his fallen condition, as a result of the preaching of Scripture. The project director determined to improve his knowledge and skill concerning a CTR.

In chapter two, the project director examined Scripture for the presence of a CTR, and application for the modern preacher. He studied the passages in Acts 2:37–41, Acts 17:30–31, and Matt 7:13–27. Through these passages, the project director demonstrated how Jesus, Peter, and Paul used a CTR in their sermons.

The project director discussed the ministry foundations for the CTR in chapter three. He examined the CTR using literature and developed a review. He then developed a methodology to incorporate the CTR into the sermon. This method involved the project director using a fallen condition focus (FCF) as the basis for a CTR in the sermon.

The project director described his process in chapter four. He researched the CTR, using books, journals, and articles. Then, he developed a methodology for implementing a CTR from the sources. A sermon feedback form was developed and evaluated by an expert panel. This feedback form was used to evaluate his sermons by a sermon feedback panel of lay people in the project director's church. This data was compiled to provide the results of the ministry project.

In chapter five, the project director analyzed the data from the ministry project implementation. He studied the quantitative and qualitative data. Through this study, the project director determined that he accomplished his objectives.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **Purpose**

The project director—senior pastor at Calvary Baptist Church (CBC) in Tupelo, Mississippi—sought to enhance the exhortation and persuasive aspect of the sermon known as the call to response (CTR) in his own sermons. This ministry skill represented an area where the project director perceived a lack of proficiency. Through six years of serving as a senior pastor, the project director noticed difficulty developing the sermon conclusion to include an exhortation, which gives a clear call to action while remaining faithful to the Scriptures' intent. The project director believed that an investigation of the CTR, and development of a precise method for developing a CTR, would lead to greater impact from a sermon. The project director utilized a methodology for evaluating a sermon's CTR, and this methodology involved the use of a sermon feedback form. He also utilized information gleaned from studying resources to establish a method for adding a CTR into a sermon. The director developed a series of sermons, which he prepared using the methodology, outlined in Ch.4 to incorporate a clear and faithful exhortation and encouragement. Through this sermon series, the project director demonstrated that he accomplished the intended objectives. The project director's desire involved the development of a method for consistently including a CTR, and increased his knowledge and skills regarding a sermon's CTR.

The CTR represents a vital part of a sermon. The Apostle Paul in 2 Tim 4:2 instructs Timothy to “Preach the Word” (ESV). Using five distinct imperatives Paul demonstrates the aim of this preaching, and they serve as a guide for Timothy to follow. Paul commands Timothy to “preach, be prepared, reprove, rebuke, and exhort.”<sup>1</sup> These meanings help bring clarity regarding the function of the sermon. The admonition Paul gives to Timothy articulates the need for a sermon section that will encourage hearers to an appropriate response. Paul challenges Timothy to clearly call the hearer to respond to the preaching of Scripture.

Preaching should heed the calling to exhort and encourage. The imperative “exhort” highlights the mandate that preaching includes a call to action that is based on the commands of Scripture. A specific appeal to action equates to a direct call to respond in the sermon. This call to respond serves a necessary function, which aids the preacher in exhorting the hearer toward faithfulness. Walter Liefeld writes that to correct, rebuke, and encourage “reflects the necessity of a strong ministry in view of the false teaching at Ephesus.”<sup>2</sup> The specific encouragement or exhortation given in a CTR challenges the individual to act upon the specific truth revealed by the Scriptures. William Mounce explains that exhorting or encouraging challenges the hearer, “to live out the gospel in a life of righteousness.”<sup>3</sup> To call hearers to this righteousness represents one of the preacher’s primary tasks.<sup>4</sup> He calls his hearers to righteousness by demonstrating

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<sup>1</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 574.

<sup>2</sup> Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1999), 287.

<sup>3</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 574.

<sup>4</sup> Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 294.



faithfulness to exhortation through preaching the Word of God. This exhortation emerges in the sermon as a clear CTR.

The exhortative and persuasive elements of preaching are the most important purposes of preaching. Without a CTR, one could ask whether the function of preaching has been fulfilled. Considering this question, Jason Allen, President of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, writes, “If you haven't invited, you haven't preached. If you haven't persuaded, you haven't preached. If you haven't begged, you haven't preached. You may have lectured, led an inductive Bible study or presented an insightful exposition, but to be a preacher is to be a pleader, a persuader, a beggar.”<sup>5</sup> All elements of the sermon are important, but the exhortation represents an aspect of preaching that a preacher cannot neglect. Without an exhortation, the fundamental purposes of preaching have not been fulfilled. Preaching should exhort and encourage the hearers to respond to the Scriptures.

### **Project Objectives**

The project director aimed to accomplish three objectives in order to enhance his inclusion of a CTR in a sermon. The objectives included: determining the role of the call to response, determining how to evaluate sermons for a CTR, and then implementing what he learned. Through each objective, the director accomplished a specific purpose that advanced the project.

The first project objective determined the role of the CTR in the sermon.

Understanding the essential role of the CTR provided the project director with an

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<sup>5</sup> Jason Allen, “Preaching and the Public Invitation,” *Baptist Press First Person*, 1 May 2017, <http://www.bpnews.net/48776/firstperson--preaching-and-the-public-invitation>.

appreciation of the necessary role that it fulfills. Accomplishing this objective required researching the history, theology, and practical use of the CTR in a sermon. The project director used this research to establish the methodology for accomplishing objective two.

The second project objective determined how to evaluate a sermon's CTR. In order to accomplish this objective, the project director sought to identify key components of the CTR. He utilized a methodology for evaluating sermons, and he also used an expert panel to provide feedback. The sermon feedback panel evaluated a rubric developed for the purposes of evaluating a sermon's CTR.

The third project objective included implementing what the project director learned by developing a series of expository sermons that incorporated a CTR. To accomplish this objective, the project director used commentaries and scholarly resources to inform his research and preparation. The project director preached the prepared sermons in the last step of this objective.

The project director sought to accomplish an enhancement of his skills in two areas. First, he sought to improve his knowledge regarding the CTR in a sermon. In order to accomplish this objective, he examined preaching literature and sermons from Scripture. Second, he sought to increase his skill at incorporating the CTR into a sermon. To accomplish this objective, the director developed a methodology and prepared sermons focused on improving the CTR. Those sermons underwent review by a sermon feedback panel who helped assess whether the director succeeded in establishing a clear CTR.

### Ministry Context

The ministry context for the proposed project was Calvary Baptist Church of Tupelo, MS (CBC). Since 2016, the project director has served CBC as the senior pastor.

Responsibilities of this position include leading the ministry staff, articulating vision for the church, and preaching for the worship services of the church. The focus of the project involved improving a specific aspect of the project director's expository preaching. The ministry project helped the senior pastor of CBC faithfully expound Scripture and apply them to the life of the congregation. In the course of being faithful to this calling, all pastors should include a CTR into sermons. In order to understand his ministry context, the project director researched information regarding the local community, where he resided, and the local church where he serves.

The project director first examined the local community of Tupelo, MS. Located at the center of Lee County, along the historic Natchez Trace, Tupelo stands as a city with a rich history. According to Tupelo's official website, the city was "incorporated as a city in 1870 and named after the native Tupelo gum tree. Tupelo's modern history can be traced to the convergence of the Mobile & Ohio and the Kansas City, Memphis & Birmingham railroads in 1887."<sup>6</sup> In 1934, Tupelo became the first city to receive electric power under the Tennessee Valley Authority.<sup>7</sup> Tupelo also served as the birthplace of the famous singer Elvis Presley.<sup>8</sup> As of July 1, 2016, Tupelo contains an estimated population of 38,842.<sup>9</sup> To understand more about the context of the church, the project

<sup>6</sup> "Our Story," <http://www.tupeloms.gov/about/>.

<sup>7</sup> Sara E. Morris, "The Rural Electrification of Northeast Mississippi," <http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/376/the-rural-electrification-of-northeast-mississippi>.

<sup>8</sup> "Our Story."

<sup>9</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Tupelo, MS," <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/tupelocitymississippi,MS#viewtop>.

director considered two topics: the general demographics of the Tupelo area and specific religious demographics of the community.

The project director's first consideration involved the general demographic of the Tupelo area. Several counties converge to make up the larger Tupelo area, including Lee, Pontotoc, and Itawamba. Tupelo represents a micropolitan area, and according to resources provided by the Tupelo Chamber of Commerce, "A micro area contains an urban core population of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000. All metro or micro areas consist of one or more counties and includes the counties containing the core urban area, as well as any adjacent counties that have a high degree of social and economic integration with the urban core."<sup>10</sup> The Tupelo micropolitan area contained a population of 142,587 persons in the year 2015. In the year 2014, Tupelo received ranking as the eighth top micropolitan area in the United States by Site Selection magazine.<sup>11</sup> As the urban core of the area, Tupelo provides resources to the surrounding communities. These resources bring people to the city and poise the church to impact the area. Members of CBC reside in each of the counties that make up the larger micropolitan area, and they influence the lives of a wide range of the population. The general demographics of the city demonstrate the potential of the church to reach the community with the gospel.

The religious demographics provided the project director with another important aspect of the context of CBC. In the city, 42.9 percent of people identify themselves as Evangelical Christian.<sup>12</sup> A total of 58.7 percent of the population identifies as

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<sup>10</sup> "Micro Demographics," [http://www.cdfms.org/media/351782/micro\\_demographics.pdf](http://www.cdfms.org/media/351782/micro_demographics.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> "Tupelo, MS," <http://www.city-data.com/city/Tupelo-Mississippi.html>.

Protestant.<sup>13</sup> A trend from the most recent census demonstrated an increase of individuals listing their religious affiliation as None.<sup>14</sup> This number rose from 8,595 persons to 31,444 persons over the course of the ten years between the surveys. People who classify themselves as having no religious affiliation represent 37.9 percent of the residents in Tupelo. These trends show a changing city and area regarding foundational values. These demographics demonstrate the growing need for evangelistic emphasis within the Tupelo area, and they demonstrate the need for preaching that articulates the gospel and presses for a response.

CBC cooperates with the Southern Baptist Convention and the Lee County Baptist Association. The church was founded in 1935 by a group of 173 individuals who separated from the First Baptist Church of Tupelo, MS.<sup>15</sup> These charter members desired a church with an emphatic mission focus. From its inception, CBC maintained ardent support to the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program and International Mission Board. Several factors impact the church's ministries, including leadership structure and attendance trends.

Understanding the leadership structure of CBC helped the project director provide an understanding of the church's context. CBC has a large staff to provide ministry to the congregation. In addition to the senior pastor, four other members are considered ministry staff. These positions include a full-time Associate Pastor, Student Pastor, Worship Pastor, and Children's Director. The church also employs an extensive network of support staff, which includes a full-time Business Administrator, Operations Coordinator,

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<sup>13</sup> "Tupelo, MS," <http://www.city-data.com/city/Tupelo-Mississippi.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Constitution and By-laws, Calvary Baptist Church History.

custodian, and four ministry assistants. In addition to these staff positions, the church employs a part-time media director, and a part-time music and media secretary. Each of these positions carries the expectation of fulfilling the church's mission to proclaim the gospel to Tupelo.

CBC annually elects a team of thirty-six volunteer deacons who serve the congregation through a variety of ministries. They assist the pastoral leadership in congregational care as well as provide some administrative oversight to the ministries of CBC. Deacons serve a three-year term, with a mandatory year of inactivity before having the opportunity to be re-elected to a new three-year term. The deacons of CBC fulfill a vital ministry within the church and its evangelistic effort.

Several attendance trends are noteworthy for understanding the project director's ministry context. CBC's church membership number is 1,184 persons.<sup>16</sup> Average Sunday School attendance, for the year 2017, totals 416 persons. Recently, the pastoral staff sought to understand more about the discrepancies between membership and attendance. To understand this trend, the church began tracking the total number of monthly attenders for Sunday School. The results of this survey reveal that 600 individuals attend Sunday School throughout the course of a given month.<sup>17</sup> A comparison between average attendance and the total monthly attenders revealed a lack of consistency in the CBC congregation. The numbers demonstrated the necessity for preaching that challenged the congregation away from apathy, and it calls for a life of righteousness.

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<sup>16</sup> Calvary Baptist Church Membership Rolls.

<sup>17</sup> Calvary Baptist Church attendance information.

Through the ministry context, the project director discovered a need for sermons that provide a clear exhortation. The pastor of CBC must bring clarity to the CTR in order to counter the trends that affect the church. An examination of the ministry context reveals the call to response as a necessary element of the sermon.

### **Rationale**

The CTR represents one part of a sermon's conclusion. The project director discovered the essential nature of the CTR as he understood the fundamental principles of the sermon's conclusion. He then detailed the essential nature of the CTR by examining the function and necessity of the sermon conclusion, and common problems preachers have with their sermon conclusion. Each of these details revealed the necessity of a CTR in a faithful sermon.

The sermon conclusion is an important aspect of the overall sermon. In *Christ Centered Preaching*, Bryan Chapell writes that the sermon conclusion represents the moment where, "A preacher marshals the thought and emotion of an entire message into an exhortation that makes all that has preceded clear and compelling."<sup>18</sup> Chapell labels the conclusion as the "climax" and the "destination" of the message.<sup>19</sup> Danny Akin, Stephen Rummage, and Bill Curtis, in *Engaging Exposition*, also use this language when they describe the conclusion as "basically the climax of the sermon."<sup>20</sup> These insights give support to the conclusion's strategic function. Because the conclusion represents a high point in the sermon, the preacher must recognize the pitfalls of a weak conclusion.

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<sup>18</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 254.

<sup>19</sup> Chapell, 253.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Akin, Stephen Rummage, and Bill Curtis, *Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 199.

The conclusion of the sermon provides a strategic opportunity, but it can also become a preacher's weakness. Akin, Curtis, and Rummage write, "The conclusion of a sermon can make or break the message."<sup>21</sup> The strategic aspect of the sermon conclusion lies in two functions. In *Power in the Pulpit*, Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix reveal the two functions of the conclusion when they write, "Like a lawyer during closing arguments, the preacher will bring to focus as clearly as possible the timeless truths exposed in the message into one final thrust upon their minds and hearts."<sup>22</sup> The conclusion represents the final opportunity to impact the hearer with truth and drive them toward a response. Akin, Curtis, and Rummage note, "It is difficult to overstate the crucial nature of the conclusion. It includes your last words, and your last words should be lasting words."<sup>23</sup> In describing the aim of the conclusion, Robinson states, "Your congregation should see your idea entire and complete, and it should know and feel what God's truth demands of it."<sup>24</sup> The need for a well-thought conclusion also points to the necessity of the CTR.

The importance of the CTR emerges in the process of understanding the distinct parts of the conclusion. The conclusion contains two parts called the "summation" and "the response." These parts receive different descriptions from various authors, using different terms. However, each of the parts represent the main intentions of the conclusion. Tony Merida uses "summation" and "response" in *The Christ Centered Expositor*<sup>25</sup> Vines and Shaddix avoid the term "conclusion" and instead use the word "summation" to describe the ending segment of the sermon. While the difference in terms

<sup>21</sup> Akin, Rummage, and Curtis, *Engaging Exposition*, 198.

<sup>22</sup> Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1999), 207.

<sup>23</sup> Akin, Curtis, and Rummage, *Engaging Exposition*, 206.

<sup>24</sup> Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014), 128.

<sup>25</sup> Tony Merida, *The Christ Centered Expositor* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 204.



might cause confusion, the authors still advance an understanding of the sermon conclusion and the function it fulfills. Vines and Shaddix reveal why they avoid the term “conclusion” when they write, “It is not the last part of the sermon! In reality, the sermon is not concluded until it is lived out in the lives of the people who hear it.”<sup>26</sup> They continue with the admonition, “Because the Word of God always demands a response, all biblical sermons should culminate in a call for such action.”<sup>27</sup> They call this segment, at the end, the “invitation.”<sup>28</sup> Vines and Shaddix’s use of the term “invitation” equates to Merida’s use of the term “response,” which describes the sermon’s exhortation within the conclusion. Consistency develops from the idea that, while their terms differ, a sermon conclusion contains two essential parts: a summation and a call for response.

The summation, also described as a recapitulation, does not only restate the points of the sermon. John Stott contends, “A true conclusion, however, goes beyond recapitulation to personal application.”<sup>29</sup> This idea prevents the preacher from mistakenly understanding the conclusion as a review of the sermon’s ideas. Wayne McDill advances this thought when he writes, “The sermon ideas cannot just be stated and left to stand there without the elaboration which calls for a response from the hearer. Those ideas must be clothed in appealing support which moves carefully from the hearing to the doing of the Word.”<sup>30</sup> This encouragement mirrors James’ call to action in Jam 1:22, where he challenges his audience to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only,

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<sup>26</sup> Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 207.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> John Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 246.

<sup>30</sup> Wayne McDill, *The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 192.

deceiving yourselves.” Douglas Moo articulates the connection between James’ words and a sermon’s call to response: “However important may be mental assent to the word, it has not been truly received until it is put into practice.”<sup>31</sup> Ralph Martin further supports this connection between hearing and action when he writes, “The verses lay on us the mandate to match the word of the gospel with its action.”<sup>32</sup> The conclusion of the sermon represents the opportunity to connect James’ encouragement that they “be doers of the word,” with Paul’s command to “exhort” in 2 Tim 4:2. These writers demonstrate evidence that supports the idea of a conclusion containing more than just a recapitulation. The descriptions also make a compelling case for a section of the sermon that calls for action. This section of the conclusion is termed the CTR. If a preacher fails to include this practical and biblical element of the sermon, he neglects a vital aspect of the sermon.

Lacking a CTR is a failure by the preacher. Hershael York and Bert Decker reveal the crux of the issue writing, “We will go as far as to say that the greatest error most otherwise good preachers make is in their conclusion—or lack thereof.”<sup>33</sup> Writers often speak of the conclusion as “landing the plane,” and they lament the inability to conclude well. However, more dangers exist from failing to include an element of the conclusion. If the conclusion embodies the “climax” and “destination” of the sermon, then neglecting the sermon conclusion—or parts of the conclusion—could lessen the sermon’s impact. Stott explains what dangers exist when the conclusion is not fully developed. “In

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<sup>31</sup> Douglas Moo, *James*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary 16 (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1985), 85–86.

<sup>32</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary 48 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 55.

<sup>33</sup> Hershael York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 185.

consequence,” argues Stott, “we use the pulpit for the reading of harmless little essays, and seldom if ever press home a point which demands a decision.”<sup>34</sup> Without a CTR, the sermon lacks one of the most important elements. John Piper reveals this idea when he writes, “Good preaching pleads with people to respond to the Word of God.”<sup>35</sup> This pleading represents the part of the sermon conclusion labeled as CTR. This pleading also represents the embodiment of Paul’s command to Timothy to exhort through his preaching (2 Tim 4:2). The truths from Piper, York, Decker, and others, reveal that competence in preparing the sermon’s CTR represents a necessity for every preacher.

The project director recognized his need to enhance the sermon’s CTR. The danger of failing to call individuals to response in the conclusion means the difference between the sermon succeeding or failing. The project director acknowledged that the conclusion receives the least amount time in his sermon preparation. He also realized that the CTR received little preparation as an element of the conclusion. A survey of the writers concerning the importance of the CTR led to the project director spending more time and skill to craft the sermons conclusion.

The lack of attention to the sermon conclusion was evident to the project director. His tendency was to give recapitulation without a specific CTR. CBC needs application from the content of the sermon. The project director recognized the need to challenge the congregation to action with a compelling CTR. The CTR should leave the hearer with a clear understanding of what Scripture requires.

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<sup>34</sup> Stott, 248.

<sup>35</sup> John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015), 98.

### **Assumptions**

Due to the narrow scope of the project, there were several assumptions made. The project director acknowledged the assumptions regarding the understanding of expository preaching. The project's scope would not allow for a description of all preaching forms, or the different types of sermons. The project director researched and evaluated the elements of the sermon conclusion termed CTR. The project director also assumed a familiarity with expository preaching.

