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Persuasive Appeals For Decision: Preaching The Distinctive Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs In The Michigan Conference

Daniel Paul Towar
Andrews University
This research is a product of the graduate program in Doctor of Ministry DMin at Andrews University. Find out more about the program.

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ABSTRACT

PERSUASIVE APPEALS FOR DECISION: PREACHING THE DISTINCTIVE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST BELIEFS IN THE MICHIGAN CONFERENCE

by

Daniel Paul Towar

Adviser: Ron du Preez, DMin, ThD
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Document

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: PERSUASIVE APPEALS FOR DECISION: PREACHING THE DISTINCTIVE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST BELIEFS IN THE MICHIGAN CONFERENCE

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Date completed: January 2015

Problem

Personal observations while serving as a pastor and evangelist indicate a need for more effective and persuasive appeals for decisions following sermons. This is especially important when preaching the distinctive truths of the Seventh-day Adventist church. It is both a challenging and rewarding segment of my own preaching experience. For this reason it is my desire to improve on the delivery of appeals by including “prophetic preaching” strategies for reaching the heart issues that most concern those attending the Discover Revelation seminar that I present as an evangelist for the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
Method

This project was a comparative study of persuasive appeals for decision on distinctive Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. Distinctive beliefs that are part of this project are Salvation/Baptism, Sabbath, Second Coming, State of the Dead, Remnant Church, and Sanctuary. Prophetic appeals for decision were compared to traditional story appeals for these distinctive beliefs during two evangelistic series conducted in Holland and Cadillac, Michigan from July to November 2014. A qualitative evaluation using the focus group method was done following each of the two evangelistic series of presentations. Three separate groups met during August, September, and November 2014.

Results

Each of three focus groups related strong impressions regarding the persuasive preaching of appeals using the prophetic preaching style. They agreed that this was more persuasive compared to a traditional narrative story appeal for the close of the messages. There was concern that the prophetic preaching style had potential to alienate listeners, particularly those who could be struggling with an issue the researcher addressed. Out of three groups, one person, referring to one of these presentations, said that he/she disliked that one prophetic preaching appeal and that it did nothing for him/her. Three out of 17 focus group members expressed concern about the direct nature of the issues addressed. Of the three, no one expressed that he/she was offended. None mentioned that he/she knew of anyone who took offence. One respondent in each focus group expressed this concern unprompted by the researcher. In one focus group, a respondent not of our faith, after expressing this concern, indicated that one prophetic appeal in particular caused his/her decision for Christ.
Both styles of appeals were well received. Respondents felt the prophetic style impressed attendees more due to the relevant current issues challenged by prophetic preaching. It was stronger, more distinctive. A potential weakness expressed by two was that more sympathy for those dealing with issues confronted was needed.

Conclusions

In preaching this style of appeal, it is important to exegete the audience and know their issues. It is essential to make the whole message Christ-centered and biblically presented. It is important to express empathy and sympathy in dealing with the issues. In speaking truth to power, we need to realize the weakness of individuals and be compassionate. We must include hope and the fact that Christ is the answer.

There were favorable results when compared to preaching in a non-prophetic preaching style. Approximately 14% and 23% of initial non-Adventists in attendance were baptized after six weeks. The potential stands, three months after the evangelistic meetings, for 30% to 60% of the opening attendance to be baptized as new members. This research was well received by both a small and medium-sized congregation in the Michigan Conference.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Project Document
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

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Daniel Paul Towar
January 2015
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Date approved
For my wife, Patsy
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Ministry Context

The Michigan Conference has the distinction of being the first organized conference of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Battle Creek was destined to be the center of Seventh-day Adventist Church activity for the next half century. After church founder Joseph Bates met David Hewitt, “the most honest man in town,” evangelistic meetings were held in a tent and the first Battle Creek church was built in 1855.

By 1862, a year after the formation of the Michigan Conference, 17 churches in Michigan and one church in northern Indiana were received into the Conference (Neufeld, 1976, p. 880). The territory of the Conference now comprises that of the state of Michigan. Since July 1, 2000, the researcher has been a Conference evangelist assigned to the territory of the Michigan Conference. Though an ordained minister, I am not currently assigned as pastor to a specific church congregation. During 24 previous years as a church pastor, it was my privilege to serve as a district pastor in 16 congregations of the Wisconsin, Ohio, and Michigan Conferences. These congregations ranged in size from 25-600 members. Churches pastored fall within the range of the six major groupings of all churches other than mega-church as included in Figure 1. This experience has proven invaluable in my work as an evangelist tasked with holding public
meetings in partnership with different churches throughout the Conference. In the past 15 years, my wife Patsy and I have worked with churches ranging in size from 25-768 members.