In addition, the project director made assumptions regarding baptism. In chapter two, the project director notes certain aspects of Peter's preaching concerning baptism. He made the assumption that baptism involves a person who has trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord, and has been baptized by immersion.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

During the implementation phase of the project, several limitations and delimitations were understood. One of the limitations was the short duration of the project. The project director recognizes that improvement would best be measured over the course of an extended period of time. However, he limited the evaluation to only one series of sermons. While the period of implementation extended further in scope than the end of the ministry project, the evaluation required a stopping point. This limitation potentially shows less improvement than evaluation over a longer period of time.

The project director used three specific delimitations to help to narrow the scope of the project. The first delimitation involved the context of the project. The project director preached all of the sermons in the context of CBC. This preaching took place

during Sunday morning worship services. Using this delimitation, the project director helped ensure that issues of familiarity and comfort regarding the venue did not negatively affect the implementation of the project. Preaching only in this context also allowed for consistency in the evaluation process. The same team was used to evaluate each sermon.

The second delimitation includes the pool of information considered for evaluation. The project director only used six sermons for evaluation. Most progress develops throughout years of implementing the findings from the project, but this project evaluation period included an ending point. Therefore, the scope of the project only involved one sermon series and two previously preached sermons.

The third delimitation involved the data from the sermon feedback form. The project director included items to gauge information regarding all functional elements of the sermon. Only the items that regarded the FCF or CTR were used to evaluate the project director's preaching.

### **Definition of Terms**

The research and implementation of this ministry project used terms that required definitions. These terms include: expository preaching, call to response, Christ-centered preaching, and fallen condition focus. These terms will be referenced throughout all phases of the ministry project.

### Expository Preaching

“Christ Centered, text driven, Spirit led preaching that transforms lives.”<sup>36</sup>

### Call to Response (CTR)

An exhortation in the conclusion of the sermon, which calls the hearers to act upon their fallen condition through the preaching of the Scriptures.<sup>37</sup>

### Christ-centered Preaching

“Faithful biblical preaching, which is guided by a Christocentric hermeneutic.”<sup>38</sup>

### Fallen Condition Focus (FCF)

“The mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God’s people to glorify and enjoy him.”<sup>39</sup>

### Conclusion

The CTR represents a vital part of the sermon. The preacher who fails to incorporate one simply fails to preach. John Piper recalls a moment when he witnessed a preacher fail to call for response in the sermon: “I recall hearing a preacher in the reformed tradition several years ago preach from 1 Corinthians 16, which ends with the fearful threat, ‘If anyone has no love for the Lord let Him be accursed.’ He alluded to it in passing, but

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<sup>36</sup> Akin, Curtis, and Rummage, 2.

<sup>37</sup> The project director formulated this definition from gleaning the research for the ministry project. Please see the literature review in chapter three for a list of sources.

<sup>38</sup> Akin, Curtis, and Rummage, 217.

<sup>39</sup> Chappell, 50.

there was no yearning or pleading with the people to love Christ and to escape the terrible curse. I marveled at how this could be.”<sup>40</sup> Piper’s use of this illustration demonstrates the danger that exists in failing to include an exhortation. When the difference is one of life and death, a pastor neglects his duty if he fails to try to persuade. Jason Allen articulates the essence of the problem when he explains:

I have sat through sermons where the pastor explained the Gospel, but it came without a sense of urgency or a call for response. The text had been appropriately explained, and the work of Christ expounded, but there was no plea for repentance and submission to Christ. Such sermons are like setting a plated meal before a hungry guest, but never inviting them to eat.<sup>41</sup>

Upon realizing this danger, the project director acknowledged that the CTR embodies an issue of faithfulness. This faithfulness includes devotion to the Lord, the Word of God, and to the preacher’s calling. The preacher has a responsibility to present a faithful exhortation to his hearers.

The project director recognized the necessity of the CTR in his pastoral ministry. His goal was to improve in presenting a clear CTR in his preaching. The project director’s desire was that through the ministry project, he would enhance his skills, and as a result, enhance his preaching.

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<sup>40</sup> Piper, 96.

<sup>41</sup> Allen, 1.

## CHAPTER 2 BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

### Introduction

Hearing the truth of Scripture necessitates a response, and the preacher of God’s word should faithfully deliver a call to respond to the Scripture. Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix acknowledge this truth writing, “Because the Word of God always demands a response, all biblical sermons should culminate in a call for such action.”<sup>1</sup> Wayne McDill supports this thought when he writes, “The sermon ideas cannot just be stated and left to stand there without the elaboration which calls for a response from the hearer. Those ideas must be clothed in appealing support which moves carefully from the hearing to the doing of the Word.”<sup>2</sup> After delivering the exposition and application of Scripture, a preacher should point his hearers toward an appropriate response.

The call for response emerges through the preaching found in Scripture. Examining Peter’s conclusion to the Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:37–41, Paul’s conclusion to the Areopagus sermon in Acts 17:30–31, and Jesus’ conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 7:13–27, are examples of including a call for sermon response. Researching these passages clarifies the biblical and theological foundations included in the call for response.

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<sup>1</sup> Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1999), 207.

<sup>2</sup> Wayne McDill, *The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 192.



### **Peter's Conclusion to the Pentecost Sermon in Acts 2:37–41**

In Acts 2:37–41 Peter's sermon occurred at the coming of the promised Holy Spirit. Those who witnessed the event accused the crowd of drunkenness. Peter responded by using Scripture to explain the event. He pointed out how Scripture foretold the specific signs and events that had just occurred. Howard Marshall acknowledges this reality when he claims, "The assembled crowd provided Peter with the opportunity to explain the significance of what was happening."<sup>3</sup> Peter seized the opportunity to share the Gospel with the crowd, and he used a form that resembles a modern sermon. This form includes a segment classified by some as apostolic gospel or kerygma.<sup>4</sup> Peter included a focus on the gospel intending to bring those gathered to a realization of the truth of Jesus Christ. By using prophetic passages from the Old Testament, and explaining how Jesus fulfilled them, Peter pointed his hearers toward the truth of Jesus as Messiah. In his preaching Peter demonstrates key elements of a sermon, including the resurrection of Jesus; a call for response to repentance and faith in Jesus; and the gift of forgiveness, salvation, and the Spirit to those who respond.<sup>5</sup> After he challenged the people's hearts, Peter persuaded them toward repentance and baptism.

Peter's sermon fits a specific category of literature called "peshet." Craig Evans notes that "peshet exegesis is based upon an eschatological understanding which sees certain contemporary events predicted, in a somewhat hidden way, in the writings of the

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<sup>3</sup> Howard I. Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary V.5 (Nottingham: IVP Academic, 2008), 76.

<sup>4</sup> Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 101. Holladay described kerygma as: the core beliefs of the early Christian church toward the end of the first century; Carl R. Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 346.

<sup>5</sup> David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 72.

prophets of old.”<sup>6</sup> Evans further notes the similarities of Peter’s sermon to the words of the Prophet Joel: “Approximately 20 words in Luke’s narrative and in Peter’s opening remarks may be traced to Joel. Of even greater significance is the fact that many of these words provide essential details to the narrative itself.”<sup>7</sup> Evans describes this usage as prophetic narrative, which he explains as a method of New Testament authorship that approximates *peshar* exegesis. Peter’s sermon represents an exposition of Scripture that is based in an Old Testament text. From this scriptural base, Peter explained the truth concerning Christ. The truth leads people to a crisis of belief, which ultimately leads them to repentance.

### Exegesis

After preaching the main content of his sermon, which included the truth concerning Christ, Peter moved into the conclusion. In Acts 2:37, the crowd is described as “cut to the heart.” Marshall describes “cut to the heart” as a reaction of shock. He writes, “Peter’s revelation of the status and dignity of Jesus came as a shock to them, and they were pierced to the heart by what he said.”<sup>8</sup> “Cut to the heart,” or “pierced,” comes from the Greek word, “κατενύγησαν.”<sup>9</sup> Peterson explains that this phrase means, “they were conscience-stricken or remorseful.”<sup>10</sup> This piercing describes the crowd’s emotional state upon hearing of their sin and guilt. John Polhill demonstrates the extensive effect of the

<sup>6</sup> Craig Evans, “The Prophetic Setting of the Pentecost Sermon,” *ZWKK* (1983): 150.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>8</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 85.

<sup>9</sup> *The Greek New Testament*: Fourth Edition (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: D–Stuttgart, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Peterson, 154.

gospel on the hearts of those who heard.<sup>11</sup> Peter recognized their emotional state and enlightenment as an opportunity for them to believe in Jesus, and he specifically called them to do so.

In Acts 2:38 Peter called those who were affected by the message to “repent and be baptized.” This call to repentance marks a central element in the book of Acts. As noted earlier, the inclusion of a CTR is a characteristic of the larger apostolic gospel, or kerygma. Carl Holladay argues that “this specific feature is an expectation of Jesus, and the particular call in this passage is the first among many others in the book of Acts.”<sup>12</sup> Peter’s specific persuasion to “repent and be baptized” comes as a result of the question posed by the crowd. They ask, “what shall we do?” and Peter responded, “repent and be baptized.” Examining the parts of Peter’s admonition to repent offers insight into the meaning of repentance.

The first response that Peter instructed the people to render involved repentance. The translated word “repent” comes from the Greek “μετανοήσατε.” Marshall claims, “The word indicates a change of direction in a person’s life rather than simply a mental change of attitude or a feeling of remorse; it signifies a turning away from a godless way of life.”<sup>13</sup> Repentance involves a complete change of a person, includes more than just remorse over sin, and is a specific change of mind, attitude, and living. This call remains consistent with the larger message of Peter’s sermon. The specific urge toward

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<sup>11</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary V. 26 (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1992), 116.

<sup>12</sup> Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary*, 106.

<sup>13</sup> Marshall, 86.

repentance reinforces Peter's call to the people in light of the truth he revealed about Jesus.

Peter's call to repentance also includes baptism. Baptism should be performed "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Peter's exhortation did more than just call people to an outward response involving physical action; it also called the people to have an inward change involving the whole person. Marshall further explains this understanding writing, "However precisely the phrase be understood, it conveys the same thought that the person being baptized enters into allegiance to Jesus, and this would tie in with the evidence that at baptism it was customary to make a confession of Jesus as Lord."<sup>14</sup> To confess Jesus as Lord involves more than just an outward action of baptism. Baptism signifies a change of heart.

In Acts 2:40, Peter further pressed those called to repentance and baptism to "save yourselves from this crooked generation." Peter pleaded with the people to recognize Jesus. F.F. Bruce describes the nature of Peter's pleading as an effort to make sure the people understood the danger.<sup>15</sup> The two words used in Acts 2:40 are "bearing witness" and "exhorting." The first word translated "bearing witness" represents the Greek word "διεμαρτύρατο." David Peterson writes, "Warned is literally 'testified', indicating that proclamation of the facts about Jesus was accompanied by persuasive argument and exhortation."<sup>16</sup> This explanation shows Peter's priority to ensure that his hearers understood the message. Overall, Fernando describes Peter's admonition as a "more

<sup>14</sup> Marshall, 86.

<sup>15</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 72.

<sup>16</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 157.

intense appeal to the will than before including warning and pleading.”<sup>17</sup> Both words indicate the intensity of the appeal Peter makes with the people to respond.

### Exposition

Peter’s call to repentance in the Acts 2 sermon represents a common feature of other sermons in Acts displaying a similar nature. Fernando acknowledges this trend by recognizing that a summons to repent and receive forgiveness demonstrates a feature of the apostolic kerygma.<sup>18</sup> Bruce demonstrates four parts to the apostolic kerygma. He outlines a call to repentance as the final feature.<sup>19</sup> Polhill reinforces this idea when he observes, “Among the other features of the Acts Missionary addresses is that the final movement is, ‘a call to repentance,’ with a final allusion to the text of Joel to, ‘round off’ the sermon.”<sup>20</sup> A specific call to repentance is recognizable as normative for the evangelistic preaching of Acts, and the early preaching of the apostles. The CTR is an important feature of Peter’s Pentecost sermon.

Peter’s call to repentance embodies an important part of his sermon. The larger context of the book of Acts and the New Testament reveals that Peter’s call is widespread throughout. The call to repentance represents a transition to persuasion from the information and exposition given on the Scriptures. Using this transition, Peter begins instructing the people regarding an appropriate response in light of the preaching. They are called to respond based on what they have heard in the sermon. Marshall writes that

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<sup>17</sup> Fernando, 106.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>19</sup> Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 63.

<sup>20</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, 107.

“Peter’s reply sums up what was to be the stated call by Christian preachers to their audiences.”<sup>21</sup> Investigating the call to response, given by Peter, leads to the realization that today’s preachers should include this element in their sermons.

Another important theological implication of this passage includes the nature of Peter’s call and specific truths related to extending the call to repentance. One who preaches should understand what Peter meant in his call to repentance. Peterson addresses this issue when he clarifies the confusion about baptism: “It is regularly associated with commitment to Christ, but is not a rite that can secure the blessing of salvation apart from genuine repentance and faith.”<sup>22</sup> Bruce acknowledges this same danger when he writes, “It is against the whole genius of biblical religion to suppose that the outward rite could have any value except insofar as it was accompanied by the work of grace within.”<sup>23</sup> These statements clarify that no religious rite can bring about salvation. Instead, salvation requires inward change that involves more than experiencing sorrow over sin.

The truth about baptism is supported by the larger context of Scripture. Concerning this spiritual transformation, Peterson demonstrates the connection between the Old Testament and New Testament writing, “The OT regularly shows that genuine sorrow for sin involves an alteration of attitude towards God that brings about a ‘conversion’ or reorientation of life. NT use of the terminology must be interpreted within this biblical-theological framework.”<sup>24</sup> Polhill concisely explains the call of Peter

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<sup>21</sup> Marshall, 85–86.

<sup>22</sup> Peterson, 155.

<sup>23</sup> Bruce, 70.

<sup>24</sup> Peterson, 154.

by writing, “The essential response that Peter called from the Jewish crowd is the complete turnabout that comprises true repentance, to turn away from their rejection of the Messiah and call upon his name.”<sup>25</sup> Peterson explains the connection of salvation and repentance, which involves calling on Jesus as Lord: “At the human level, calling upon Jesus as Lord and Messiah is essentially what makes a person Christian.”<sup>26</sup> Through this clarification, one can understand the nature of what Peter called the people to do—to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and turn from their rejection of him. This repentance involved a change of heart that led them to baptism.

#### Application

The biblical preachers’ consistent demonstration of a call to response in the book of Acts should lead the modern preacher to consider whether or not he includes a CTR in his own preaching. Fernando presses the idea that modern preaching should incorporate the call to repentance based on the presence of the call to repentance in the early preaching of the church. He notes that “this emphasis on sin and repentance was a consistent theme in the evangelism of the early church. It must be so today too.”<sup>27</sup> Bruce further describes the call to repentance as an “essential element in the proclamation of the apostolic message.”<sup>28</sup> The presence of the call to repentance in the early sermons should highlight its importance. The modern preacher should include a specific call to repentance that mirrors the apostles’ CTR.

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<sup>25</sup> Polhill, 117.

<sup>26</sup> Peterson, 155.

<sup>27</sup> Fernando, *Acts*, 110.

<sup>28</sup> Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 69.

Beyond mimicking the preaching of Acts, the preacher should understand the necessity of the call to repentance. Peterson demonstrates the crux of the importance of the CTR when he writes,

These samples of Apostolic preaching have an important function in Luke's narrative, illustrating how opportunities were taken to testify to the person and work of Christ in a variety of situations. As such, they are part of the unique revelation of God that forms our NT and must be foundational to our own faith and understanding of the gospel. Their method of proclamation, point for point, may not be applicable in every situation, but reflection on the theological issues they affirm will be a stimulus to effective evangelism in every age and culture.<sup>29</sup>

Peterson points out the effectiveness of the methodology used by Peter and the other preachers in Acts. Their persuasion and exhortation to repentance came as a result of the impact that the Word had on the hearers. The realization of their sin came as a direct result of hearing the word of God. Peter calls for a response based on their recognition of the truth. Fernando describes the mandate that should lead the modern preacher to specifically call for response: "The gospel is not something simply to be discussed. It is a message that demands a personal response, and we must always work toward provoking such a response, even if it means warning people and pleading with them."<sup>30</sup> After explaining the Scriptures and providing application, the faithful preacher will call the people to respond. The specific mandate for the inclusion of the CTR lies in examples of preaching throughout Scripture.

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<sup>29</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 144.

<sup>30</sup> Fernando, 118.



### Paul's Conclusion to the Areopagus Sermon in Acts 17:30–31

Paul's sermon in Act 17:30–31 occurs as a result of his evangelism in the city of Athens. Paul, distressed by the rampant idol worship in the city, preached the gospel in multiple contexts.<sup>31</sup> At one point, he encountered a group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who “took him and brought him” to the Areopagus to explain his teaching. Craig Keener acknowledges that there is debate about whether the Areopagus represented the name of a place or the title of a council in Athens.<sup>32</sup> In Paul's time period, the Areopagus likely referred to a council, not a place.<sup>33</sup> Regardless, Paul addressed a group of philosophers with the truth of God's coming judgment, their own culpability, and the need for repentance. These realities pointed Paul's hearers to Christ.

The features of Paul's sermon slightly differ from other evangelistic speeches in the book of Acts. Peterson maintains that the opening of Paul's speech does not cite a text, but instead resembles Genesis by “moving from a proclamation of the one true Creator, to an assertion of his purpose for humanity, and concluding with a declaration of universal accountability before God as judge.”<sup>34</sup> Paul's sermon contained language that sounded different than a typical sermon preached in a Jewish context, though it would have sounded familiar to his Gentile hearers. This language included quotations from Greek philosophy: Fernando explains the wisdom of Paul's approach writing, “Paul quoted from writers the Athenians looked up to.”<sup>35</sup> Fernando further observes that Paul

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 473.

<sup>32</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* V. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 2600.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Peterson, 493.

<sup>35</sup> Fernando, 476.

used this material in support of his argument, though Paul would not agree with everything the hearers believed.<sup>36</sup> Paul's message was contextualized to his audience, making it sound different from some of the other Acts speeches, but it still pointed to biblical themes and used biblical terminology.<sup>37</sup> Fernando regards the sermon so highly that he claims, "We will use Paul's ministry as an example of effective evangelism among people without a biblical heritage."<sup>38</sup> Even without an explicit biblical reference, the features contained in the speech resemble the apostolic gospel or kerygma mentioned earlier.

These features of the apostolic gospel represent the core beliefs of the early church. Examining the sermon based on Peterson's description of the apostolic gospel reveal several confirmations of the sermon's consistency. Peterson speaks about the specifics of the sermon's fidelity by writing, "Paul's speech in Athens is ultimately messianic and evangelistic because it concludes with a proclamation of the resurrected man by whom God will judge the world and calls upon all people everywhere to repent in response to this."<sup>39</sup> This call to repentance represents the focus of the exegesis and theological implications of Paul's sermon.

### Exegesis

Acts 17:30 marks a new section in Paul's sermon. Peterson notes this "new section of the sermon is signaled by the Greek *men oun*, though there are links with what has gone

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<sup>36</sup> Fernando, 479.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 480.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 478.

<sup>39</sup> Peterson, 493.

before.”<sup>40</sup> This section includes features that resemble a sermon conclusion. The segment provides a recapitulation and calls for a response, which in this case calls the hearers to repent. Howard Marshall mentions, “There follows a conclusion, calling on men to abandon their ignorant ideas of God and to repent.”<sup>41</sup> John Polhill further acknowledges the call to repentance when he observes, “Paul now directed his attention to the Athenians, returning to the theme of ignorance with which he began.”<sup>42</sup> Paul’s message revealed the identity of their unknown god, and removed their ignorance.