Figure 1 shows relative church sizes within the conference.

![Figure 1](image)


The two churches within this project are Holland with 398 members and Cadillac West with 38 members as of January 2014 (Michigan Conference 2014 Directory).

According to the Association of Religion Data Archives (thearda.org) for 2010, the majority (58%) of Michigan residents are unclaimed by any church or religion. Among religious groups, Catholics make up only 17% of the population of the state; all Protestants comprise a total of 22%. Orthodox believers are significantly less than 1% of the state’s population. Adventists have 7,000 fewer adherents than do the Orthodox. The
Adventist figure includes the combined members of the Michigan and Lake Region Conferences with a total of 40,503 members. The numbers present the church with a challenging and disturbing reality, for every Adventist in Michigan, there are 250 who are not. Most of them have no church affiliation. Figure 2 illustrates the mission challenge for the Adventist church.


The membership of the Michigan Conference has increased from 23,872 on December 31, 2000 to 25,781 on December 31, 2011. This is an increase of 1,909 members in 11 years. Many members have left Michigan due to the recession that occurred in the United States in 2008 and thereafter. In the 11 years studied, 2007 is the only year that showed a decline in total Michigan Conference membership. It may be that
the economic decline that hit America in 2008 was already affecting Michigan as early as 2001 (Eberts & Erickcek, 2009, pp. 1-3).

Personal and public evangelism are needed. One cannot succeed without the other. Each gives reason for the other. A multiplicity of approaches is necessary to meet the dire needs of a world that is losing its soul. Evangelists must refocus. The above statistics show that we need to regain our purpose through the power of the Holy Spirit if the work of Christ is to be completed before another generation passes (Sahlin, 2003, p. 29). We need to refocus as a church, and be that last generation on earth, ready for Jesus to come.

Statement of the Problem

Personal observations while serving as a pastor and evangelist indicate a need for more effective and persuasive appeals for decision following sermons. This is especially important when preaching the distinctive truths of the church. This is both a challenging and rewarding segment of my own preaching experience. For this reason, it is my desire to improve on the delivery of appeals by including “prophetic preaching” strategies for reaching the heart issues that most concern those attending the Discover Revelation seminar that I present as an evangelist for the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Statement of the Task

The task of this project is to develop, implement, and evaluate a strategy that improves giving the appeal for decision regarding the distinctive truths of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the Discover Revelation evangelistic series.
This new approach in giving the invitational appeal will concentrate on the effective role of preaching with a prophetic focus; as such, key components of an effective evangelistic appeal will be identified. This “prophetic focus” will integrate the prophetic preaching style into six appeals given for distinctive Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. A qualitative evaluation of this approach to giving appeals using the focus group method is to be done following each of two evangelistic series of presentations in Holland and Cadillac, Michigan.

**Justification for the Project**

Prophetic Preaching proclaims a biblical challenge to culturally ingrained lifestyles that enslave people in bondage, keeping them from accepting Christ and distinctive Bible beliefs. This preaching style speaks biblical truth to power, belief systems, and cultures that oppose the spiritual advancement of anyone, rich or poor. This project will seek to demonstrate that preaching with a prophetic focus, within the context of a Seventh-day Adventist biblical and eschatological identity, can improve and enhance positive responses to the preaching of our distinctive doctrines as we understand them.

The topics to be considered in this project paper are Salvation/Baptism by Immersion, Sabbath, Second Coming, State of the Dead, Remnant Church, and Sanctuary. These distinctive truths, or pillars of faith, lay the foundations for what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist Christian.

This project intends to give a clear definition of preaching with a prophetic focus. Prophetic preaching will give a clear, transforming “Thus says the Lord” ring to the message presented, based on a sound biblical hermeneutic. Its role within the framework of an Adventist public evangelistic series will be studied.
Preaching with a prophetic focus should be biblically centered in Jesus Christ and relevant to the issues and problems people face today, including those of ethics and religious liberty. In this way, the sermon appeal should prove to reach the mind, heart, and emotions of the listener effectively.