Through his sermon, Paul demonstrated consistency with Greek rhetoric. Craig Keener points out that segments of Paul’s sermon resemble divisions of philosophical rhetoric, which the people knew well. Based on this description, this part of Paul’s sermon (beginning in Acts 17:30) could receive consideration as *peroratio*.<sup>43</sup> Overall, this section fits the mold of a sermon conclusion, which includes a call to repentance seen throughout the evangelistic preaching of the New Testament. Holladay supports this truth writing, “The call for universal (“every human being in every place”) repentance resonates with the biblical tradition, the teachings of Jesus and John the Baptist, and their successors in Acts.”<sup>44</sup> This feature, while consistent with the rhetorical ending, also achieves calling the people to a response.

In Acts 17:30, Paul described the “former times of ignorance,” but he also emphasized that their enlightenment changed their culpability. Keener explains,

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<sup>40</sup> Peterson, 501.

<sup>41</sup> Marshall, 298.

<sup>42</sup> Polhill, 376.

<sup>43</sup> Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 2618.

<sup>44</sup> Holladay, 346.

“Ignorance about God was less culpable than deliberate distortions about him, but given God’s self-revelation of character in humanity, idolatry remained culpable, and now, given the climactic and more complete revelation of his purpose in the historic act of raising Jesus, it became inexcusable.”<sup>45</sup> Peterson further explains, “Paul identifies the era in which they have been living as ‘the times of ignorance,’ recalling the further charge of ignorance in Acts 17:23. He goes on to speak of what God now requires in the light of Christ’s coming. The two-age perspective of Jewish eschatology is thus adapted and applied to the Gentile situation.”<sup>46</sup> After receiving the truth, the hearer’s ignorance cannot serve as an excuse for ignoring Jesus. As a result of their enlightenment, Paul called those present to repentance and faith.

Paul challenged his hearers, in Acts 17:30, that God “commands all people everywhere to repent.” Paul called on the people to repent due to their ignorance ending. The word “μετανοειν,” in Acts 17:30, translated as “repent,” comes from the root “μετανοέω.” This word mirrors Peter’s usage in Acts 2:38. Polhill surmises that the call to repentance would seem strange to Paul’s hearers.<sup>47</sup> But Keener compares it to a transformation of mind that the hearers would recognize which resembled someone converting to a new philosophical viewpoint.<sup>48</sup> Polhill notes that this repentance represented a “complete turnabout from their false worship and a turning to God.”<sup>49</sup> When Paul sought their repentance, he presented an action his hearers would understand.

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<sup>45</sup> Keener, 2668.

<sup>46</sup> Peterson, 501.

<sup>47</sup> Polhill, 377.

<sup>48</sup> Keener, 2668.

<sup>49</sup> Polhill, 377.

Paul gave the reasoning behind the call to repentance in Acts 17:31. God’s eschatological judgement, which Jesus will carry out, serves as the basis for the call to repentance. Peterson writes, “God has set the day and appointed the judge.”<sup>50</sup> The truth that God will judge through Christ mandates their response. Fernando argues, “The wisdom of such a step,” as repentance, “becomes all the more evident when we realize that this God is someday going to judge the world.”<sup>51</sup> This reality was amplified as Paul’s hearers recognized that God also appointed the judge.

Jesus’ resurrection lends authority to the claim that he will judge the world. Paul noted this truth in Acts 17:31 when he wrote, “He has given all assurance by raising him from the dead.” The resurrection allows the assurance of God appointing Jesus. Fernando reasons, “Paul has made some astounding claims—especially that the representative of this supreme God through whom he will accomplish his work is a man called Jesus. How does Paul know that these things are true? What proof does he have of all these claims? Paul answers that this supreme God has given proof of this to all men by raising [Jesus] from the dead.”<sup>52</sup> Paul’s sermon highlights the importance of the resurrection.

### Exposition

Paul specifically revealed that God calls all people to repent. Paul’s meaning of the word repent is brought into question as one considers the context of the Areopagus sermon.

Keener details this question writing, “Like Paul here, some philosophers used, *μετάνοια* for transformation. Most used the term weakly but nevertheless accepted the general

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<sup>50</sup> Peterson, 502.

<sup>51</sup> Fernando, 476.

<sup>52</sup> Fernando, 476.

concept of conversion and transformation. Philosophers employed a particular variety of rhetoric, the “protreptic discourse, when seeking to convert people to philosophy.”<sup>53</sup> Paul demonstrates that his hearers understood repentance involving a change or transformation. Bruce clarifies the specifics of the Athenians call to repentance when he claims, “Let all people everywhere (the Athenian hearers included) repent therefore of their false conception of God (and consequent flouting of his will) and embrace the true knowledge of his being now made available in the gospel.”<sup>54</sup> Their repentance involved a specific change. Peterson furthers this understanding when he explains, “A call for repentance in this context provides a vivid rebuttal of the position that ‘natural revelation’ is itself without correction and need of supplement.”<sup>55</sup> Paul’s call to repentance urged the crowd to repent of their former ignorance and to embrace the coming judge.

An important aspect of the sermon involves the lack of explicit reference to Jesus. Jesus embodies the object of Acts 17:31, even though the verse does not explicitly mention him. Peterson notes, “The proclamation of Jesus and his resurrection seem to be the goal toward which these encounters were pressing. The messianic kingship of Jesus and its implications remains the core of the message to pagan audiences, though the terminology and approach are very different from the preaching to Jews or Gentiles who were familiar with the Jewish Scriptures.”<sup>56</sup> These statements reveal the common thread throughout the sermon that ultimately points to Christ. One theory surmises that Paul possibly mentioned Jesus and explained the truth about him, but Luke did not record that

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<sup>53</sup> Keener, 2668.

<sup>54</sup> Bruce, 340.

<sup>55</sup> Peterson, 501.

<sup>56</sup> Peterson, 44.

segment here. Fernando speculates, “Though the cross is missing in this summary report of his talk, the death of Christ must have been mentioned for him to mention the resurrection, and there is nothing to say that this was not clearly presented during his reasoning with the people of Athens prior to this event.”<sup>57</sup> Jesus as the object of Paul’s preaching clarifies the passage.

Though never mentioned by name, Jesus represents the “man God has appointed, and the one he has resurrected.” Peterson explains that Paul “does not even explain that forgiveness is available through Jesus, though the offer is implicit when God, commands all people everywhere to repent.”<sup>58</sup> The conclusion of the sermon affirms the truth of the gospel and of the resurrection. Peterson notes this truth:

The divine challenge to turn back and seek a new start would make little sense and would carry little power if it did not include the possibility of reconciliation with God and cleansing from sin. Repentance for the Athenians would have meant turning to God from idols ‘to serve the true and living God.’ With instructions such as the Thessalonians received, this would also have involved waiting ‘for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues form the wrath to come.’<sup>59</sup>

Jesus clearly emerges as the object of Paul’s speech even though he never mentioned him by name.

### Application

Two particular areas of application impact the hearers. Paul demonstrated the form that a sermon should take, as well as the nature of how it should be delivered. Each of these demonstrations help the modern preacher better communicate the gospel of Christ.

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<sup>57</sup> Fernando, 477.

<sup>58</sup> Peterson, 502.

<sup>59</sup> Peterson, 502.

Paul preaches using a definite method that allows for the contextualization of his message. This truth should inform the preacher about the importance of the delivery of his sermon. The preacher should consider how his hearers will understand the sermon. Speaking to an audience educated in Greek rhetoric meant that Paul would seek to present the gospel in a way consistent with their understanding. The sermon's form appeared familiar to them. Thus, the preacher of God's word should take this reality into consideration when preparing his own sermons in order to ensure maximum impact. Charles Williamson observes, "One thing that this story about Paul in Athens does for us is to give us a model to follow as we undertake the task of telling others the good news of Jesus."<sup>60</sup> The contextualization of Paul's sermon clearly emerges in the structure. Paul divided his sermon into segments that the hearers would recognize as consistent with established rhetoric. Even the presentation of the message was crafted to fit the audience, yet he still maintained faithfulness to the gospel. In addition, Fernando writes, "Paul's speech before the Areopagus remains a model of sensitive but forthright confrontation of an intellectual audience with the claims of the gospel."<sup>61</sup> The preacher in today's context should consider his audience and contextualize the delivery of his sermon in a way that maintains fidelity to the gospel.

Another application for the modern preacher involves the need for a specific call to repentance. Paul instructed the Athenians on the truth of Scripture and the existence of the one true God. Based on this information and their hearing of truth, he called them to respond—particularly to repent. Paul's revelation that God already appointed Jesus as the

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<sup>60</sup> Charles C. Williamson, *Acts*, Interpretation Bible Series (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 59.

<sup>61</sup> Fernando, 475.



judge demonstrates the need for repentance. This call to repentance includes faith in Christ, and faith acknowledges Jesus as the object of repentance. Williamson notes, “Fortunately for us, God did not leave us to grope around in the dark. God revealed God's self to us in the person of Jesus (v. 31).”<sup>62</sup> The preacher should include a conclusion that calls for a response to the message. This inclusion mirrors Paul’s sermon conclusion, which exhorts the hearer to respond. Paul’s statement in Acts 17:30 demonstrated evidence for the necessity of their repentance. The preacher in today’s context should prioritize the same exhortation.

Paul’s sermon in Acts serves as a model for the modern preacher. He appropriately contextualized the message, and he provided a distinct call for repentance and response. Paul persuaded the Athenians to action through his call for response. Through these elements, Paul provides an example for any preacher of God’s word to follow.

### **Jesus’ Conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 7:13–27**

In Matt 5–7, Jesus preaches a sermon regarding how his followers should live in light of his Kingdom. What Jesus detailed represents an ethic for life that acknowledges the Lord’s authority. Donald Hagner concisely summarizes the Sermon on the Mount using the warnings of the final conclusion: “The Sermon on the Mount comes to an end with exhortations in the form of warnings. A lengthy discourse containing the ethical teaching of Jesus has been presented, a description of righteousness explicitly said to be the fulfillment of—the exposition of the true meaning of—the law and the prophets. This

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<sup>62</sup> Williamson, *Acts*, 59.

teaching is to be taken with all seriousness: the words of Jesus are not only to be heard but done.”<sup>63</sup> In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus prioritized the obedience of his followers.

In Matt 7:13–27, Jesus concluded his sermon. Examining the parts of the passage reveals truth about living. The choice that Jesus offered, and the repentance that he called for, clearly emerge from the text. Considering these segments will reveal the truth of this passage.

### Exegesis

In Matt 7:13–27, Jesus presents the conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount. He outlined four contrasts that describe those who will enter the Kingdom and those who will not. Hagner calls the parable a “rabbinic idiom.”<sup>64</sup> Through rabbinic idiom, Jesus used practical lessons to provide the hearers with two divergent options. Jesus used the example of two paths, two trees, two confessions, and two houses to offer this choice.

Jesus began by offering the option between two paths: a narrow path that leads to life, and a broad path that leads to destruction. D.A. Carson maintains, “The first is broad (not “easy,” RSV) and its gate is wide. It accommodates many people, all enjoying its spacious contours. But although it is so well travelled, it ends in destruction.”<sup>65</sup> Jesus gave instructions regarding the ease of the broad road, but he also acknowledged the dangerous end. Jesus noted that many individuals travel this way. Charles Quarles writes, “A wide gate permitted people to enter en masse and thus portrays the popularity of the

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<sup>63</sup> Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary 33A (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 191.

<sup>64</sup> Hagner, 190.

<sup>65</sup> D.A. Carson, *Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount And His Confrontation with the World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 130.

route to destruction.”<sup>66</sup> In contrast to the broad path lies the narrow path, described as leading to life. Carson notes, “Life is a synonym for the kingdom.”<sup>67</sup> The path that represents the entrance to life is not marked with the ease of the broad road. Charles Quarles claims that this path “is restrictive due to its narrow nature.”<sup>68</sup> He explains, “The adjective ‘narrow’ (stenos) in Matt 7:13 demonstrates that entrance into the kingdom is restrictive and highlights the exclusive nature of the kingdom.”<sup>69</sup> Jesus gave a clear choice: the individual must choose between a road to life or a road to destruction.

In the next contrast, Jesus described two trees in the context of a warning about false prophets. He gave the caution to remain vigilant for false prophets. Carson describes, “A prophet is fundamentally a messenger for someone else, and these false prophets claim to be speaking for God.”<sup>70</sup> Jesus demonstrated that these false prophets provide danger and deceit. He used the illustration of a wolf in sheep’s clothing.<sup>71</sup> However, Jesus noted that a way to distinguish between false prophets and true prophets exists. Quarles writes, “Despite false prophets’ clever attempts to disguise themselves as Christian disciples, Jesus exclaimed, ‘you’ll recognize them by their fruit’ (Matt. 7:16).”<sup>72</sup> John Stott further writes that Jesus “held that truth and falsehood excluded one another, and that those who propagate lies in God’s name are false prophets, of whom his

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<sup>66</sup> Charles Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 310.

<sup>67</sup> Carson, *Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount*, 130.

<sup>68</sup> Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount*, 310.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Carson, 134.

<sup>71</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 196.

<sup>72</sup> Quarles, 323.

followers must beware.”<sup>73</sup> Jesus demonstrated that true believers will be known by the fruit they bear. The lack of fruit makes the false prophets recognizable. Carson acknowledges, “From a certain perspective, false prophets can look like real prophets, and their fruit may appear to be genuine. But the nature of a false prophet cannot be hidden forever: sooner or later he will be seen for what he is.”<sup>74</sup> The two trees highlight the distinction between what is real and what is false.

Jesus’ next example contrasts two claims. Carson explains, “Two claims are made and two kinds of claimants are portrayed.”<sup>75</sup> Jesus explained that the people addressed him as Lord. Quarles highlights, “In light of the earlier usages of the title in Matthew, the natural reading of the term in 7:21 regards it as a title of Deity.”<sup>76</sup> Jesus alluded to a confession of Deity, yet he acknowledged that many people would make this claim but remain excluded from the Kingdom. Quarles acknowledges this truth when he writes, “Mere verbal profession is not enough. The true disciple expresses the sincerity of his confession of Jesus’ identity as the Lord through obedient living.”<sup>77</sup> Jesus demonstrated the spectacular nature of the profession that these disciples made. Stott explains, “In order to make his point Jesus cites the most extreme examples of verbal profession, namely the exercise of a supernatural ministry involving prophecy, exorcism and miracles.”<sup>78</sup> Despite the spectacular demonstrations by these individuals, Jesus told them to “depart for he never knew them.” Jesus called for obedience, and he desired a

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<sup>73</sup> Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 198.

<sup>74</sup> Carson, 136.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>76</sup> Quarles, 330.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>78</sup> Stott, 207.

profession that he is Lord, accompanied by the keeping of his commandments. Anyone who does not practice obedience professed falsely. Carson notes, “It is true, of course, that no man enters the kingdom because of his obedience; but it is equally true that no man enters the kingdom who is not obedient.”<sup>79</sup> Jesus’ example of two claims demonstrates the insufficiency of a verbal profession that lacks obedience.

The final contrast from Jesus involves two houses. One house built on rock withstands the storm, but the other, built on sand, does not. Jesus gave parallels to the two different houses. Wisdom characterizes one individual person in the passage. Hagner observes, “The word, ‘wise,’ is a favorite of Matthew (seven occurrences, all in the parables or figurative passages; in the other Gospels, only two occurrences in Luke). It refers to the prudent, wise or discerning person, the person who not only knows the truth but acts upon it.”<sup>80</sup> The wise man obeys Jesus’ commands. He builds his house on the rock, and it withstands the storm. Foolishness describes the next man because he built his house on sand, which indicates a lack of obedience. Hagner writes, “The foolishness of this person in the parable lies in hearing but, ‘not doing,’ the words of Jesus.”<sup>81</sup> Jesus described the fall of the foolish man’s house as “great.” Considering this issue Quarles suggests, “In Jesus’ time, the terrible collapse not only reduced the house to rubble but claimed the lives of all those who sought refuge from the storm in the trusted walls of the home.”<sup>82</sup> Jesus’ warning involves obedience—not merely a verbal profession.

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<sup>79</sup> Carson, 139.

<sup>80</sup> Hagner, 190.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 191.

<sup>82</sup> Quarles, 349.

## Exposition

The choice given by Jesus reveals a truth about the human heart. Stott perceives the reluctance of individuals to accept only two options: “Everybody resents being faced with the necessity of a choice. But Jesus will not allow us to escape it.”<sup>83</sup> The choice involves acknowledging Jesus as Lord, and whether an individual’s life maintains obedience to the profession of Jesus as Lord. Articulating this truth, Hagner claims, “This parable of eschatological judgement sets before the reader a choice of two opposite outcomes. It repeats and strengthens the immediately preceding warnings and thus effectively ‘rounds out’ the entire sermon by its emphasis on the ultimate importance of obeying the ethical teaching of Jesus.”<sup>84</sup> Stott further explains the function of the ending of Jesus’ sermon: “That is why the sermon’s conclusion is so appropriate, as Jesus sketches two ways (narrow and broad) and the two buildings (on rock and sand). It would be impossible to exaggerate the choice between them, since one way leads to life while the other ends in destruction, and one building is secure while the other one is overwhelmed with disaster.”<sup>85</sup> Craig Blomberg mentions that this section “forms a fitting conclusion to the sermon as a whole by making plain that there is no valid reason for refusing Christ’s appeal.”<sup>86</sup> The choices offered by Jesus provide a clear explanation of his warning. Each of the contrasts in this passage regard the danger of choosing wrongly. Michael Wilkins notes, “As Messiah, Jesus is also highlighted as the authoritative adjudicator of

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<sup>83</sup> Stott, 196.

<sup>84</sup> Hagner, 190.

<sup>85</sup> Stott, 211.

<sup>86</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 134.

humanity's destiny. In these four brief scenes that conclude the SM, all of humanity stands before Jesus, and he asks each, 'What will you do with me?'"<sup>87</sup> The choice between these contrasts is resolved in a question of whether Jesus will be followed.

Jesus' warnings ultimately represent a call to repentance. While Jesus' call was not explicit in the text, his call is certainly implicit. Hagner observes, "The Sermon on the Mount comes to an end with exhortations in the form of warnings."<sup>88</sup> Carson echoes this thought stating that Jesus was trying to scare people into the Kingdom: "Not a few will come only because they see that the issues with which Jesus is concerned are eternal issues—ultimately, nothing less than heaven and hell."<sup>89</sup> The issues of both commitment and obedience are used by Jesus to represent entrance into the kingdom. Since repentance involves a complete change of the man (as previously defined), Jesus provided a call to repentance through the presentation of two choices. Carson appropriately notes the following:

These final verses of the Sermon on the Mount demand decision and commitment of the type that beseeches God for mercy and pardon. Such discipleship is characterized by that deep repentance which hungers for nothing more than conformity to God's will. But because there are only two ways, simple failure to make such a deep commitment is already a commitment not to do so. Jesus way demands repentance, trust, and obedience. Therefore refusal, stemming as it must from unrepentant arrogance, unbelief, and /or disobedience—in short, self-centeredness instead of God-centeredness—can only be construed as rebellion.<sup>90</sup>

Jesus' words clearly articulate the obedience he desires from those who follow him. In the passage, he affirmed the priority of turning to him in repentance.

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<sup>87</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 330.

<sup>88</sup> Hagner, 191.

<sup>89</sup> Carson, 142.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 129–30.

### Application

In his sermon, Jesus used contrasts to call for repentance in his sermon. In Matt 7:13, the beginning of the passage marks the start of a conclusion. Jesus used the analogies to highlight the results of obedience and disobedience. Examining Jesus' sermon should lead the preacher to recognize the importance of a CTR for preaching. Jesus used a form of warning and exhortation through the analogies, and he clearly demonstrated a method for including a call to response. His inclusion should be an example for modern preachers to embody.

Jesus presented the choice to follow him or go the opposite way. Calling for repentance should be a necessity for every preacher's sermon. However, Jesus revealed that this call can involve creativity. Haddon Robinson writes, "Depending on the sermon, the audience, and the minister, conclusions take different shapes and forms. Because the element of freshness adds interest to preaching, work to vary your conclusions."<sup>91</sup> Jesus' contrasts represented a choice detailing the path for his hearers, but he also expressed the consequences for disregarding his call. Similar to Paul using rhetoric familiar to his audience in Athens, Jesus left no ambiguity regarding what his hearers were called to do. Every preacher should strive to deliver a clear call to response in a compelling way that fits the audience and the text.

### Conclusion

The inclusion of a CTR in the sermon represents a biblically founded practice. Roy Fish observes, "The good news is incomplete without an appeal to respond. The very fact that

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<sup>91</sup> Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014), 128.



it represents an offer implies the necessity of appeal.”<sup>92</sup> Peter presented the gospel at Pentecost, and during his conclusion, he called for his hearers to “repent and be baptized.” Paul contextualized his message to his hearers in Athens, and in his conclusion, he called his hearers to respond by informing them that God called for their repentance. In addition, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount and concluded by offering choices that pointed his hearers to a response. These sermons demonstrate a biblical foundation for a CTR. Using this call, the preacher should exhort the hearers to action. The preacher of God’s word, desiring faithfulness in his preaching, should seek to include a CTR as a part of his sermons. In Acts 2:37–41, Acts 17:30–31, and Matt 7:13–27, the authors provide a biblical basis for the inclusion of a CTR in the sermon.

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<sup>92</sup> Roy J. Fish, *Coming to Jesus* (North Charleston: CreateSpace, 2015), 23.

## CHAPTER 3 MINISTRY FOUNDATIONS

### Introduction

In chapter 1, the project director communicated that he would conduct a literature review for insight into the history, theology, and practical use of the Call to Response (CTR) within a sermon. The director's examination of sources revealed the vital function of the CTR throughout the history of preaching and in homiletical works. The project director synthesized the insight from the sources to develop a methodology for including a CTR for the sermon. This methodology was used in the development of a sermon series. The project director's sermon series provided opportunity for a feedback panel to evaluate the project director's progress in the development of a CTR.

### Practical Considerations for Understanding the Call to Respond

Through the study of literature concerning the *Biblical and Theological Foundations* and *Ministry Foundations* of the CTR, the project director enhanced his understanding of this topic. The CTR represents a segment of the sermon conclusion, and through this segment, a preacher includes exhortation and persuasion based on the primary application of the sermon's text.

In *Power in the Pulpit*, Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix reveal the conclusion's importance when they acknowledge that the conclusion is the final opportunity for the preacher to impact the hearers. Haddon Robinson echoes this truth when he states, "Your

congregation should see your idea entire and complete, and it should know and feel what God's truth demands of it."<sup>1</sup> The preacher builds the sermon's intensity until the end, where he calls the hearers to respond.

The conclusion also embodies the final opportunity to impact the hearer with truth and to drive them toward a response. Daniel Akin notes, "The conclusion of a sermon can make or break the message."<sup>2</sup> Akin further reveals, "It is difficult to overstate the crucial nature of the conclusion. It includes your last words, and your last words should be lasting words."<sup>3</sup> The conclusion of the sermon is a strategic opportunity for the preacher to impact the hearers.

The conclusion contains two distinct parts: a summation and the CTR. In various terms, these segments of the conclusion are described throughout the resources consulted by the project director. These resources all communicate the same understanding of the parts of the sermon conclusion. Tony Merida, in *The Christ Centered Expositor*, uses the terms "summation and a response."<sup>4</sup> Vines and Shaddix avoid the term "conclusion," and instead use "summation," with an accompanying "invitation" to describe the ending segments of a sermon.<sup>5</sup> They write, "It is not the last part of the sermon! In reality, the sermon is not concluded until it is lived out in the lives of the people who hear it."<sup>6</sup> Their classifications give further clarity to the sermons structure. Despite the terms used, a sermon should include a CTR. Vines and Shaddix continue with the admonition that,

<sup>1</sup> Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 128.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Akin, Stephen Rummage, and Bill Curtis, *Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 198.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>4</sup> Tony Merida, *The Christ Centered Expositor* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 204.

<sup>5</sup> Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 207–10.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 207.

“Because the Word of God always demands a response, all biblical sermons should culminate in a call for such action.”<sup>7</sup> They call the ending segment the “invitation.”<sup>8</sup> While their terminology differs, consistency characterizes the author’s descriptions of the elements. Part of the consistency regards the truth that a sermon conclusion contains a summation and a CTR.

The “summation,” also described as a recapitulation, does not represent the only intention of the preacher in the conclusion. The conclusion’s function is not only to restate the points of the sermon. Stott clearly acknowledges that a conclusion is more than just a recapitulation of the sermon.<sup>9</sup> Wayne McDill advances this thought by explaining that the preacher must call the hearer to live out the Word.<sup>10</sup> Moving from summation to actual application represents the purpose of the CTR. The CTR persuades the hearers to practice what they hear. Based on this reality, the preacher must understand the role of exhortation and persuasion in the CTR.

### Exhortation

An important characteristic of the CTR is exhortation. Chapters 1 and 2 of the project report described the presence of scriptural exhortation. Exhortation parallels an aspect of the call given to Timothy in 2 Tim 4:2, and it represents an element of Peter’s preaching in Acts 2:37–41. Bryan Chapell describes exhortation as one of the chief aims of a sermon conclusion. Chapell informs an understanding of the CTR: “Ordinarily, there

<sup>7</sup> Vines and Shaddix, 207.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> John Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 246.

<sup>10</sup> Wayne McDill, *The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 192.

should be no new exposition or application in a conclusion but rather a determined effort to mobilize the wills of the listeners to conform to previously specified imperatives. This means that the concluding exhortation is often broader than (or the culmination of) the applications in the main points.”<sup>11</sup> Using this description, Chapell reveals the function of the CTR. Through exhortation, the preacher challenges the hearers to respond to the message they have heard.

### Persuasion

In addition to exhortation, the sermons CTR includes persuasion. Stott describes strategies that allow a preacher to overcome difficulties that may prevent individuals from responding to the sermon:

Sensitive to these blocks we may well need in the conclusion to resort to persuasion. . . . by argument (anticipating and answering people’s objections), or by admonition (warning them of the consequences of disobedience), or by indirect conviction (first arousing a moral judgement in them and then turning it upon themselves, as Nathan did with David), or by pleading (applying the gentle pressure of God’s love).<sup>12</sup>

Stott clearly anticipates that the preacher must challenge his hearers with persuasion.

Through persuasion, the preacher aims to stir an individual’s will. Tim Keller acknowledges this aim: “While only God can open hearts, the communicator must give great time and thought both to presenting the truth accurately and to bringing it home to the hearts and lives of the hearers.”<sup>13</sup> Using the CTR, the preacher is given an opportunity to incorporate persuasion into the conclusion of a sermon.

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<sup>11</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 255.

<sup>12</sup> Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 54.

<sup>13</sup> Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 14.

### The Danger of Manipulation

While incorporating exhortation and persuasion into the CTR, the preacher must take care to avoid manipulation. Steve Gaines reflects, “Many of us have cringed as we have witnessed preachers using their ‘tricks’ to get people to come forward during an invitation.”<sup>14</sup> He continues, “The preacher should take every precaution to avoid planned, manipulative tactics throughout his sermon.”<sup>15</sup> A necessary element to avoid manipulation is integrity to the Scriptures. Merida notes, “It is not manipulation if you are persuading them to act on God’s Word. Persuade with integrity based upon the authority of God’s truth.”<sup>16</sup> Vines and Shaddix also give helpful advice for guarding against manipulation: “Offer opportunities for response regularly but do so with integrity and clarity so as not to manipulate premature decisions.”<sup>17</sup> By practicing integrity with the Scriptures, the preacher guards the sermon against manipulation.

### Historical Evidence of the CTR

Knowledge concerning the historical evidence of the CTR helps inform an understanding of its function. Equivalents to the CTR exist from the Old Testament, New Testament, and throughout the history of the church. Examining these equivalents provides the preacher with a better understanding of his purpose when using the CTR in a sermon’s conclusion.

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<sup>14</sup> Steve Gaines, Al Fasol, Roy Fish, Ralph Douglas West, *Preaching Evangelistically: Proclaiming the Saving Message of Jesus* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), 58.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Merida, 205.

<sup>17</sup> Vines and Shaddix, 217.

## Old Testament

The Old Testament preachers demonstrated a CTR. Roy Fish provides six explicit invitations for public response in the Old Testament preaching, and he gives several important aspects about these invitations.<sup>18</sup> Fish's primary intention is to discuss the provision of a public invitation to respond to the sermon, but within this examination, he notes that "a variety of methods were employed" in calling for a response.<sup>19</sup> Fish writes, "At times the primary response was simply a verbal commitment."<sup>20</sup> Stott also acknowledges that a CTR was a part of Old Testament preaching: "The biblical authors were quite clear that this was the purpose of their teaching." He continues, "Ezekiel was appointed 'a watchman for the house of Israel' in order to warn them of God's judgement and call them to repentance."<sup>21</sup> These brief examples demonstrate that calling for response was a common feature of the preaching in the Old Testament.

## New Testament

In the New Testament, the preaching of Jesus, John the Baptist, and the Apostles all feature a CTR. Peterson highlights this truth by noting that Peter's preaching was an echo of Jesus and John the Baptist.<sup>22</sup> Fish notes the specifics of Jesus' calls for the people to respond: "Jesus frequently coupled the indicative and the imperative. He would conclude a message with 'unless you repent, you will all likewise perish' or 'repent and believe in

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<sup>18</sup> Roy J. Fish, *Coming to Jesus Invitation* (North Charleston: CreateSpace, 2015), 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Stott, 246–47.

<sup>22</sup> David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 154.

the gospel.”<sup>23</sup> Bruce argues, “The call to repentance had been sounded by John and Jesus (and by Jesus’ disciples in his name) in the years preceding the crucifixion.”<sup>24</sup> The ample evidence demonstrates the existence of a CTR in this segment of New Testament preaching.

The preaching of the apostles also featured a CTR. The content of the NT preaching was called the *apostolic kerygma*. C.H. Dodd writes that the kerygma constitutes the message of the preacher.<sup>25</sup> Dodd outlines the features of this kerygma and uses Peter’s sermons to demonstrate the content of the early apostolic preaching. He writes, “The first four speeches of Peter cover substantially the same ground. The phraseology and the order of presentation vary slightly, but there is no essential advance from one to another. They supplement one another, and taken together they afford a comprehensive view of the content of the early kerygma.”<sup>26</sup> Craig Keener reveals that this preaching provides a model for preaching: “Many speeches also explain salvation and provide a model for preaching the gospel from various starting points to different groups.”<sup>27</sup> As Dodd outlines the content of the kerygma, he notes that a prominent feature is the CTR.

The apostolic kerygma also features a CTR as the final element. Dodd notes, “The kerygma always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and the

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<sup>23</sup> Fish, *Coming to Jesus Invitation*, 23.

<sup>24</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 69.

<sup>25</sup> C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1950), 7.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>27</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts*, An Exegetical Commentary V.1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 266.



holy spirit, and the promise of ‘salvation,’ that is, of ‘the life of the Age to Come,’ to those who enter the elect community.”<sup>28</sup> Peterson points out the presence of a CTR in the early apostolic preaching. He notes, “There are also common features in the mission speeches to Jewish audiences, which include the fulfillment of scriptural promises and Davidic kingship, the saving significance of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection-ascension, and a call to turn to Jesus with Faith (or to repent), and receive the benefits.”<sup>29</sup> The closing feature of the New Testament apostolic kerygma represents an equivalent to the CTR in the sermon.

### Beyond the New Testament

Beyond the New Testament, classical rhetoric demonstrates the inclusion of a CTR. Evidence of rhetorical style exists in the New Testament through Paul’s preaching in Acts. The use of this style influenced preachers from the days of the New Testament into the present day.

Greek rhetoric contained a segment known as *peroratio*. George Kennedy describes the basic divisions in classical rhetoric, including *peroratio*—the peroration is the “conclusion or epilogue” of the speech.<sup>30</sup> This segment of the speech means to move the hearer to a response. David Platt observes, “An effective *peroratio* enables a rhetor to persuade an audience in the conclusion of a speech.”<sup>31</sup> The *peroratio* can be understood as an equivalent to the CTR.

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<sup>28</sup> Dodd, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Peterson., 44.

<sup>30</sup> George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classic Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 5.

<sup>31</sup> David J. Platt, “An Analysis of Rhetorical Elements in Selected Origenist Homilies” (PhD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004), 34–35.

In addition to the *peroratio* as a recognized segment of the speech, persuasion was understood to encompass a chief aim of rhetorical speech. Stott concisely explains,

This was an essential element in the classical understanding of public speaking. Cicero had said in the orator that ‘an eloquent man must so speak as to teach (*docere*), to please (*delectare*), and to persuade (*flectere* or *movere*).’ Augustine quoted Cicero’s dictum and applied it to the responsibility of Christian preachers to teach the mind, delight or inspire the affections and move the will.<sup>32</sup>

The function of giving a speech was persuasion, which intended a response from the hearers.

A central figure of the progression of sermon form was Augustine. Kennedy writes about Augustine stating, “His only acknowledged source on rhetoric is Cicero. From—‘a certain eloquent man’—he takes the concept of the three ‘duties of the orator’: to teach, to delight, and to move.”<sup>33</sup> The duty to “move” is a persuasive task to provoke the listener to action. Kennedy notes Augustine’s thought: “It is the universal office of eloquence in any of these styles to speak in a manner leading to persuasion; and the end of eloquence is persuasion, by speech, of what you intend.”<sup>34</sup> Augustine based his preaching around a rhetorical style. Kennedy notes Augustine’s process: “Augustine thinks that it is necessary to delight a listener in order to retain him as a listener; it is necessary to move him in order to impel him to do what was right.”<sup>35</sup> Augustine intended to move his hearers toward a response, which is the central goal of the CTR.

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<sup>32</sup> Stott, 246.

<sup>33</sup> Kennedy, *A New History of Classic Rhetoric*, 269.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Kennedy, *A New History of Classic Rhetoric*, 269.

Many other examples could be given regarding the presence of a CTR. Stott acknowledges that the Puritans “wanted their message to penetrate through the head to the heart, that is, to the decision making centre of the human personality.”<sup>36</sup> This example supports the argument that even though there may not have been a public opportunity to respond, the preachers were intentional about exhortation to response. Robert Hamblin observes that many preachers throughout history extended invitations, or at least had an exhortation to response. He writes about Gregory of Nazianus, Patrick of Ireland, Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter Waldo, Antony of Padua, the Anabaptists, Puritans, John Wesley, George Whitfield, Charles Finney, William Booth, Charles Spurgeon, Absalom Earle and Dwight L. Moody as preachers who called for response.<sup>37</sup> Moving toward the present, Hamblin acknowledges that Billy Sunday and Billy Graham are people who called for individuals to respond to the sermon.<sup>38</sup>

The examples above highlight that preachers throughout history included a segment in the sermon intended to persuade the hearers to act upon the content of the message. This call is present in the Old Testament, New Testament, and the present day. Thus, a CTR is a historically justified segment of a sermon.

### **Theological Justification of the CTR**

Based on the over-arching redemptive message of the Bible, the CTR represents a necessary challenge to those who hear. Fish writes, “The gospel message is such that an

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<sup>36</sup> Stott, 247.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Hamblin, “The Gospel Invitation in Today’s World,” *The Theological Educator* 57 (1998): 30.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

invitation to respond is the logical outcome of its declaration.”<sup>39</sup> In the book *He is Not Silent*, Al Mohler reflects on the state of preaching and defines the meta-narrative of Scripture. His meta-narrative is that Scripture tells a story of redemption that finds its expression in the gospel.<sup>40</sup> He writes, “When we preach we must remember that what we proclaim is not just a little story, and not just a series of little stories . . . it is the big picture.”<sup>41</sup> This big picture is manifested in the gospel. Regarding this truth, Vines and Shaddix note that “the gospel of Christ innately demands a response from those who are confronted with its claims.”<sup>42</sup> Using the apostle Paul as an example, Keller explains an essential focus to preaching: “Paul sees Christ as the key to understanding each Biblical text (the first aspect of good preaching) and also as the key to bringing the Word home persuasively to the heart and mind of the listener (the second aspect).”<sup>43</sup> The gospel’s message necessitates that listeners receive exhortation to respond to the text.

### **Differentiating the CTR from the Public Invitation**

The CTR does not represent the equivalent to a public invitation. Vines and Shaddix summarize the issue:

The designation, ‘public invitation’ is not without some ambiguity. Does the designation refer to an invitation that is being offered publicly by a preacher or to an invitation offered by a preacher for persons to respond in some public manner? A difference does exist between the two, and proclaimers of the gospel must make the distinction before debating the validity of the role of the invitation in preaching. When the preaching

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<sup>39</sup> Fish, 23.

<sup>40</sup> R. Albert Mohler, *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 92.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Vines and Shaddix, 212.

<sup>43</sup> Keller, 16.

event is traced through its biblical and historical development, the former appears to be a nonnegotiable part of the nature of preaching.<sup>44</sup>

The preacher must recognize that a difference between a CTR and a public invitation exists.

Understanding the truths related to the public invitation provides a differentiation from the CTR. Akin clarifies, “It must be honestly acknowledged that the public invitation is a modern invention, at least in its present form.”<sup>45</sup> Fish suggests, “None of the words that we employ to describe the invitation—appeal, commitment, pledge, altar call, or invitation—is found in records of the New Testament nor are they found in the history of the church until the First Great Awakening in the thirteen colonies in the 1730s and 1740s.”<sup>46</sup> The historical presence of a CTR distinguishes it from the public invitation.

Fish acknowledges the tension regarding the issue writing,

As a rule among most evangelicals, the word ‘invitation’ includes prescribing some specific action in the way of eternal expression of a positive response. However, the word ‘invitation’ encompasses more than this. It includes any appeal to repent and to respond affirmatively to Jesus...it could be as unobtrusive as inviting people to pray where they are standing or sitting and simply appealing to them to put their trust in Jesus Christ with no opportunity given for public expression.<sup>47</sup>

Fish provides a framework for speaking meaningfully regarding both topics and their relationship to one another. The public invitation embodies one of the many outlets for hearers to respond to the sermon. The calling of the hearers to respond, however, represents a separate sermon element from the contemporary understanding of the public invitation.

<sup>44</sup> Vines and Shaddix, 212.

<sup>45</sup> Akin, Curtis, Rummage, *Engaging Exposition*, 209.

<sup>46</sup> Fish, 9.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

### Literature Review

The project director sought sources that examined the details of sermon preparation, or included information that pertained directly to the inclusion of a CTR in a sermon. Each resource offered insight into the history, practical use, and preparation of the CTR. The authors' opinions vary regarding minor elements of the sermon's conclusion. They also differ regarding terminology that defines the ending elements of a sermon. However, they agree about the inclusion and function of a CTR in the sermon. The literature informed the project director's understanding of the CTR.

Danny Akin, William J. Curtis, Stephen N. Rummage,  
*Engaging Exposition*

*Engaging Exposition* is a collaborative effort of Danny Akin, William Curtis, and Stephen Rummage to identify the essential elements of expository preaching. In addition, they establish foundational principles that lead to the faithful exposition of a text. The book encompasses more than a textbook style instruction on preaching. The authors detail the hermeneutics of sermon preparation and the important function they serve within the sermon development process. Practical details of a sermon are also addressed in the book, which include descriptions about the parts of a sermon as well as methods for constructing a sermon. Two of these sermon parts are the conclusion and the part of the conclusion characterized as the invitation.

Akin contributed the chapters about the sermon conclusion and invitation. He gives helpful advice for constructing a conclusion that achieves effectiveness and fulfills its function. However, he cautions, "A good preacher will not shortchange this vital

component of his message because of time constraints, fatigue, or laziness.”<sup>48</sup> Akin imparts helpful advice to the preacher, detailing specific concerns for the conclusion, such as the importance, purpose, and elements of a conclusion. The author concludes with practical information about developing a conclusion.