Preaching with a prophetic focus has the potential to transform the presentation of the evangelistic appeal by making the “call” more effective in bringing individuals to a positive decision for Bible truth.

Preaching Adventist distinctive truths with a prophetic focus should strengthen the Seventh-day Adventist identity. Adventist beliefs will be appreciated as relevant to the times in which we live.

Preaching with a prophetic focus should transform the preacher. A new emphasis that reaches the hearts of the hearers at their deepest concerns for freedom and justice (i.e., Luke 4:18, 19) will also affect the minister’s own spiritual life.

Preaching with a prophetic focus should transform the listener, not just bring a positive response to a message, but be a power within that transforms the life and its direction. From decision, a new lifestyle begins.

Preaching with a prophetic focus will likely transform the local church, bringing increased support for public evangelistic outreach. This could increase the prophetic role of the church in their community.

Preaching with a prophetic focus can transform evangelism resulting in an “evangelistic mindset” that includes soul-winning and discipleship activities as a way of life for every involved believer.
Our voice is needed. At a time when Adventist public evangelism is no longer a leading edge philosophy or strategy in many churches, the preaching of prophetic last-day themes has found renewed emphasis among conservative evangelical Protestants. It is also of interest to Roman Catholics who follow with interest reports of Marian manifestations. Even Hollywood shows interest by marketing such films as 2012, Noah, and Exodus: God’s and Kings, and various films with a supernatural theme such as the Harry Potter and Twilight series aimed at children and youth.

So many come to our seminars burdened and broken by life. They hear and may even believe the message we present as Adventists, but they need healing from these burdens. Prophetic preaching does not shy away from these issues, but expresses hope in Christ and in the context of the blessed hope.

**Expectations From the Project**

This project illustrates the value of giving appeals for decision using the method of preaching with a prophetic focus.

This project shows that presenting the distinctive Seventh-day Adventist doctrines through preaching with a prophetic focus enhances the positive interest and decisions of those attending Discover Revelation.

This project encourages a good retention of non-Seventh-day Adventists throughout the Discover Revelation series.

This project produces an enthusiasm for attending and participating in an Adventist evangelistic series for both members and non-members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
This project hopes to leave a resource that can be utilized by pastors, evangelists, and laypersons interested in giving effective appeals for decision for Christ and Bible truth.

**Delimitations**

The project was limited to the Holland and Cadillac, Michigan areas. Handbill invitations covered every mailbox in each city. In Holland the surrounding communities within a ten-mile radius were included. In Cadillac a double mailing was chosen for every mailbox of the city.

**Limitations**

The meetings were held from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. There were 25 meetings in each series over a span of seven weeks and eight weekends. Being balanced in approach to the appeals meant that in each site there were three prophetic appeal presentations in this research. Three other of the distinctive doctrines studied in each series were not given with a prophetic preaching appeal. The types of appeals were “traded” from one series to the next series. This meant that in each series, I was giving a prophetic appeal for the distinctive doctrines for the first time in my experience.

**Definitions of Terms**

*Appeal.* The invitation at the end of the sermon to accept Christ and the distinctive biblical doctrine presented.

*Prophetic preaching.* Speaking truth to popular culture and power. Challenging the “norm” with that biblically distinctive belief. Prophetic Preaching proclaims a biblical challenge to culturally ingrained lifestyles that enslave people in bondage, keeping them
from accepting Christ and distinctive Bible beliefs. This preaching style speaks biblical truth to power, belief systems, and cultures that oppose the spiritual advancement of anyone, rich or poor.

*Prophetic preaching appeals.* Where prophetic preaching is included, forming the basis of the appeal for a positive decision for the Bible doctrine presented.

**Description of the Process**

Chapter 2 is a theological reflection of preaching with a prophetic focus. The chapter includes the power of its role in appeals from the study of Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, Peter, and James. Ellen G. White’s statements on evangelistic preaching and giving the appeal are also evaluated for their prophetic and eschatological focus.

Chapter 3 is a review of current and other relevant classic literature on prophetic preaching in the context of evangelistic outreach. This includes books, articles, dissertations, and Ellen White’s writings.

Chapter 4 is a field test of how the research is proposed to work. It includes the strategies and details of each series of meetings conducted for the project. Philosophy and methods are described that make up the rationale for the evangelism project. The components of successful prophetic preaching are also studied.

Chapter 5 reveals how the research project developed as the reality of the series in Holland and Cadillac unfolded. During the course of the two separate series, six presentations of the distinctive beliefs included a prophetic preaching appeal. After the two series of presentations, six distinctive beliefs were preached without this prophetic
preaching emphasis. This data was received from July 2014, extending to November 2014.

Chapter 6 includes the evaluation of the project by focus groups research. What was learned, results, recommendations, and conclusions close out the research. My appeals during the Discover Revelation series changed from what they have been by incorporating preaching with a prophetic focus. The issues of the day—be they questions of morals, ethics, law, or justice—must be incorporated in the context of our Adventist eschatology. This should result in a greater impact on people’s minds and hearts, leading to a greater awareness and acceptance of our distinctive truths. This project was completed on November 24, 2014.
CHAPTER II

THEOLOGY

Biblical Theology and Persuasive Appeals

There is some discussion regarding the appropriateness of giving persuasive appeals for decisions in Bible-based preaching. Under consideration here are the precedents set in the biblical books of Genesis, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Gospels, Acts, and James. I am specifically addressing select New Testament appeals made by John the Baptist; Jesus Christ; Peter; Philip; and Paul, the primary teacher of preachers in the gospel dispensation. These selections seem to be most relevant to the focus of my research. Also discussed are basic reasons for incorporating appeals in end-time prophetic preaching as illustrated in these precedents. It is the goal of this paper to support the conclusion that the persuasive appeal is essential to scriptural end-time prophetic preaching.

General Precedents

Biblical prophets called. They made appeals. “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision” (Joel 3:14, NKJV). There is no less a need for such persuasive appeals in the last days of earth’s history.
Prophetic Preaching and the Appeal

Prophetic preaching brings a strong persuasive element into the appeal. As pointed out by Bradford (1975) quoting Karl E. Braaten, “The future in secular theology is reached by a process of the world’s becoming. The future in Christian eschatology arrives by the coming of God’s kingdom. The one is a becoming, the other a coming” (p. 14). Without a belief in the coming of God’s kingdom, preaching appeals would be senseless.

To illustrate the relevance of the eschatological element further, Bradford (1975) cited Braaten again: “There are two Latin words for future: futurum and adventus. Futurum, the future principle of fuo, the same root from which we get our word physics . . . is the future actualization of potentialities within things. Adventus is the appearance of something new that is not yet within things, not even as a possibility” (p. 14). Prophecy believes in what God will do outside of any human possibility. Prophetic preaching believes in a future where God intervenes. “Adventus” is a belief that God is in control of the future.

Biblically speaking, “adventus” would be the theme of prophetic preaching. The “adventus” preaching of the gospel will be a confrontation to the culture. It is unique and we must protect that quality which thus calls humans above and beyond themselves. “It is our conviction that the claims of Christ confront both the age and the man, and that when we look at both we do so from the perspective of the Word of God, the center of which is the evangel, the good news of salvation from sin, offered freely to those who have faith in Jesus Christ” (Holmes, 1987b, p. 58).

The challenge of prophetically preaching persuasive appeals grasps the promise of
authority given by Christ in Matthew 28:18: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Williams (1998) shared the definition and the results of prophetic preaching: “Rather than simply to inform, prophetic preaching has a sense of urgency” (as quoted in Morris, 2011, p. 7). The need for this type of preaching is emphasized:

Shout out with authority and spring into action no matter what the personal cost might be . . . The time has come for us to reclaim the gift of prophetic preaching. We need to step forward into the marketplace and declare, ‘Thus saith the Lord’ so that people will once again stop in their tracks and listen to what we have to say. Then they will have no option but to respond to the One who called us to declare righteousness and speak boldly against sin. (Morris, 2011)

** Appeals in Genesis **

God Himself gave the first persuasive appeals in Genesis 2 and 4. These appeals to Adam and Eve gave a choice between right and wrong. These appeals warned of the consequences of choosing a wrong course. The appeal is given as a divine signpost at a critical intersection in human activity. Appeals show the way to avoid the certain disaster of a wrong decision.