In the chapter about the invitation, Akin seeks to establish a biblical understanding and defense of public invitations. He begins with the reality that “Scripture is clear that it is right for us to invite men and women, boys and girls, to repent of sin, trust Christ, believe the gospel, be reconciled to God, and receive the free and gracious gift of salvation.”<sup>49</sup> He details criticisms regarding the modern invitation, as well as arguments surrounding the history of the modern invitation. He examines the issue with a balance of thought and offers strategies and methods for giving invitations. Akin clarifies the relationship between the conclusion and the invitation, and he details items that represent the CTR.

#### Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*

Bryan Chapell serves as the Senior Pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Peoria, IL. He served for eighteen years as the President and Chancellor of Covenant Theological Seminary in Saint Louis, MO. In addition, Chapell has authored several books and influenced many young preachers through his texts on preaching and his years as a professor of preaching.

In *Christ Centered Preaching*, Chapell perceives how a sermon’s Christ-centered focus unifies the sermon and points individuals toward redemption. The author focuses

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<sup>48</sup> Akin, Curtis and Rummage, *Engaging Exposition*, 198.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 207.

on the sermon's structure and development process, and he examines methods to clearly demonstrate the gospel from every passage in Scripture. Chapell advocates using a Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) to serve as the basis for preaching the gospel and calling individuals to Christ.<sup>50</sup> This FCF serves as the primary unifier for a sermon because it represents the foundation for a sermon's main idea. The FCF influences the development of the CTR since it calls individuals to respond to the fallen condition present in Scripture.

The author presents the definition and goal of the sermons ending. Through the book, Chapell expounds his understanding of a sermon's main point. Chappell describes the segments of the conclusion as the "recapitulation and exhortation."<sup>51</sup> Chappell suggests, "In a conclusion, a preacher exhorts people to act on the principles or concepts the sermon has already made clear."<sup>52</sup> He details how the preacher builds the sermon's intensity until the conclusion, where the preacher reaches the climax: "The last sixty seconds are typically the most dynamic moments in excellent sermons."<sup>53</sup> Chapell examines the vital role of the CTR in a sermon's overall purpose.

#### Roy Fish, *Coming to Jesus: Giving a Good Invitation*

From 1965 until 2012, Roy J. Fish was Professor of Evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He also served as an interim president for

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<sup>50</sup> Chapell, 50.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Chapell, 254.



the North American Mission Board. Steve Gaines notes that Fish's book represents "one of the best works regarding the public invitation ever to be written."<sup>54</sup>

In *Coming to Jesus*, Fish observes the biblical and historical justifications of the public invitation. He also goes beyond a philosophical understanding of the public invitation and observes the practical parts of extending an invitation and calling for a response. Fish notes, "The Bible itself is a virtual invitation for people to come to the Lord."<sup>55</sup> Fish argues that a biblical justification exists for extending a public invitation during the preaching event.

Fish's understanding and rationale of the invitation are helpful toward understanding the CTR. For Fish, the invitation represents more than just a physical relocation. His invitation involves responding to a specific application of the text. He maintains, "The good news is incomplete without an appeal to respond."<sup>56</sup> He also observes, "The gospel message is such that an invitation to respond is the logical outcome of its declaration. Though preaching is done in the indicative mood, that is, stating the facts about Jesus, the imperative mood, calling for response, is also present."<sup>57</sup> Fish also perceives many ways that the hearers are exhorted through a CTR in the sermon. In his book, Fish primarily addresses giving a public opportunity to respond at the end of the sermon. But in the process of expounding on the methods for exhortation, he also lays out the justification for a CTR as an essential element of the sermon.

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<sup>54</sup> Gaines, ix.

<sup>55</sup> Fish, 2.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>57</sup> Fish, 2.

Tim Keller, *Preaching*

Tim Keller is a New York Times best-selling author who has written many books. He is the founder and former Pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.

Keller retired in July of 2017. He currently serves as the Chairman of Redeemer City to City, which is a church planting effort to start churches in urban contexts.

Keller examines biblical exposition that connects with and allows individuals to understand the truth of the Gospel. Through this exposition, a preacher exhorts the hearers to respond by acknowledging their possible difficulties and questions. Keller accomplishes his task by giving specific feedback on the nature of preaching and a sermon's intended aim. Keller describes the essential role of gospel and Christ-centered preaching as the foundations of connecting with individuals for change. As he outlines the three levels of gospel ministry these levels demonstrate the need for practical, contextual application that resonates with the hearers.

In *Preaching*, Keller provides a manual for the underlying dynamics of developing a CTR. Throughout the entire sermon, the preacher should speak to the hearer's heart and call them to respond to the gospel. Keller writes, "Preaching must not simply tell stories or try to work on the emotions . . . preaching to the heart can change people right in their seats."<sup>58</sup> Keller gives insight into persuasion as a tactic that involves more than simply offering a segment of time for people to respond at the end of a sermon. He clarifies that the whole sermon functions to challenge the hearers to respond to Christ.

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<sup>58</sup> Keller, 165.

Wayne McDill, *The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*

Wayne McDill is a retired preaching professor and spent over 35 years as a pastor, denominational leader, and teacher. He has written books dealing with the subjects of evangelism and preaching. McDill retired in 2012.

In *The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*, McDill details skills that help an individual become a better preacher. McDill claims that preachers are not born great, but must develop their skills instead. McDill focuses on twelve skills that are essential to crafting expository sermons: getting the text in view, seeing what is there, asking the right questions, naming the textual idea, touching human needs, bridging from text to sermon, writing sermon divisions, planning sermon design, developing sermon ideas, exploring natural analogies, using words to draw pictures and tell stories, and preaching for faith.<sup>59</sup> In addition, he also details the importance of planning in good preaching.

McDill is explicit about the call to response in the sermon. He writes, “The response moves progressively from the mere understanding of the idea, to the picturing of the idea in concrete terms, to accepting the idea as credible and relevant, to intending to act on the idea personally.”<sup>60</sup> He details considerations that are important during planning. These considerations impact the response of the hearer, and include the principle that “explanation hopes for the simple response of understanding.”<sup>61</sup> McDill encourages the preacher to plan the sermon expecting the response he desires.

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<sup>59</sup> McDill, *vii*.

<sup>60</sup> McDill, 192.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*.

Tony Merida, *The Christ-centered Expositor*

Tony Merida is the Pastor of Imago Dei Church in Raleigh North Carolina. Merida formerly served as Associate Professor of Preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. The *Christ-centered Expositor* is a textbook that includes important skills necessary in developing expository sermons.

Merida specifies the hermeneutical aspects of preaching, and he also examines the character of the preacher and his preparation. Merida gives practical insight into the parts of the preaching delivery process. He is clear about the principle of a sermon's conclusion including a summation and a call for response. These elements are described separately, and the importance of each is emphasized.

Through his process, Merida offers a helpful guide for developing a faithful CTR. Using a process that mirrors Brian Chapell's plan, Merida encourages the development of a sermon's main point, then establishing a redemptive main point that informs the sermon's unity. Once this redemptive point has been established, it serves as the basis for the body of the sermon and conclusion. The CTR becomes plain as the redemptive main point is expounded. In the end, the CTR should call the hearers to respond to the redemptive, main point.

John Stott, *Between Two Worlds*

John Stott was a pastor of All Souls Church in Langham Place, London. In *Between Two Worlds*, Stott describes the difficult task of preaching in a post-modern context. The rejection of truth by the post-modern generation makes it difficult to establish Scripture as an authority. Stott establishes the need to continue viewing Scripture as the starting

place for a sermon, even in a world abandoning truth. At certain points in the book, he clearly describes the task of the preacher at the end of a sermon. He compares the preacher's effort to trying to land a plane. Here, he mentions the need for the conclusion to be more than a recapitulation of the ideas already presented. Stott encourages the preacher include a specific application that demands a response from the hearer.

Stott describes the classical understanding of public speaking and the role of persuasion. He writes, "Augustine quoted Cicero's dictum and applied it to the responsibility of Christian preachers to teach the mind, delight or inspire the affections and move the will."<sup>62</sup> Stott described this effort as "storming the citadel of the will, and capturing it for Jesus Christ."<sup>63</sup> In *Between Two Worlds*, Stott clearly describes the purpose of the call to response and the function it plays in the sermon.

#### Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*

Jerry Vines is a retired Pastor, having pastored for over sixty years, spending 28 years as the Pastor of First Baptist Church Jacksonville Fl. Jim Shaddix holds the W.A. Criswell chair of Expository Preaching and is the Director of the Center for Preaching and Pastoral Leadership at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. *Power in the Pulpit* is a preaching textbook that details all of the necessary skills in developing and preaching the sermon. Vines and Shaddix give specific feedback on the practical parts of sermon preparation. These parts of preparation include developing the central idea of the text and using the priority of Scripture for the basis of the sermon.

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<sup>62</sup> Stott, 246.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 248.

The book's value concerning the CTR lies in the discussions of the sermon conclusion, or "summation," as defined by Vines and Shaddix. A clear definition of the task is given in their chapter dealing with the conclusion. Vines and Shaddix give specific instruction for building the sermon. Within this chapter are segments on the summation and invitation. Both the summation and the invitation make up the sermon's conclusion. They call the invitation the preacher's "call for action."<sup>64</sup> However, Vines and Shaddix caution, "Contemporary invitations must be cohesive with the sermons that precede them. Expressions of response called for at the close of some preaching events have become so routine that they often have absolutely no relationship to the message that has been preached."<sup>65</sup> These truths support the idea of a CTR in the sermon, which is not necessarily equivalent to a call for people to move after the sermon. They write,

Proclaiming God's truth implies a call for decision, and proclaimers of the biblical text must call upon listeners to act upon the preached word. Whether or not persons are asked to respond with some immediate, public indication of their decision every time preaching occurs is a different matter. In fact, the only determinant of whether or not a person truly acts upon the message is the changed life he or she lives long after the preaching event is over.<sup>66</sup>

In *Power in the Pulpit*, Vines and Shaddix provide valuable insight into the nature of the CTR as well as developing the CTR.

### **Methodology**

Upon establishing an understanding of the CTR, a methodology for faithfully incorporating one must be established. Applying Chapell's Fallen Condition Focus, and a commitment to Christ-centered preaching, establishes safeguards for avoiding common

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<sup>64</sup> Vines and Shaddix, 210.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>66</sup> Vines and Shaddix, 212.

pitfalls with the CTR. These safeguards also ensure that the CTR maintains consistency with the rest of the sermon.

### The Fallen Condition Focus and the CTR

Chapell defines the Fallen Condition Focus as “the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God’s people to glorify and enjoy him.”<sup>67</sup> Chapell uses the FCF to unify each element of the sermon around a main point. He notes, “Ultimately, a sermon is about how a text says we are to respond biblically to the FCF as it is experienced in our lives.”<sup>68</sup> Through the CTR, the preacher persuades the hearer based upon the Fallen Condition Focus and the content of the sermon. Chapell explains this idea: “The conclusion drives the matter home, marshalling the forces of heart and mind for a final exhortation that calls listeners to respond to their fallen condition with the biblical guidance that the sermon has disclosed.”<sup>69</sup> The Fallen Condition Focus represents an essential starting place for a faithful CTR.

Chapell’s FCF mirrors the instruction of others. Merida identifies a similar component to the FCF that he calls a redemptive main point of the Sermon. He notes, “By considering ‘the mutual human condition’ of the original audience and your audience, you will be able to state a redemptive solution that adequately reflects the text and ensures the Christ-Centeredness of your sermon.”<sup>70</sup> Akin argues for essentially the same process although using different terms: “State your application in the form of a

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<sup>67</sup> Chapell, 50.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>69</sup> Chapell, 272.

<sup>70</sup> Merida, 157.

universal principle. Look for what is true anywhere, anyplace, anytime, and under any circumstances. There is an ultimate principle to remember: the solution to any problem is a person and his name is Jesus.”<sup>71</sup> Each of these truths reflect Chapell’s process and informs the development of the CTR. A faithful CTR emerges from a focus on Chapell’s principles.

### Christ-centered Preaching and the CTR

Another safeguard for a faithful CTR is that the sermon be Christ-centered. Akin connects Christ-centered preaching to the CTR writing, “Good invitations recognize faithful biblical preaching, which is guided by a Christocentric hermeneutic, and plays a key role in calling people to trust and follow Christ.”<sup>72</sup> Christ-centered preaching guards the preacher against delivering a CTR that is disconnected from the biblical text and the rest of a sermon.

Chapell warns of the danger of formulating sermons without this Christ-centered safeguard. This principle has implications for the development of the CTR. Chapell writes, “A textually accurate discussion of biblical commands does not guarantee Christian orthodoxy. Exhortations for moral behavior apart from the work of the Savior degenerate into mere Pharisaism, even if preachers advocate the actions with selected biblical evidence and good intent.”<sup>73</sup> A focus on Jesus allows the sermon to maintain a redemptive element. Stott also warns of the danger of preaching without a central focus or dominant thought for the sermon. He wrote, “What I am asserting, however, is that

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<sup>71</sup> Daniel L. Akin, “Applying a Text-Driven Sermon,” In *Text Driven Preaching*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Matthews (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 284.

<sup>72</sup> Akin, Curtis, Rummage, *Engaging Exposition*, 217.

<sup>73</sup> Chapell, 274.



every text has an overriding thrust. We need the integrity to discern this and to resist the temptation to give the text a twist or stress of our own.”<sup>74</sup> Preaching Christ-centered sermons safeguards the preacher from these pitfalls.

Through a Christ-centered focus, the preacher also safeguards the CTR. Merida mentions, “Ultimately, the purpose of Christ-exalting exposition is to see Christ formed in his people for the glory of God.”<sup>75</sup> Through this truth, Chapell acknowledges that the sermon’s ultimate focus involves moving people to respond. Using this focus, a preacher impacts the hearer by the Christ-centered nature of a sermon. Keller reinforces this idea by encouraging Christ-centered preaching: “The key to preaching the gospel every time is preaching Christ every time and the key to that is to find how your particular text fits into the full canonical context and participates as a chapter in the great narrative arc of the Bible, which is how God saves us and renews the world through the salvation by free grace in his son, Jesus Christ.”<sup>76</sup> Keller demonstrates that all of Scripture has a redemptive aim, and recognizing a redemptive aim ensures a faithful CTR.

### **Conclusion**

A faithful CTR is essential to a sermon as it embodies a biblically and historically justified, persuasive sermon element. Stott demonstrates the purpose of the CTR writing, “The New Testament writers make it plain that ‘truth’ brings with it moral demands: it is to be ‘done’ not merely heard, to be obeyed not merely believed. For Jesus had said to them, ‘if you know these things blessed are you if you do them’. (John 13:17) James

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<sup>74</sup> Stott, 224.

<sup>75</sup> Merida, 57.

<sup>76</sup> Keller, 70.

expressed the same necessity when he urged his hearers to be ‘doers of the word, and not hearers only’. (Jas. 1:22—25).”<sup>77</sup> The CTR represents a faithful effort by the preacher to challenge the sermon’s hearers. Through the CTR, the preacher aims to challenge his hearers to be doers of the word.

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<sup>77</sup> Stott, 247.

## CHAPTER 4 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project was focused on improving the call to response in the preaching of the Senior Pastor at Calvary Baptist Church (CBC) in Tupelo. The project director researched the topic, developed a methodology and rubric to measure progress, then implemented the findings by creating a series of sermons. The project director then combined and analyzed the information to determine whether the ministry project fulfilled the intended design.

The basis for the project emerged from the project director's own perception regarding the competence of his preparation and implementation of a CTR. The project director noticed that he spent a great deal of time working on the introduction and body of a sermon, but he gave little attention to the conclusion. As the project director began to study, he determined that the sermon conclusion and CTR represented an area of struggle for a preacher. He also recognized the need for a method to help develop a CTR that maintained consistency with the sermon's main idea. Based on these perceptions, the project director focused on a ministry skill enhancement.

The setting for the ministry project was CBC of Tupelo, MS. The project director began serving as the Senior Pastor at CBC in July of 2016. The Senior Pastor serves as the primary Sunday morning preacher. As the primary individual responsible for leading and planning the services, the project director determined the schedule of implementation for the project according to his own timeline.

### **Research Period**

The project director used several steps to complete the project. The first step involved surveying and researching the CTR, beginning with scripture. Through study, the project director identified the biblical presence and validity of the CTR. Three passages, Acts 2:37–41, Acts 17:30–31, and Matt 7:13–27, were used to demonstrate the presence of a CTR in the preaching of Jesus, Paul, and Peter. The project director expanded the research from scripture to homiletical resources including books and journals. Surveying the resources informed the development of a literary review.

The project director's second step centered on developing a strategy for incorporating the CTR into a sermon. Through the literature review, the project director identified that a Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) would aid in developing a CTR that maintained consistency with the main idea of the sermon. He also perceived that preaching a Christ-centered sermon would allow for the development of a biblically faithful CTR. The project director began incorporating these two elements into his sermons during the ministry project implementation. The project director found a method for developing a CTR through these functional elements.

In step three, the project director developed a sermon feedback form to test the inclusion of an FCF (Christ-centered Focus) and an effective CTR. This step involved recruiting an expert panel to evaluate the sermon feedback form. The expert panel offered suggestions and feedback. The project director recruited a group of CBC members to evaluate two of the project director's past sermons using the sermon feedback form.

In the fourth step, the project director developed a sermon series using the lessons gleaned from the literary review and strategy.<sup>1</sup> This step included preaching the sermon series to the congregation. The project director recruited a group of congregation members to evaluate the sermon series for effectiveness and improvement using the CTR. The evaluation panel also evaluated two past sermons using the sermon feedback form.

The final step was receiving all of the feedback from the sermon evaluation panel. The evaluators returned their sermon evaluation forms to the project director's office. The project director compiled all of the feedback and developed a conclusion on the results of the ministry project.

### **Development of Measurement Tools**

The project director developed measurement tools to gauge his improvement regarding incorporating a CTR into the sermon. First, he developed a sermon feedback form to gauge the use of a CTR and rate the effectiveness. He used an expert panel to evaluate the feedback form. After adjusting the sermon feedback form based on the expert review, the project director recruited a sermon feedback panel from the membership of CBC Tupelo. The sermon feedback form, the expert panel, and the sermon feedback panel all helped the project director gauge his improvement.

#### **Sermon Feedback Form**

The project director's sermon feedback form represented a central part of the ministry project.<sup>2</sup> He used several resources to research the evaluation form. These resources

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A.

included books and sermon feedback forms the project director used during seminars. These books include Chapell's *Christ Centered Preaching*, and Merida's *The Christ Centered Expositor*.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the project director used other sources not cited in the ministry project report. These sources include James W. Cox's, "Evaluating the Sermon," in the *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, and Richard Ramesh's, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons*.<sup>4</sup> The project director also consulted a sermon feedback form from Jim Shaddix's Engaging Exposition seminar class notes.<sup>5</sup> These resources aided in the development of the project director's sermon feedback form.

The project director decided to use a seven point Likert scale to gauge the quantitative data from the evaluation of the sermon. Gerard Guthrie describes a Likert scale as "a common form of scaled response that asks interviewees to respond to a statement by choosing the answer that best corresponds to their viewpoint."<sup>6</sup> The project director also decided to use strategic questions pertaining to the functional elements of a FCF and a CTR. These questions provided a qualitative measurement tool as a part of the sermon feedback form. The sermon feedback form-allowed the project director to analyze a connection between the FCF and the CTR. While the sermon feedback form allowed the project director to analyze the presence of a FCF and CTR, the form also asked for general feedback involving other aspects of the sermon as well. The project director focused on the segments specifically pertaining to the FCF and CTR.

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<sup>3</sup> These books were referenced previously in the ministry project report.

<sup>4</sup> James W. Cox, "Evaluating the Sermon," *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, ed. Michael Diduit (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 144; Richard Ramesh, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 251.

<sup>5</sup> Jim Shaddix, "Engaging Exposition," Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, (Wake Forest August 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Gerard Guthrie, *Basic Research Methods: An entry into Social Science Research* (New Delhi: Sage, 2010), 133.