The first appeal found in Scripture is recorded in Genesis 2:16, 17: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” The first element of this appeal is truth, directly set forth. Adam and Eve were allowed to eat of all the trees of the garden except for one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God did not want them to know evil because sin brings death. If the warning were rejected, death would follow. The appeal clearly defined the consequences.

God intervened with another appeal in Genesis 4:6, 7. God initiated a conversation with the recalcitrant Cain, giving a warning that sought to prevent him from
going further into rebellion. God confronted him with two directions and their corresponding consequences.

So the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”

The promise was given that right decisions would bring acceptance from God and victory over sin.

The next appeal is set in an extended narrative regarding a promised heir for Abraham and Sarah. This appeal includes the patriarch’s own persuasive appeal to God on behalf of the souls in Sodom. The narrative includes conversation between God and man. Questions and answers were part of working through the appeal process. Genesis 17 and 18 highlight this reality. This helps us understand how God teaches, and how He brings people into harmony with His will. In responding to Abraham’s appeal, God taught Abraham how to intercede for Sodom.

Genesis 19 is a direct and anxious appeal from the two angels who had appeared with the Lord when they came to Abraham’s tents (chap. 18). This chapter links the role of Abraham’s prayers and appeals to God with the role of the angels who were sent to appeal to Lot. It is clear that effective appeals are associated with much prayer.

Appeals were given with full disclosure and sought to win as many as possible from the threatened destruction. Sodom was doomed. The only escape was to get out. Lot was directed to get his family out: “Take them out of this place” (Gen 19:12). “Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city . . . Escape for your life! Do not look behind you” (Gen 19:14, 17). Biblical precedent gives us appeals as earnest and impassioned as the gravity of the case demands.
Judah presented his appeal as an intercession (Gen 44:16, 18-34) in the presence of the second mightiest authority on earth. He stood, unwittingly, before his brother, Joseph. To save his brother Benjamin from a lifetime of slavery, Judah offered himself. In humility, he sought for mercy. As soon as Judah was done speaking, the Egyptian prime minister responded to his appeal by revealing his true identity to his brothers.

Within the Ten Commandments, the fourth and fifth contain appeals calling people into relationship. They harken back to Genesis and the origin of all relationships between God and human beings. The fourth commandment speaks directly to this point: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy” (Exod 20:8). Zacharias (2010) observed, “It is the mind that holds memories and processes texts within contexts, so much so that when the mind has become disconnected from those memories, we wonder who the person is anymore.” He continues, “God is the only one who knows us comprehensively. By denying him and his existence, we reject the one person who knows us completely, with the result that we truly become strangers to ourselves and to others” (pp. 24, 25).

When we preach prophetically, we must keep our origins in view. The knowledge of the eternal God helps us define who we are and what our life means. Listeners can make more intelligent decisions when they hear convincing evidence of the all-sufficiency of God.

**Appeals of Isaiah and Jeremiah**

The book of Isaiah opens with a direct appeal from God. The appeal in preaching is commonly seen as the conclusion, but Isaiah weaves his appeal into the message from the start. The prophet says that the people of the Lord “have turned away backward” (Isa 1:4). “Alas” (v. 4) indicates a yearning from God’s heart for a nation that is rotting like a
hut in the midst of a cucumber garden, or a “besieged city” (v. 8). Their disgrace is as sure as the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah. God even addressed their leaders and the people as if they were Sodom and Gomorrah. “By placing them on the same level with the cursed people of Sodom and Gomorrah the author’s intention is to indicate God’s disgust with their relationship, spiritual growth, and performance towards Him. Thus, right in the beginning He warns them that their end might be the same as those who perished in the two ancient cities” (Gregor, 2011, p. 21).

Israel’s actions caused God to hate their religion and view their sacrifices as a desecration of His courts. God was sick of their pretense. He warned that He would no longer hear their prayers no matter the sacrifice. So far gone in iniquity was the nation that God called their Sabbath observance “an abomination to Me” (v. 13). The only hope presented in this descriptive statement is to be found in verse 2; “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me.”

They were God’s children. He declared that there was hope. He gave His solution for their rebellion in verse 16. That solution was to go beyond a mere ceremonial cleansing to the actual changes that must be made in life. The solution was to heed the appeal to “put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes” (Isa 1:16).