### Expert Panel

The project director enlisted an expert panel to evaluate the sermon feedback form. The project director used email correspondence to contact possible evaluators. Once they agreed to participate, they received the project director's sermon feedback form along with a brief sketch of the methodology gleaned from the research and literary review. The experts evaluated the form and gave insight for improvements. The project director heeded the suggestions to improve the form. Suggested changes included a separate segment to identify the sermons main thrust, as well as to improve the language of some of the feedback criteria. One aspect of feedback received by the project director involved the language used for the individual segments of the feedback form. As a result, the project director modified the language to maintain consistency in each individual segment. Another suggestion involved clear instruction for the sermon feedback panel regarding the ways persuasion can be used in a sermon. The fear was that this item involved a high level of subjectivity. The project director determined to address the item in a training session for the sermon feedback panel.

The four experts recruited for the panel included Jim Shaddix, Bo Rice, Steven Smith, and Sam Greer. Dr. Jim Shaddix holds the W.A. Criswell chair of Expository Preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He also serves as Director of the Center for Preaching and Pastoral Leadership. He has written several books on preaching, including *Power in the Pulpit* along with Jerry Vines, *Progress in the Pulpit* with Jerry Vines, and the *Passion Driven Sermon*. Dr. Bo Rice works as the Associate Dean of Supervised Ministry and Mentoring Programs and Associate Professor of Evangelism and Preaching at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Steven

Smith serves as Senior Pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Arkansas. Smith has written two books on preaching: *Dying to Preach* and *Recapturing the Voice of God*. Dr. Sam Greer serves as the Senior Pastor of Red Bank Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He recently wrote *The Gospel Conversation*. Greer began serving as a pastor in 2004. Each expert provided gracious feedback regarding the project director's sermon feedback form.

### Sermon Feedback Panel

The project director enlisted a sermon feedback panel to evaluate his sermons. These individuals actively serve as members of CBC. The panel participants were selected based on the ability to provide critique regarding the sermons developed for the project. Each participant possesses experience in their job fields, and they offered critical thinking and evaluation.

The project director began the process of enlisting the sermon feedback panel by developing a research profile and completing the Assessment of Risk to Human Subjects in Research form.<sup>7</sup> The assessment form and sermon feedback form were submitted to the seminary Research Ethics Committee. The project director recruited six individuals to offer feedback. In order to gauge the possibility of their participation and ability to provide effective feedback, the project director began to interact with individuals through conversation. After receiving ethics committee approval, the project director proceeded with enlisting the individuals he believed could give the needed feedback. He then distributed the feedback form and instructions to the sermon panel.

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix D.



The feedback panel consisted of six members before the start of the project. The project director designed a website for interacting with the sermon feedback panel. Through the website, the project director provided the panel with training. He developed a session that defined the CTR, explained the FCF, and gave insight into the use of the sermon feedback form. In addition, the project director provided examples of the use of persuasion in a sermon. Using the website, the project director also provided the panel with practical tools to aid them. Practical items posted on the website included a sample evaluation form and instructions for the course of the project implementation. The participants also received encouragement to interact with the project director regarding their questions. A contact form on the website provided a means of communicating with the project director throughout the course of the project implementation.

The panel received a packet on the first Sunday of the project implementation. Each packet received marking with a distinct color and corresponding sermon feedback forms were placed inside. In addition to the feedback forms, the project director included an Agreement to Participate form in the packet. The panel participants picked a packet of their choice without the knowledge of the project director. This step provided a level of anonymity for the panel. The panel returned their forms to the Senior Pastor's mailbox. Using the mailbox allowed the panel to return their forms anonymously. At no time did the project director personally distribute or receive forms from the feedback panel.

The panel included six individuals with varied backgrounds. Each person on the panel maintained active status as members of CBC. The first member was a sixty-year-old male, who previously served in Ministry. He holds a Ph.D. in agriculture and currently serves as a chaplain for a local hospice agency. The second member was a

sixty-five-year-old male who works as the director of benefits for Mississippi Senator Roger Wicker. The third member was a seventy-three-year-old Female. She retired as an English professor. She holds a Ph.D. in English. The fourth member was a thirty-six-year-old male. He works as an architect for a regional architectural firm. The fifth member was a fifty-six-year-old male. He works as an attorney and handles inheritance law for a national law firm. A sixth, female, member who agreed to participate contacted the project chair during implementation and informed him that she would have to withdraw from the panel.

The project director asked the feedback panel to evaluate six sermons. The panel evaluated two sermons preached by the project director before researching and studying the project. Additionally, the project director prepared four sermons using the methodology developed through the project. The two previous sermons were offered through the internet on the project director's website. The four sermons preached in January 2018 were offered live and through the internet on the Calvary Baptist Church Website.

### **Ministry Project Implementation**

The project director began implementing the project on January 7, 2018. The project implementation phase lasted four Sundays of the month of January, 2018. The project director preached a sermon series titled *Cornerstone*, which examined the text of 2 Pet. The project director preached the introductory sermon of the series from Matt 21:42–46. He titled the message “How Firm a Foundation.” This sermon was preached on January 7, 2018. The second sermon used 2 Pet 1:1–15. The project director titled this sermon

“Living Without Masks.” Sermon two was preached on January 14, 2018. The third sermon in the series used 2 Pet 1:16–2; 1–22. The project director preached this sermon on January 21, 2018. This sermon was titled “Fact versus Fiction.” The project director preached the final sermon in the series from 2 Pet 3. He titled the sermon, “Hope for Tomorrow, Strength for Today.” The sermon series examined the implications of Jesus being the foundation for all of life.

The sermon evaluation panel also evaluated two of the project director’s previous sermons. The project director preached the first sermon in January of 2014 at Mount Zion Baptist Church in Brookhaven, MS. He titled the sermon, “The Source of Contention,” and preached from Jam 4:1–10. The project director provided the sermon to the feedback panel using recorded audio available on his website. The second sermon was preached in January of 2017 at CBC. The project director titled this sermon, “Justified.” He preached the from 1Cor 6:9–11. This sermon was offered through the CBC website using a video recording of the sermon. The panel evaluated these sermons using the sermon feedback form, and they submitted the evaluations to the project director.

The project director began incorporating what he learned from his research during the preparation of his sermons. He focused on developing an FCF for each sermon. The project director connected the FCF to the main thrust of the sermon and developed a CTR using the FCF as a guide. The project director used the FCF as an aid to establish the basis for the entire sermon, specifically a CTR.

The ministry project implementation ended on the final Sunday of January, 2018. The project director waited for the sermon panel to submit their feedback. Then, the

project director compiled the information. This information allowed the project director to determine the effectiveness of the skill enhancement.

### **Conclusion**

The project director perceived a need to improve the CTR in his preaching. Through research, recognition of a methodology, and a means of testing, the project director sought to enhance his skills in ministry. The project director accomplished his objective of increasing his knowledge related to the CTR. Through examination of the gathered data, the project director determined whether he improved his skill.

## CHAPTER 5 PROJECT ANALYSIS

### **Introduction**

The project director aimed to enhance the call to response (CTR) in his own preaching. He determined to research the CTR and develop a method for consistently including a CTR in his sermons. Using this method, he prepared and preached a series of sermons. The project director also developed a sermon feedback form, and he appointed a sermon feedback panel to evaluate the sermons regarding the CTR. The project director grew in his knowledge and skill related to the sermon's CTR.

### **Summary of Results**

In order to accomplish the desired improvement, the project director focused on a ministry skill enhancement. He proposed two objectives to aid in the process of the enhancement. He proposed to increase his knowledge and skill related to the implementation of a CTR.

#### Increase Knowledge

The project director desired to increase his knowledge of the CTR. He implemented a plan to research the topic using books, journals, and other resources. The knowledge gained from his research gave him a better grasp of how to improve his skill. Through the research, the project director learned about the functional elements of a CTR, and the increased knowledge allowed him to develop a method for incorporating a CTR into a

sermon. Through these means, the director fulfilled the objective of increasing his knowledge.

#### Increase Skill at Incorporating the CTR

The project director also aimed to increase his skill related to using a CTR in his preaching. He increased his skill through the implementation of the knowledge he gained and the methodology that he developed. The project director's methodology involved incorporating an FCF into the sermon and using a Christ-centered focus for the sermon. Using these functional elements, the project director increased his skill at incorporating a CTR into the sermon.

The project director utilized quantitative and qualitative data that he gleaned from the sermon feedback forms.<sup>1</sup> This data allowed him to measure the objectives outlined in the project proposal. The project director utilized a sermon feedback form with a 7-point Likert scale to provide the quantitative data. The data also informed the project director's overall determination regarding his ministry skill enhancement. The director used targeted questions to evaluate the qualitative data.<sup>2</sup> This qualitative data offered further insight into the project director's improvement.

**Table 5.1 Summary of Quantitative Data**

Sermon	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2017	Jan. 7, 2018	Jan. 14, 2018	Jan. 21, 2018	Jan. 28, 2018
The sermon incited interest.	4.8	5.2	5.4	5.4	5.6	6.2
The preacher shared a fallen condition applicable to your life today.	4.8	5	6.6	5.6	6	5.6
This fallen condition was articulated clearly.	5	5.4	6.6	5.4	5.4	5.4
The sermon communicated what this biblical text of scripture is about.	5.8	5.6	6.4	5.6	6.6	6.2

<sup>1</sup> The quantitative data is calculated using the overall mean score for each category.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B.

These points were demonstrated in the text of scripture.	6.2	5.4	6	5.6	6.4	6.2
Points were explained thoroughly.	6	5.6	6	5.4	6.2	6.4
Illustrations supported the claims of the main points.	5.8	5.4	5	5.2	6	6.2
Application was relevant to the main points.	5.8	5.8	6	5.6	6.2	6.2
The preacher summarized the content of the sermon clearly.	5	5.8	5.8	5.8	6	6.4
The summation lead to a clear call for response.	5.4	6.2	6	5.8	6	6.2
The preacher was clear on how the hearers should respond.	5.4	6.2	5.8	6	6.4	6
The preacher used persuasion effectively.	5.4	5.4	5.6	5.4	6.2	6.2
The persuasion was relevant to the rest of the sermon.	5.4	5.4	5.8	5.6	6.6	6.2
The response called for was related to the fallen condition in the sermon intro.	4.6	6	6.6	5.8	6.4	6
The sermon pointed the hearers to Jesus using the passage.	6.4	6.4	6.8	6.2	6.6	6.8
The sermon exalted Jesus using the passage.	6.6	6.4	7	6.6	6.8	6.8

Through the overall results of the quantitative data, the project director gained insight into his progress. By examining Table 5.1 (above), the project director was able to note the improvements he made. From the January 2014 sermon to the last sermon of the project implementation on January 28, 2018, the project director demonstrated improvement in every quantitative item except one. In the item regarding the demonstration of the sermons points in the text of scripture, the project director's score remained the same from the first sermon to the last. The second sermon preached in 2017 showed improvement because the project director was halfway through the DMIN program, and he was already interacting with some of the material in anticipation of the ministry project.

The feedback items of most interest to the project director included those that specifically included the FCF and the CTR. The project director demonstrated a level of

improvement in all areas. In some areas, the project director demonstrated minor improvement, but in others, significant improvement emerged.

**Table 5.2 Applicable FCF**

Sermon Feedback Question	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2017	Jan. 7, 2018	Jan. 14, 2018	Jan. 21, 2018	Jan. 28, 2018
The preacher shared a fallen condition applicable to your life today.	4.8	5	6.6	5.6	6	5.6

The project director sought feedback concerning the inclusion and recognition of the FCF in the sermon. Through this item, the project director asked the feedback panel to rate whether the preacher shared a fallen condition applicable to their life. The project director demonstrated improvement between the old sermons and those developed for the ministry project. His scores for the sermon series demonstrate improvement over the previous sermons. The improvement resulted from the project director's intentional focus on identifying the FCF from scripture, and then explicitly stating that fallen condition in the sermon.

In the sermons prior to the project, the project director did not explicitly state an FCF. The feedback panel still noted the presence of this element in the sermon. The project director acknowledged that the presence of this element emerged from a fallen condition's presence in the text of scripture. The panel perceived this in both of the previous sermons.

**Table 5.3 Clear FCF**

Sermon Feedback Question	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2017	Jan. 7, 2018	Jan. 14, 2018	Jan. 21, 2018	Jan. 28, 2018
This fallen condition was articulated clearly.	5	5.4	6.6	5.4	5.4	5.4

The project director also acquired feedback concerning the clear articulation of the FCF. While the project director improved, he recognized that cultivation of this



aspect of the sermon should continue. The data shows only one sermon with significant improvement over the old sermons. In the sermons preached during project implementation, the FCF was explicitly shared during the introduction. The project director must work to clearly state the FCF in future sermons.

The project director asked each of the sermon feedback panel participants to write what they perceived as the FCF. Through this qualitative data, the project director noticed a positive effect regarding the FCF. The feedback panel's answers to the 2014 and 2017 sermon feedback questions were inconsistent and vague. While the quantitative data outlined in Table 5.3 shows little variance between the articulation of the FCF in the sermons, a noticeable impact is demonstrated through the qualitative data. The sermons preached for the project implementation, which included an intentionally articulated FCF, demonstrated a change in the feedback. The FCF, articulated by each member of the sermon panel, became consistent and was recounted with more specificity. As a result of this data, the project director noticed the effect of including and articulating an FCF for the sermon. The project director recognized this item as an improvement of his skill regarding an aspect of the ministry project.

The conclusion of the sermon included the section where the CTR would be incorporated. The project director used several items to help him gauge the effective use of the conclusion. These items also tested the connection of the CTR with the FCF outlined in the introduction.

**Table 5.4 Clear Recapitulation**

Sermon Feedback Question	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2017	Jan. 7, 2018	Jan. 14, 2018	Jan. 21, 2018	Jan. 28, 2018
The preacher summarized the content of the sermon clearly.	5	5.8	5.8	5.8	6	6.4

The project director sought feedback regarding the summarization of the sermon. Through this feedback, the project director measured whether he summarized content clearly. In the ministry project report, the project director outlined two aspects of a sermon conclusion. Using the feedback form, the project director measured the presence of the recapitulation, or summation, of the conclusion. The project director demonstrated significant improvement from the oldest sermon to the last sermon in the project implementation. The increase from each sermon to the next gave insight into the project director's increased skill as the ministry project progressed.

**Table 5.5 Clear CTR**

Sermon Feedback Question	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2017	Jan. 7, 2018	Jan. 14, 2018	Jan. 21, 2018	Jan. 28, 2018
The summation lead to a clear call for response.	5.4	6.2	6	5.8	6	6.2

The project director also desired to receive information related to the CTR. This item of feedback was the project director's focus of enhancement for the ministry project. He asked whether the summation lead to a clear CTR, and the project director showed improvement in this area.

The project director received the same score for the January 2017 sermon as the final sermon he preached during implementation. The project director also received a higher score for the January 2017 sermon than the others in the project implementation. The sermons preached in 2018 demonstrate the project director beginning to develop a measure of consistency at incorporating a CTR into the sermon.

**Table 5.6 Correlation between CTR and FCF**

Sermon Feedback Question	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2017	Jan. 7, 2018	Jan. 14, 2018	Jan. 21, 2018	Jan. 28, 2018
The response called for was related to the fallen condition in the sermon intro.	4.6	6	6.6	5.8	6.4	6

The project director recognized a connection between the FCF and the CTR. He endeavored to evaluate his effectiveness at relating these two functional elements to one another. The director asked the feedback panel to rate whether the CTR related to the FCF. The project director showed improvement from the 2014 sermon. Inconsistencies marked the sermons preached during implementation. The project director perceived that these inconsistencies emerged as a result of the new process. Overall, the project director demonstrated measurable improvement according to the data received.

**Table 5.7 Specific Instruction in the CTR**

Sermon Feedback Question	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2017	Jan. 7, 2018	Jan. 14, 2018	Jan. 21, 2018	Jan. 28, 2018
The preacher was clear on how the hearers should respond	5.4	6.2	5.8	6	6.4	6

The project director also determined the need for clarity when delivering the CTR. He sought feedback from the sermon feedback panel regarding this clarity. Through the data received, the project director noted improvement from the 2014 sermon to the recent sermons. However, the project director recognized the need for more improvement in this area.

The project director also sought qualitative data regarding how each member of the sermon panel responded to the sermon. Using this data, the project director noticed the impact on the sermon panel. In the sermons from 2014 and 2017, the articulation of how the panel responded was varied and inconsistent. The feedback regarding the sermons preached by the project director during the ministry project demonstrated consistency in the way the panel responded. The project director recognized this reality as the result of his effort to improve the CTR.

**Table 5.8 Persuasion in the CTR**

Sermon Feedback Question	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2017	Jan. 7, 2018	Jan. 14, 2018	Jan. 21, 2018	Jan. 28, 2018
The preacher used persuasion effectively.	5.4	5.4	5.6	5.4	6.2	6.2
The persuasion was relevant to the rest of the sermon.	5.4	5.4	5.8	5.6	6.6	6.2

The project director perceived the importance of persuasion at the outset of the project. He sought to measure the use of persuasion in his sermons through the sermon feedback panel. The director sought out feedback on two aspects of persuasion: the first aspect regarded effectiveness. The project director demonstrated a considerable increase in persuasion over the final two sermons. He perceived this increase as the result of developing competence as the ministry project progressed.

The project director also recognized the possibility of abuses related to persuasion in the CTR. Due to this truth, the project director sought to ensure that any persuasion used in the sermon was relevant to what was presented in the rest of the sermon. The project director demonstrated improvement in the new sermons compared to the old ones. Over the final two weeks the feedback considering persuasion improved. The higher numbers came as the result of the project director's improvement regarding the incorporation of a CTR.

**Table 5.9 Christ-centered focus**

Sermon Feedback Question	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2017	Jan. 7, 2018	Jan. 14, 2018	Jan. 21, 2018	Jan. 28, 2018
The sermon pointed the hearers to Jesus using the passage.	6.4	6.4	6.8	6.2	6.6	6.8
The sermon exalted Jesus using the passage.	6.6	6.4	7	6.6	6.8	6.8

The project director recognized the importance of incorporating a Christ-centered focus in a sermon. Through this aspect of the sermon, the preacher establishes a guard to ensure a faithful CTR. The 2014 and 2017 sermons both demonstrated a high mark

concerning this aspect of the sermon. Even with the high marks in the older sermons, the project director demonstrated improvement in the sermons preached for the project.

### **Strengths**

The project director recognized that the Christ-centered aspect of his preaching represented a strength. The director marked higher on items dealing with the Christ-centeredness of a sermon. He began high, according to table 5.1, with a 6.4 and 6.6 on both of the items for the January 2014 sermon. While the project director's scores varied slightly, he maintained consistency at incorporating this aspect of the sermon.

### **Weaknesses**

An item of weakness the project director recognized was the articulation of the FCF in a sermon. The project director did not show improvement according to Table 5.3. The January 7, 2018 sermon demonstrated a rise in the score to 6.6, but the project director regressed on the final three sermons. As noted earlier, the project director must continue to improve at the articulation of the FCF. He feels that this area will improve as he continues to spend time cultivating this aspect of the sermon.

### **Evaluation of the Project Process**

Using the expert panel was a positive experience for the project director, which allowed him to learn. Interacting with the expert panel required the project director to critically evaluate his work in developing the sermon feedback form. This interaction caused him to continue to evaluate the form and improve upon specific aspects.

The project director also recognized the interaction with the sermon feedback panel to be a positive experience. This interaction allowed him to understand the lenses through which parts of his congregation view the sermon. The experience improved the project director in more areas than just the ministry project.

More information and description was needed related to the fallen condition. The project director felt that after review, the question about whether the FCF was applicable to everyday life was too subjective. The general aspect of the FCF was a fallen condition that all people share, but the panelists may not have realized at the outset that they were affected by this fallen condition. The language could be amended to take away some subjectivity.

The project director realized that more reviews of older sermons would have offered a better evaluation of the skill enhancement. The project director gained insight using one sermon preached before the start of the Doctor of Ministry degree, but multiple sermons would have allowed more analysis beneficial to the ministry project.

The project director believed that receiving each feedback form, within the days after the preaching the sermon, would allow him better opportunity for improvement. During the course of the project, two of the members of the sermon feedback panel provided their evaluations the week after. The project director benefitted from receiving these evaluation forms during the ministry project implementation. He used the feedback he received to concentrate on areas of improvement.

### **Lessons Learned**

The project director learned several lessons throughout the course of the ministry project. These lessons related specifically to the ministry project, and those that related to his preaching in general. The project director will benefit from the lessons learned for the duration of his ministry.

The project director realized that an effective and faithful CTR emerges as the result of a cohesive and well-designed sermon. Through his research, the project director arrived at the knowledge that other elements affected the development of the CTR. He discovered a connection between the FCF and CTR. He also noticed the connection of Christ-centered preaching to the CTR. The project director recognized that his weakness regarding the CTR emerged as the result of his lack of skill relating to knowledge of a methodology for incorporating a CTR.

The project director also learned a lesson that impacted his preaching in general. The process of enlisting and receiving feedback was valuable. The project director gained an appreciation of the perspective his congregation can bring to his preaching. He benefitted from the insights of the sermon feedback panel. Through the process, the project director determined to regularly solicit feedback from the congregation. This feedback will allow the project director to maintain self-awareness regarding items for improvement in his preaching.

### **Suggestions for Further Implementation**

Making suggestions for further implementation, the project director will continue to develop the process of connecting an FCF to the CTR. He demonstrated improvement at

using these functional elements, but he is still in need of improvement. An extended period of evaluation should demonstrate more improvement at developing and implementing the functional elements. After four weeks, the project director began to develop competence at using the methodology that he developed through his research. An extended period of time would have afforded more insight into the improvement of the project director's preaching.

### **Reflection**

I grew in several areas as a result of the ministry project. I personally grew in my own skill and competence, and in my understanding of how a sermon is constructed. I also grew in my understanding of my ministry and my ministry context. Through the ministry project, I also learned about myself. These areas of growth enhanced my entire pastoral ministry.

I also grew in my skill and competence at preaching. My investigation of the CTR lead me to realize the implications for the entire sermon. I recognized that the CTR is affected by many other sermon elements. This recognition allowed me to improve my knowledge and investigate the elements that emerged as most important regarding the CTR. Through this understanding, I noticed the connection of the FCF to the CTR, and the impact of Christ-centered preaching on the CTR. Studying these elements enhanced my knowledge, which enhanced my skill.

One area of growth concerned the reality that well-structured sermons do not just happen. I recognized that areas of impact in a sermon develop as a result of a consistent process that is prayerfully and skillfully incorporated into the process of sermon



planning. This revelation changed my preaching, and it will change my ministry. Before the project, I struggled with being specific about how the congregation should respond to the sermon. Through the ministry project, I was reminded that the Holy Spirit can generate a response from a sermon, which can happen without intentionality on my part. However, I realized the beauty of the Holy Spirit arresting hearts through an intentional CTR that I articulated based on the FCF of the text. This FCF, recognized by the entire sermon feedback panel, caused the panel to recognize implications of the specific FCF for their lives. Ultimately this process allowed me to fulfill the overall objective of the project. Indefinitely, this process will allow me to be a better preacher and pastor.

I gained new insights into ministry through researching and implementing the project. The project taught me much about my preaching. One item received in the feedback regarded the nature of my sermons, which described my sermons as tedious. The accompanying explanation stated that there was too much academia and less focus on the practical application. This feedback reminded me of the need to stay close to my congregation. Knowing their needs and items of struggle will inform me of the areas to focus more teaching. This knowledge will also allow me to know where I need to make more application with the congregation. For some, the academic element is important, and they want to learn about the passage. The takeaway for me as a pastor involves providing the application needed for a member of the congregation to leave the worship service knowing how to live the principles of the sermon. This application will mark an improvement for my preaching holistically.

Another area of ministry that I better understood, as a result of the ministry project, regards the FCF. A preacher should give a clear focus on the fallen condition.

Through the implementation of the FCF, I found the items of application for the sermon becoming more consistent, and easier to derive. The FCF allowed me to develop a CTR that was evident through the entire sermon.

I learned about my ministry context through the ministry project process. Recruiting a feedback panel to evaluate my sermons offered an opportunity to engage in a process that I have not engaged in before. Interacting with this panel gave me insight into their thoughts and needs. I realized that those on the feedback panel were able to clearly articulate their perspective on the sermon's content and development.

Lastly, I learned about myself. Undertaking the ministry project represented one of the most intense experiences that I have ever gone through. I was encouraged to participate and finish the project. Finishing required budgeting time between many different priorities. I learned discipline on a level that I never needed before. This reality encouraged me for future endeavors I may undertake personally.

### **Conclusion**

Through the ministry project process, the project director enhanced his skill at incorporating a CTR into his sermons. He accomplished the enhancement through the development of a methodology. The director learned the methodology by researching the history, theology, and practicality of the CTR in the sermon. The project director will benefit from the lessons learned for the rest of his ministry.

APPENDIX A  
SERMON FEEDBACK FORM

Preacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Bible Passage: \_\_\_\_\_

Location or type of media from which evaluation was made:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Introduction:

- |  | Poor          | Excellent |
|--|---------------|-----------|
| 1. Incited Interest.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |           |
| 2. The preacher shared a fallen condition that is applicable to your life today. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |           |
| 3. Please write what you heard the fallen condition to be:                       |               |           |

- |   | Poor          | Excellent |
|---|---------------|-----------|
| 4. This fallen condition was articulated clearly.                         | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |           |
| 5. The sermon communicates what this biblical text of scripture is about. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |           |
| 6. Please write what you heard the main point of the sermon to be.        |               |           |

7. Circle all of the following terms that describe the sermon structure/organization and write down what you heard the main points of the sermon to be.

Easily understood    Mostly clear    Sometimes clear    Not clear    Confusing    Tedious

	Poor	Excellent
8. These points were demonstrated in the text of scripture.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
9. Points were explained thoroughly.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
10. Illustrations supported the claims of the main points.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
11. Application was relevant to the main points.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

Conclusion:

12. The preacher summarized the content of the sermon clearly.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. The summation led to a clear call for response.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. The preacher was clear on how the hearers should respond.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. Circle all of the following terms that describe how the hearers were called to respond.	

Spiritual response      go and do what you have heard      written response

Immediate physical response      post-meeting response

16. The preacher used persuasion effectively.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. The persuasion was relevant to the rest of the sermon.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. The response(s) called for was related to the fallen condition in the sermon introduction.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. Please write how you responded to the sermon:	

20. The sermon pointed the hearers to Jesus using the passage.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
21. The sermon exalted Jesus using the passage	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Please include any additional feedback below:

APPENDIX B  
QUALITATIVE ASSESSEMENT RAW DATA FOR FCF AND CTR

Question: Please write what you heard the fallen condition to be:

Responses:

**Jan 2014, Jam 4:1–10.**

Green: When we are not fully submitted to Christ, we are living with one foot in our Christian faith and the other in the world.

Blue: We are trying to live lives that God wants us to live while hanging on to our selfish worldly desires.

Red: Man thinks he can look at life through the eyes of man (world) and God and live life in harmony . . . it creates a problem for us.

Purple: Quarrels and conflicts in church among the people.

Orange: Worldliness leads to quarrels and conflicts.

**January 2017, 1 Cor 6:9–11.**

Green: What does my life look like? Am I abiding in Christ and looking like him or do I look more like the world?

Blue: Data Missing

Red: The Corinthian church resembled the World instead of looking different as followers of Jesus.

Purple: We are living unchanged in a fallen world.

Orange: We are all in need of a perspective-i/e. a Savior.

**January 7, 2018, Matt 21:42–46.**

Green: The foundation/ authority for our lives must be Jesus and only Jesus. We cannot combine a foundation of Jesus with any other foundation. TO do so is to try to serve two masters

Blue: We want to set our own standard of right and wrong rather than submit to Jesus authority as to what is right and/or wrong.

Red: I interpret what is right for me . . . I make life what I want it to be. I am the own authority for my life. Man has submitted to the wrong authority in life.

Purple: We each have an authority. When Jesus, the Cornerstone, is not our authority, we have fallen because we have not accepted him.

Orange: Everyone submits to an authority, and it will determine our destiny.

**January 14, 2018, 2 Pet 1:1–15.**

Green: Many people try to imitate the lives of believers by demonstrating the fruits of the spirit in their actions. That amounts to putting on the mask of a believer, and it will surely fail. A saved person will bear the fruits of the spirit because of knowing Jesus.

Blue: We make ourselves to be something we are not in order to make our lives acceptable to others because we have not used Jesus as the foundation of our beliefs.

Red: man hides who he truly is when he is living a life that he knows to be wrong...in lieu of admitting his sin.

Purple: We put on masks and try to demonstrate a spiritual life in our own strength.

Orange: Everyone wears a mask at times to cover our reality.

**January 21, 2018, 2 Pet 1:16–2:22.**

Green: People build their lives on some standard of truth. That is their cornerstone. Too many people build their lives on the wrong standard which is anything other than Jesus Christ. Is there a disconnect between our profession of faith and the way we live our lives.

Blue: We are not using Jesus as the standard to determine whether our values are true.

Red: We often mistake what truth is because we are viewing it from the wrong perspective.

Purple: There are those who have fallen under the teaching of false teachers rather than believing the truth of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Orange: How we know and understand truth affects our perception of our world.

**January 28, 2018, 2 Pet. 3.**

Green: True hope is found in Jesus. Those who are without Jesus are without hope.

Blue: We do not have a true understanding of God's promises, so we are not living effective lives.

Red: We all have a desperate need for hope in our lives

Purple: People put hope in so many worldly endeavors rather than in Christ.

Orange: We need hope.

Question: Please write how you responded to the sermon.

Responses:

**Jan 2014, Jam 4:1–10.**

Green: The sermon will cause any believer to think about whether he has allowed rivals to God in his life.

Blue: My response was more vague than with your new method of preaching, but I did recognize that I need to be all in, not keep the blue marble.

Red: Consider how I have withheld areas of my life from God and where I must submit to him.

Purple: To ask God (pray) to reveal to me where and when I am not in full submission to Him.

Orange: Evaluated my personal commitment; renewed my commitment.

**January 2017, 1 Cor 6:9–11.**

Green: It is a sobering thought to consider what my life reflects. If I am struggling to live as I should, I need to learn to abide in Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to do his work in me.

Blue: Data Missing

Red: What parts of my life don't reflect the light I have been given? Self-reflection on my own life.

Purple: I responded through self-evaluation on how clearly and closely am I abiding in Christ. The test is how much peace do I have.

Orange: Evaluated my personal commitment; renewed my commitment.

**January 7, 2018, Matt 21:42–46.**

Green: I am convicted of letting other things be a part of my authority for life. I must serve only one Master.

Blue: I was convicted of my failure to yield to Christ rather than rely on my feelings or experience to justify what is right and wrong in my life.

Red: Contemplate Jesus as the authority in my life. Be committed to Jesus as the authority in my life.

Purple: Jesus is my authority. I commit to continued prayer and Bible study to protect against dual authorities in my life.

Orange: Evaluated and renewed my commitment to Christ as my authority.

**January 14, 2018, 2 Pet 1:1–15.**

Green: The sermon causes me to evaluate my own actions. Do they originate in my very real relationship to Christ, or am I trying to be something I am really not?

Blue: I did take away an appreciation for not putting on masks that result from manipulating what I want the rules to be or what I think they should be. I was convicted to allow God's truth to rule my life.

Red: In what areas of my life do I have a mask on. What am I trying to hide? Show me misunderstandings of truth I have and help me to accept the real truth!

Purple: I responded by reading the scripture again and meditating on the character qualities given to us through the teaching of Christ.

Orange: Evaluated /renewed my commitment to live honestly, openly and boldly in my world.

**January 21, 2018, 2 Pet 1:16–2:22.**

Green: I believe anyone who listened should do some self-examination. The key question boils down to this: Am I living my life according to the truth I acknowledge in my profession of Faith?

Blue: I was convicted that just generally acting by what I think Jesus' wants isn't enough. I need to focus on his view of right and wrong and continually fine tune my values toward his standard.

Red: Is Jesus the standard of which I construct all things in life?

Purple: My walk in the truth of Jesus was affirmed.

Orange: Evaluated/ renewed my commitment.

**January 28, 2018, 2 Pet 3.**

Green: In light of the recent tragedy in our community, this was a very timely sermon. Funny how God works that out. The despair that many feel over the loss of a young life can be dealt with only on the basis of hope we have in Jesus.

Blue: I need to look beyond, or keep an open mind regarding what I think God's plans are for my life. If I have misunderstood and/or am not willing to change, I will set the wrong priorities for today.

Red: A personal challenge to keep my priorities on Jesus . . . not my own Hope for the future.

Purple: I felt encouraged in my priorities and was challenged to remain hopeful in Jesus in all circumstances.

Orange: Evaluated/renewed my commitment

## APPENDIX C SERMON OUTLINES

### **James 4:1–10 The Source of Contention: Worldliness**

#### **Introduction**

Illus: January 28, 1986 11:38 AM, on a chilly South Florida morning, the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded 73 seconds into its flight. On board were six astronauts, and the first ever teacher to go into space. All were lost in the disaster.

With anything when it is studied, and looked at from many different angles, we find causes. Things that led to the realities we face presently, choices, attitudes, emotions, circumstances all weighing into the reason.

In James 4 we are seeing a cause identified for us. The problem is quarreling and conflicts, and the goal is seeing that these problems cease. But without knowing why they exist then it would be impossible to stop them, or even worse incorrectly labeling something as a cause when it is not, results in failing to stop the problem meaning that the conflicts would continue. James cuts straight to the heart of the problem.

- **Read James 4: 1–10**
  - Worldliness, Carnality, looking at things from a perspective other than that of a Kingdom Perspective. Being Double minded.
  - Context. James has talked in great detail of the double minded man, and the man who is of the world and not of God. 1:8 ship of the sea tossed by the wind, 1:23 man who forgets his reflection, 3:13–17 the difference between worldly and godly wisdom. Now James is relating it specifically to something within the church.
  
- **A Worldly Agenda leads to quarrels Vs. 1–3**
  - The key to why there are quarrels is isolated by James and out in display for us . . . It is ultimately passions he says . . .
  - Passions directed at the wrong things can be catastrophic.



- Even more so the accusation is that what is asked for in prayer is only asked for to satisfy selfish desires which are opposed to the Kingdom. To fulfill these passions which are directed at worldly things.
- Where are your passions directed? Because that will chart your course. They will lead you down a path. James boils it down to lust. Wanting, but then not receiving and what he says is that when it is not obtained, it creates jealousy, envy, which leads to strife and conflict. These things are subtle . . . looking at what a friend has, desiring another's position or status, wanting certain possessions that others have. . . . It comes upon us softly, but grips with a bite that is undeniable. The resulting fallout are unfulfilled passions, which lead to quarrels and conflicts usually with those who have what we want.
- **Living according to the world is hostility toward God. Vs. 4–5**
  - It is equated to adultery. Even more it is considered hostility. It is not turned down, not softened. If you love the world, and it's things then it is hostilely to God. This is because there are two different agendas. . . . The Kingdoms vs. Your own.

So set this up: devotion to the world is hostility to God.

#### **Live in submission to the Lord. Vs. 6–10**

- **Becomes the conclusion**

#### **Illus: The Difficulty of Christian Submission**

*[In an article for Decision magazine], Samuel Kamaleson illustrates [the difficulty of submission] through a Christian folk story from South India. There are several versions of it, but here it opens with a young boy who loved to play marbles. He regularly walked through his neighborhood with a pocketful of his best marbles, hoping to find opponents to play against. One marble in particular, his special blue marble, had won him many matches. During one walk he encountered a young girl who was eating a bag of chocolate candy. Though the boy's first love was marbles, he had a weakness for chocolates. As he stood there interacting with the young girl, his salivary glands and the rumbling in his stomach became uncontrollable, and he thought to himself, I have got to get my hands on those chocolates. Concocting a plan, he asked the girl, "How about I give you all these marbles for those chocolates?" She replied, "Sounds fair to me." He put his hand in his pocket, searching for the distinguishing cracks on the surface of the blue marble. Once he identified the blue marble with his finger tip, he carefully pushed it to the bottom of his pocket and pulled out all the other marbles. As he handed the marbles to the girl in exchange for the chocolate, the boy thought his plan was a success and turned to walk away. As he began to eat the candy, he suddenly turned to the girl and asked, "Hey, did you give me all the chocolates?"*

*Our fallen nature persuades us to posture ourselves in the same deceptive and defiant attitude as the boy in this story. We want everything the kingdom of God has to offer. We want to have a secure sense of God's presence, we want all our prayers to be answered, we want to "feel close" to Jesus, we want to flourish in the riches of God's glory—we want it all. But we are unwilling to give up everything for it. Many times there is a "blue marble" in our lives that we seem unwilling to offer to the control of Christ. Until we can fully subjugate ourselves to God's will, our participation in God's kingdom will be limited*

### **The End of the World as We Know It. 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 Life in a Fallen World**

#### **Introduction**

How do we navigate life in a fallen world? Since It is the end of the world as we know it. Maybe you are not a follower of Jesus Christ, hopefully today you will see the difference between religion, and what it is to have an abiding relationship with Jesus Christ.

*<sup>9</sup> Or do you not know that the unrighteous<sup>2</sup> will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: <sup>x</sup>neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,<sup>3</sup> <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And <sup>y</sup>such were some of you. But <sup>z</sup>you were washed, <sup>a</sup>you were sanctified, <sup>b</sup>you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

- **CIT:** Paul calls the Corinthians to live in light of the transformation that Christ has brought into their lives.
  - Prop: We should live in light of the transformation that Christ has brought into our lives.
  - Context: CH is the admonition to church discipline, then about lawsuits against brothers. He is highlighting inconsistencies in their manner of living. Debate about whether this fits with what goes before it or behind it. Compelling case for both. It really can fit with either.
- **Believers will demonstrate the new life they have been given.**
  - Inherent imperative—live out the new life in Christ and stop being like the wicked.
  - 11. And such were some of you....*
  - It is inconsistent to live in the former way. And the caution is that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Already but not yet of the Kingdom.
  - Paul is giving them a warning
  - Illus: The Parrot—What happened to the Chicken?

- SO we have been changed and what we do will show it. So it is inconsistent to say we are a follower of Christ yet live as if no change had been wrought. . . . In fact if we do then what is the evidence of salvation? They were much more like the world around them than Christ in them. We must constantly guard ourselves to make sure that is not the case.
- **Recognize why we are called to live that way**
  - Because it is truly the end of the world as we know it—life has changed because we have been transformed. So, to be clear it is not because of these things that we are saved
  - Two ways that people might see this:
    - One will think that it is that they can earn salvation by not doing these things
    - The Other will think that these are in no way important since they are saved—so salvation is simply a religious act.
  - No need for these to be systematized
    - Washed—made clean from practices such as those that were mentioned earlier
    - Sanctified— set apart
    - Justified—declared righteousness, given the righteousness of Christ.
  - So, the why is the transformation that has been brought into our lives by Jesus.
- **Realize This is done through the working of the Spirit.**

*11 You were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

  - Too often left to theological discussion and not brought into the realm of the real life worked out.
  - If we are to live this way there will have to be the undergirding of the Holy Spirit.
  - This is where too many believers mistake religion for abiding.
  - Illus: The caterpillar—tapes on wings and paints his body to look like a butterfly

### **Conclusion**

So today we must live in light of the transformation that Christ has brought into your life.

Maybe today you are realizing that none of those things has ever happened in your life. And your realization is that you are of those who will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Realize that God's work of Washing, Sanctifying, and Justifying can happen in your life today. If you would trust him by faith. Asking him to forgive your transgressions against him and letting him then accomplish this transforming work in your heart through the power of the Holy Spirit. The walk with him in newness of life.