Beyond putting away evil, the appeal was to “learn to do good, seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Isa 1:17). If evil is to be put away, the social issues must be addressed. “One of the main roles of those who were called to lead was to implement justice in the courts and protect those levels of the society which needed protection, such as orphans and widows, against merciless lenders. Even outside of Judah and Israel, leaders and especially kings, were responsible for the
protection of the weak . . . First, God indicates that they must stop doing wicked deeds. But this is not enough, he goes a step further, indicating that they cannot ignore social injustice and remain passive, they must start doing good” (Gregor, 2011, p. 25).

“Come” is at the heart of the appeal for decision, and with this word, God arrives at the focal point of His invitation. In a sentence, the preacher of appeals asks the pertinent question expressed so often by Graham: “Ask yourself right now if the Holy Spirit is calling out to you, ‘Come’” (Graham, 2011, p. 232). God’s “closing” words to Isaiah’s introduction are “Come now.” Now is the time to come. God has not waited for them to get better. He has told them what to do, but the focus is on the coming. Their sins, though like scarlet, will become as white as snow. What God needs from them is a willing heart, a heart that yields obedience. He promises that the sure restoration is the result: “You shall eat the good of the land” (Isa 1:18, 19).

A reminder of the negative consequences of their current course concludes this persuasive appeal: “But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword;” Isaiah emphasizes, “For the mouth of the Lord has spoken” (Isa 1:20).

Jeremiah also opens with God pleading for the repentance of His people: “I remember you, The kindness of your youth, The love of your betrothal” (Jer 2:2). The Lord brings forth the burden of His heart: “What injustice have your fathers found in Me, That they have gone far from Me, have followed idols, and have become idolaters? Neither did they say, ‘where is the LORD . . .’” (Jer 2:5, 6)? You can sense the deep hurt in the words of the Lord: “For they have turned their back to Me, and not their face” (Jer 2:27). As in Isaiah, God shows that He will no longer listen when they call in the time of trouble. He will allow their other gods to answer and save them.
After the appeal of Jeremiah in 18:7-10, the prophet faces death threats. This shows the stubborn pride of the unrepentant against God’s love that would in an instant turn away from the wrath that He had determined to bring upon the nation. Nonetheless, the prophetic preacher proclaims all the truth of God. His case is against the sin of His people. He pleads for their response.

Jeremiah’s heart, therefore, is broken for God’s people. He uplifts the world’s Redeemer in Jeremiah 23:6: “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” He gives the promise of restoration in vv. 7 and 8. Then it seems the prophet’s heart gives way to a deep grief over their sins. He writes in the poetic language of the prophets, words that could not find adequate expression otherwise:

“My heart within me is broken
Because of the prophets;
All my bones shake . . .” (Jer 23:9).

The grief, the passion, the heartbreak, and the anger of God all come pouring out through the appeals of the weeping prophet. Aptly placed are the words of the evangelist: “Preaching for decision requires decided preaching. There must be a lofty and mighty purpose in the preacher’s own mind, a purpose that actuates him. . . . The preacher is on a mission of salvation. . . . He is after souls, after conviction, after decision. . . . It is in such preaching as this that God makes ‘His ministers a flaming fire.’ . . . He carries the deep feeling into the pulpit. His soul is baptized with the spirit and importance of his theme. All his heart, all his power, are enlisted. He kindles and glows with the greatness of what he is saying. The sermon comes from his burning heart” (Haynes, 1939, pp. 116, 117). When the preacher’s heart is touched by God, God is able to touch hearts with the message proclaimed.
The appeal brings to the hearers an understanding of their true condition before God. It explains the remedy—returning to God alone. The warning against rejection is also given. The gospel is an open sharing of pain and a plan for its healing. It is a plea for reconciliation. Without the appeal to come, to return, to repent, no gospel message is complete.

**The Appeals of John the Baptist**

The Baptist’s appeals present the straightforward call: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 3:2)! A new direction is necessary because a whole new order of government is near. John was direct and bold in presenting his case for decision. His theology was not a choice among several acceptable alternatives. As a student of the prophets, John was convinced that the Messiah would soon appear. To be effective, appeals must be presented in a believable, unapologetic style.