If you have done that or want to do that we want to offer you the opportunity to make that decision public through a profession of faith to this congregation. That is why we offer this time of invitation to you. Jesus calls us to tell others about the change and that proclamation can start here today!

**Cornerstone:  
Matthew 21:42–46 How Firm A Foundation**

**Introduction:**

*Illus: Bill Klem was the father of baseball umpires: colorful, judicious, and dignified. He was beyond passionate about America's favorite pastime, declaring, "To me, baseball is not a game, but a religion." The first umpire to use arm signals while working behind home plate, Bill umped for 37 years, including 18 World Series. He became known as "the Old Arbitrator," a deferential nod to his keen eye for calling balls and strikes. On one such occasion, as he crouched and readied behind the plate, the pitcher threw the ball, the batter didn't swing, and, for just an instant, Bill said nothing. The batter turned and snorted, "Okay, so what was it, a ball or a strike?" To which Bill responded, "Sonny, it ain't nothing 'till I call it."*

- FCF: What is the Chief Authority in your life? We are tempted to misplace this! Everyone submits to some authority in their life, which one determines who they are, and their outcome.
- Prop: Christ Jesus must be the chief authority because he is the cornerstone.
- Context: This is Holy Week, and the same day as Jesus clearing the temple. The natural question is then: "By whose authority do you do these things?"

**Read Passage**

**Your life must have a solid foundation Vs. 42**

**Your foundation will affect what you manifest Vs. 43**

**An improper foundation will result in destruction. Vs. 44**

- **Your life must have a solid foundation Vs. 42**
  - Jesus quotes scripture here as a prophecy concerning himself. Exposition of Cornerstone in 1<sup>st</sup> C. Cornerstone V Capstone In truth, Jesus is both the very foundation of God's work, and also the highly visible and beautiful capstone that will finish His creation. (TNTC) There is a connection between the authority you hold and your foundation.
  - Illustrated by the movie 'Waterboy' Bobby's encounter with Col. Sanders
  - Striking—A rejected stone has become the cornerstone.
  - They missed it, we must not

- **Your foundation will affect what you manifest Vs. 43**
  - Illus: When there is a faulty foundation there will be symptoms.
  - The Cornerstone was important because it ensured that the wall would be straight and that the rest of the building would be plumb. Everything followed suit, and if there was a problem eventually it would be noticed in the wall.
  - So your authority has an impact on the way you live. This is where small issues can demonstrate a much larger origin. The wrong authority will not work. Recognize that multiple authorities will not work
  
- **An improper foundation will result in destruction. Vs. 44**
  - Here is the danger. It will matter and it does matter For them the stone will crush them and cause them to stumble. There is a consequence for submitting to the wrong authority. It means we will see things improperly but Jesus also announces destruction as a consequence.

### C.T.R

Restate the FCF: You submit to an authority in your life, and which one manifests who you will be.

What is the actual authority in your life?

We are wise to heed Jesus words because failing to see this not only has an impact in the here and now, but regarding what is to come. There is an eternal implication to this choice.

SO maybe today you need to believe the gospel and make Jesus your cornerstone. I would encourage you not to wait but to make that decision right now. And if you need counsel regarding how you might do that to come to a Pastor in a few moments when the music begins.

Or It might be that you are examining your life right now and seeing signs that while would say that Jesus is your authority (Lord) something is not adding up in the way you are living. I would challenge you to contemplate as the music plays and determine how you will live.

Or maybe its just that you realize more the importance of your authority, and today you need to commit to spending more time learning from Jesus through prayer and focus on His Word. I would challenge you to use this time as a time of commitment and consecration.

### Cornerstone

#### 2 Peter 1:1–15 How to Live without the Need for Masks

##### Introduction:

Illusions—sometimes we even fool ourselves

**FCF:** We seek to cover up who we really are in essence wearing masks that hide our real selves.

It is not only what I say but what I do that demonstrates who I am.

This is an answer to the question of why we do what we do.

As the Cornerstone Jesus makes (it) straight—passage demonstrates how this works out in us.

- Context: Book is written to refute false teaching and teachers that were causing ethical deviation with what they were teaching. View it as a final Word from a soon to depart apostle on the importance of a knowledge of truth. We are really dealing with fundamentally what is true of God . . . regarding resurrection and the life beyond death. There was a group that was teaching there was none and that had enormous implications for their belief.

Read passage Vs. 1–15

**Knowing Jesus Impacts Our Core. Vs. 2–4**

**Knowing Jesus Brings Change. Vs. 5–9**

**Our Actions Demonstrate our Orientation. Vs. 10–15**

- **Knowing Jesus Impacts Our Core. Vs. 2–4**
  - Specific subject of knowledge—literally “coming to know” conversion “knowledge gained in conversion rather than that which one may develop on one’s own.” (anchor, 165) So we are talking about recognizing Jesus as Lord, believing that God raised him from the dead, and repenting of our sin. Faith and repentance.
  - But we also see what saves us . . . Vs. 1. *By the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.* Not on our own merit. Can’t earn it. But his righteousness has secured it and he offers it to us. The result vs. 2 *grace and peace* . . . and as we have more knowledge grace and peace are multiplied. But there is more . . . vs. 3 *through the knowledge of him . . . and his divine power* . . . we have been granted all things that pertain to life and godliness. We have become partakers in the divine nature.
  - Simply put knowing Jesus will change you to the core. When you have been transformed you are no longer the same. Peter offers us the key to finding true peace. And it comes through the knowledge of Christ. So this is the way you have been impacted.

But here is what happens . . .

- **Knowing Jesus Brings Change. Vs. 5–9**
  - You have been transformed: 2 Cor. 5:17. If any man is in Christ he is a new creation. So, there is initial and progressive transformation. . . . This is what it looks like: virtue, self-control, Knowledge, steadfast, godly, having brotherly affection, love. And if you do not have them you are nearsighted (so that they cannot see the implication of eternity.)

- **Our Actions Demonstrate our Orientation. Vs. 10–15**
  - This is the chicken and the egg conversation—what came first the chicken or the egg. We are prone to foul this up and we must be careful that we do not.
  - Actions do not make you a follower of Christ, but following Christ will definitely affect your actions. Reference 1 John 2:3 *And By this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments.* So vs. 10 encourages them to *confirm their calling and election.* . . . This means to examine themselves to see that they are in the faith. This is because there is an eternity and there is a resurrection and apart from Christ their ultimate end is destruction . . . make no mistake. This is a confrontation of the false teaching that exists, and it is made clear through knowledge of Jesus Christ.

*The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. (MLK Jr.)*

### **Conclusion:**

Recapitulation—These hearers are instructed regarding how they live, but really the source of their life and action. Only in Christ will that be a life that finds grace and peace.

**CTR:** Are you wearing a mask? What are you trying to hide?

That you are flawed, let me free you everyone knows because they are too.

You sinning? Should not be a surprise.

Find the Grace and Peace that Jesus brings, and be free of the need for masks. First test yourself and see that you are in the faith. Believers hear me well on this. Take off your mask. Drop the pretense. Take off the pridefulness and reveal who you really are.

Because if nobody does then you are crafting a false expectation for everyone. If everyone continues to hide where they are and no one is being real then all we have is a hollow stage-play being perpetuated.

When you are in Christ he removes the need for the mask because Satan has you distracted and wagering that pretending will ultimately bring peace, when he knows that if you would let it go you would ultimately find it. But also ask yourself if you have a knowledge of Jesus Christ. If not then today we would love to counsel with you regarding how you can.

### **Cornerstone:**

**Fact v. Fiction 2 Peter 1:16–21, 2:1–22**

### **Introduction:**

Illus: We can agree on how long this table is because when we measure it we know.

But we agree because we have agreed on the Standard that we use to measure . . . because of that we can say that it is true that this

Yet it is much more difficult to come to agreement when two parties are viewing things using a different standard of truth. Politics, Science,

- FCF: We often mistake what truth is, because we are viewing it with the wrong perspective.

#### SERMON ILLUS,

##### Priceless Pearl Found in Nearly Discarded Clam

CBSNEWS Article 2005 Barbara Krensavage & Thaddeus Krensavage.

insisted that clams are not a regular part of her diet. Yet one snowy evening in December she found herself craving an old recipe and so brought home four dozen quahogs—a clam particularly abundant along the Eastern shores of the United States, between Cape Cod and New Jersey. Mr. Krensavage was in the midst of shucking the shellfish for dinner when he discovered one that looked like it was dead. It had a different color to it and he thought it was diseased. As he was about to discard it, Mrs. Krensavage took a closer look.

It wasn't dead. In fact, inside the live clam was a rare, possibly priceless, purple pearl. Experts estimate that roughly one in two million quahog clams contains a gem-quality pearl like the one found by the Krensavages. Due to the great rarity of the find, it has been difficult to even place a value on it, though some have estimated the pearl to be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

*Possible Preaching Angles: (1) Jesus as the cornerstone rejected by the builders; (2) the Kingdom of God is like a man who finds a pearl of great price.*

*Jill Carattini, "Transfigured," A Slice of Infinity (8-11-17)*

What appears correct to us does not always prove to be so, but what appears wrong does not always be so.

CIT: Peter reveals the importance of Truth through the Knowledge of Jesus Christ in determining how we navigate through life and find truth.

- Context: He was an eyewitness to this truth. Who will you believe? Context of false teachers. Vs. 12 remind you of these qualities that you know, and are established in truth.

Read passage

**We must recognize Jesus is the embodiment of truth. Vs. 16–18**

**We must recognize that Scripture offers confirmation of God's truth. Vs.19–21**

**We must recognize that rejection of truth will lead to destruction Ch. 2**

- **We must recognize Jesus is the embodiment of truth. Vs. 16–18**
  - Likely that Peter had in view the transfiguration of Jesus, which gave a glimpse of the glory of Christ.
  - Matthew 17:1–8 They misunderstood according to Jesus so here Peter is recounting and revealing that what didn't look right ultimately was Messiah. Peter saw—with his eyes. Peter heard—with his ears



- We must see Jesus as God sees him. This comes down to understanding that Jesus is truth . . . as we draw near to him we see truth embodied. Recognizing that he is truth. He is the cornerstone, again that sets the foundation makes straight what we are building everything on. So then how you see Jesus will impact your life. We are not left to simply guess on how we are to follow him
- **We must recognize that Scripture offers confirmation of God's truth. Vs.19–21**
  - This truth is confirmed through the words of the prophets and writers of scripture. As God's word on the mount confirmed Jesus status, the Scripture accomplishes the same function.
  - Shines a light . . . like a lamp in a dark place. Illus: Kid in a room can't tell exactly what things are, but when light is shined onto it they
  - The origin of the Word is God himself, given to the writers by the Holy Spirit. So then God's word can be trusted. It reveals to us who he is, and demonstrates the impact that it makes in someone's life.
- **We must recognize that rejection of truth will lead to destruction Ch. 2**
  - Details of the glory of Christ and the truth of his word.
  - 2:1–22 elaboration almost poetically about the destruction of those who do not submit to truth, but are carried away by false teaching. This is the impact that refusal to obey truth, or misunderstanding what truth is will lead to.

### **Conclusion:**

#### **Recapitulation**

If you build a house you will choose a tape measure, which really just follows a standard.

**Call To Response:** Recognizing that Jesus is the cornerstone impacts what we understand as truth, and truth impacts everything we are and will be.

Will you consider what you understand truth to be, and consider Jesus.

Even more than that will you contemplate what your understanding of truth is leading to in your life. If you do not know him then trust him today. If you recognize Jesus then praise God today for revealing this truth. In 1914, not long after the sinking of the Titanic, Congress convened a hearing to discern what happened in another nautical tragedy. In January of that year, in thick fog off the Virginia coast, the steamship Monroe was rammed by the merchant vessel Nantucket and eventually sank. Forty-one sailors lost their lives in the frigid winter waters of the Atlantic. While it was Osmyn Berry, captain of the Nantucket who was arraigned on charges, in the course of the trial Captain Edward Johnson was grilled on the stand for over five hours. During cross-examination it was learned, as the New York Times reported, that Captain Johnson "navigated the Monroe with a steering compass that deviated as much as two degrees from the standard magnetic compass. He said the instrument was sufficiently true to run the ship, and that it was the custom of masters in the coastwise trade to use such compasses. His steering compass had never been adjusted in the one year he was master of the Monroe."

The faulty compass that seemed adequate for navigation eventually proved otherwise. This realization partly explains a heartrending picture recorded by the Times: "Later the two Captains met, clasped hands, and sobbed on each other's shoulders." The sobs of these two burly seamen are a moving reminder of the tragic consequences of misorientation. The reminder for us is this: if the heart is like a compass ... then we need to (regularly) calibrate our hearts, tuning them to be directed to the Creator, our magnetic north.

### Cornerstone

## 2 Peter 3 Hope For Tomorrow, Strength for Today.

### INTRODUCTION:

#### What We Believe About Our Future Controls How We Experience Our Present

Tim Keller writes, "Imagine you have two women of the same age, the same socioeconomic status, the same educational level, and even the same temperament. You hire both of them and say to each, "You are part of an assembly line, and I want you to put part A into slot B and then hand what you have assembled to someone else. I want you to do that over and over for eight hours a day." You put them in identical rooms with identical lighting, temperature, and ventilation. You give them the very same number of breaks in a day. It is very boring work. Their conditions are the same in every way—except for one difference. You tell the first woman that at the end of the year you will pay her thirty thousand dollars, and you tell the second woman that at the end of the year you will pay her thirty million.

After a couple of weeks the first woman will be saying, "Isn't this tedious? Isn't it driving you insane? Aren't you thinking about quitting?" And the second woman will say, "No. This is perfectly acceptable. In fact, I whistle while I work." What is going on? You have two human beings who are experiencing identical circumstances in radically different ways. What makes the difference? It is their expectation of the future. This illustration is not intended to say that all we need is a good income. It does, however, show that what we believe about our future completely controls how we are experiencing our present. We are irreducibly hope-based creatures."

- FCF: We have a deep longing for hope to make sense of our lives.
- CIT: Hope will be realized as we look to Jesus the one who has perfected our faith, and what his promises to us are.

**Knowing Jesus offers a hope that will fortify our souls Vs. 1–9**

**Jesus coming return offers clarity to the priorities of our lives. Vs. 10.**

**Hope leads to holy and godly living. Vs. 11–18**

- **Knowing Jesus offers a hope that will fortify our souls Vs. 1–9**
  - Exp: False Teachers, Peters reminder of the Lord's coming. His ways are not our ways. Must have Humility recognizing that he may not do things the way that we would. Our hope is not abstract but definite. It is founded upon Jesus

as our Cornerstone. We then have a definite hope that is not just a mood or emotion, but is an actual reality.

- So it is more than a feeling of optimism, not just a mood, but a confidence rooted in Eternity. Romans 5. Think about how much lesser the cares of this life seem when placed alongside of these eternal realities. So when the news is bad, when the illness returns, when you didn't get into that College, or the circumstances crushing, when you lost someone or something. when it didn't go your way, or you missed out on what you thought you had to have. Weigh that against the knowledge of Eternity.
  - 2 Corinthians 4:17, For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. 18, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
- **Jesus coming return offers clarity to the priorities of our lives. Vs.10–11**
    - Exp.
    - **Missing Woman Joins Search Party for . . . Herself**  
A recent headline caught my eye: "Missing Woman Unwittingly Joins Search Party Looking for Herself." From the Toronto Sun: "A group of tourists spent hours Saturday night looking for a missing woman near Iceland's Eldgja canyon, only to find her among the search party. The group was travelling through Iceland on a tour bus and stopped near the volcanic canyon in the southern highlands Saturday afternoon, reports the Icelandic news organization mbl.is (sic). One of the women on the bus left to change her clothes and freshen up. When she came back, her bus mates didn't recognize her. Soon, there was word of a missing passenger. The woman didn't recognize the description of herself, and joined in the search. About 50 people searched the terrain by vehicles and on foot. The coast guard was even readying a helicopter to help. But the search was called off at about 3 a.m., when it became clear the missing woman was, in fact, accounted for and searching for herself." Can any of you relate? Sometimes, the one we're searching frantically for is much *much* closer than we think.
    - Knowing who we are creates a purpose in life, but knowing that we are not our own gives all purpose to life. Jesus brings a purpose that transcends many of the frivolous concerns of this life.
  - **Hope leads to holy and godly living. Vs. 11–18**
    - Grounds us, demonstrates truth but also informs our days, and generates hope.
    - They are called to grow in grace and knowledge of peace

**CTR:** Everyone is trying to satisfy this desire for hope. But the only thing that fulfills it is the peace that this hope brings. This is the wager many are making. To find it they are looking at the end of the party, after the hook up, at the bottom of the bottle, It's not just

those things they wager it will be found in the thumbs up on their post, or the returned affection of the object of their desire. It's the one working the long hours because they think it will be at the end of the promotion, or the payoff, or the validation, maybe it's the name on the placard. But if you are looking for peace in those things you just as soon search for a pot of Gold at the end of the next rainbow that you see. The only place it will be found is in the Cornerstone. In the Weight of Glory. In the hope that Jesus brings. That he is the Cornerstone provides a definite hope that has a firm foundation in Christ. Will you trust him today? He wishes for all to come to repentance. Will you? Will you live in a way that acknowledges the promises of eternity? Meaning will you prioritize Jesus and his glory? That may mean significant changes to your time schedule. Or giving to benefit the Kingdom. Do your long range goals demonstrate a knowledge. Renew your hope today by reminding yourself of eternity. Find Peace even in the midst of depressing circumstances.

## APPENDIX D RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL



Approvals for Using Human Subjects in Research  
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

**Researcher** Christopher M. DeLuzar  
**Research Type**  Student  Faculty  Institutional  
**Human Subjects**  None  Ages 17 or Under  Ages 18 or Older  
**Research Title** Imagining the Call-to-Repentance in the presence of the Pastor at Calvary Baptist Church, Tampa, FL

Please initial each of the following statements as affirmation of your compliance to the protocol, then sign with your full signature and enter the date signed on the lines provided.

- I have accurately described the informed consents and levels of risk to human subjects in my study to the best of my ability, and will implement the research protocols as documented, incorporating modification as required.
- I understand that if I make changes and/or additions to these protocols, I must seek the approval of my Research Supervisor prior to the gathering of data with these protocols.
- I understand that instrumentation developed and/or revised for the use with human subjects in the study must be approved by my Research Supervisor prior to use with human subjects.

Christopher M. DeLuzar 12-11-17  
 Researcher/Team Representative Date

**SECTION BELOW FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

The documentation of the research protocols submitted by the researcher/research team appropriately informs, acquires consents, and provides accommodations for the projects level/s of risk to human subjects participating in the study...

without required modification.  with required modification as attached.

Zander A. Darter  
 Research Supervisor/Faculty Colleague

12/12/17  
 Date

J. Carter, PhD  
 Research Ethics Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

[Signature]  
 Provost

12/20/17  
 Date

Research Ethics Committee Assessment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low Risk
<input type="checkbox"/> Medium Risk
<input type="checkbox"/> High Risk



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## VITA

Christopher M. DeGeorge

## PERSONAL:

Born: September 23, 1980, Houma, LA.

Parents: Chris and Debbie DeGeorge

Married: Celeste DeGeorge

Children: Seth Michael DeGeorge

Claire Marie DeGeorge

Sara Elizabeth DeGeorge

## EDUCATIONAL:

Diploma, H.L. Bourgeois High School, Gray, LA, 1998.

B.A. Christian Ministry, Leavell College, NOBTS, 2005.

M.Div. Expository Preaching, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005.

## MINISTERIAL:

Assoc. Pastor of Students and Education, First Baptist Church, Ferriday, LA, 2005–2007.

Assoc. Pastor of Students and Education, University Baptist Church, Thibodaux, LA. 2007–2011.

Senior Pastor, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Brookhaven, MS. 2011–2016

Senior Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Tupelo, MS. 2016–present.