John’s original “brood of vipers” (Matt 3:7) is borrowed by Jesus in Matthew 12:34. The code language addressing Pharisees and Sadducees is striking. It certainly caught the attention of his audience and showed the need of repentance, even among the religious classes. The message was clear. They would be judged, and that according to their works. The descriptive address continues as the prophet warns, “Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matt 3:10). John’s enemies classified his speech as a threat. Consider his reference to the coming Messiah when he admonished, “His winnowing fan is in his hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matt 3:12). Jewish leaders had come to the conclusion that this was said directly
concerning them. For John and for Jesus, the appeal was so direct as to startle. God expects his messengers to craft an argument that confronts and disturbs as necessary.

At times the messenger himself needs an appeal. God alone understands why, as illustrated in the following account. During the final days of John the Baptist’s life, we see Christ making an appeal in a style that clearly contrasts with some of John’s earlier appeals. In the silence of a dungeon, John suffered. From the depths of his anguish, he questioned whether Jesus was actually the Messiah (Matt 11:3). When John’s disciples brought this question to Jesus, He answered by means of His work (Matt 11:5). He then gave His last appeal to the preacher of the First Advent: “And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me” (Matt 11:6). Those words were hope for John’s tormented soul. He responded to this gentle appeal, willingly giving his life as the first martyr of the New Testament.

The preacher who was “violent” for Christ (Matt 11:12) was finally and fully proven in the silence of confinement. The last words of Christ for John appealed to him to be strong, resisting the temptation to be offended because Jesus did not work to release him. He was encouraged to trust. Appeals do not always guarantee immediate “positive” results. They may simply encourage a trustful waiting upon the Lord. “So [John] waited and rotted. And one day, his cell door swung open. . . . Could this be it? The long-awaited release? Indeed it was. But not as he might have hoped. He would be released, not from prison but from life. . . . At some point, John would’ve realized that he was being led not to life but to death. His heart would have sunk. Then steeled. He would go quietly, trusting. He did not have all the answers. A precious few, in fact. But he had the one that mattered most. . . . Just trust. And love” (Asscherick, 2009, p. 83).
The Appeals of Jesus

The first appeal of our Lord was to become His follower. “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19). He went to where Simon and Andrew were “casting a net into the sea” (Matt 4:18) and spoke the language of the fishermen. Jesus was the initiator of the appeal. He created a bigger, more satisfying vision for their future. Christ expressed this new dream in words to which they could relate.

As givers of evangelistic appeals, pastors are initiators, but we must know first-hand the experience to which we invite the people. They will be able to comprehend it if it already exists in our own lives. The appeal is given out of our experience with the Giver of the call to these disciples. Never should we give an appeal without knowing it is a “call.” Appeals by their very nature are calls; they are to be given to persuade the hearers to make decisions. They invite a response (Matt 4:21). The gospel is not truly given if the hearer is not called upon to decide, to change in response to the good news presented. Without the appeal, the gospel presentation is compromised.

In His parable of the sower (Matt 13:1-9, 18-23), Jesus emphasized that the good seed is meant to grow in the life of the believer. The good seed is “the word of the kingdom” (v. 18). “The living and speaking God of Scripture has chosen to reveal Himself through the Word. God has seen it fit to commit His spoken word through the biblical authors to the medium of writing, thus generating the Bible, the Written Word of God. It seems that one has to believe Scripture before one can believe the Christ of Scripture. Jesus Himself turned to Scripture to make Himself known. . . . Jesus Himself repeatedly referred to Scripture as the authoritative norm for faith and practice” (Hasel, 2012, p. 7).
It is common in the synoptic Gospels for the appeals of Jesus to be given with a prophetic focus, as seen in the following paragraphs. The goal of meeting the needs of people in the context of prophecy is fulfilled. Following his wilderness experience, Christ went to Nazareth. Luke records His appeal using the words of the prophet Isaiah.

The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,  
Because He has anointed Me  
To preach the gospel to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD. (Luke 4:18, 19, quoted from Is 61:1, 2)

Prophetic preaching enhances and empowers the appeal to make things right with God and others. Williams spoke to this: “Prophetic preachers need to speak clearly and powerfully about where we have gone wrong, personally, and then show how to get back on track with God both individually and corporately. . . . The prophetic preacher needs to carefully examine the present cultural, social, or religious situation and then put that situation into a theological and biblical perspective” (as quoted in Morris, 2011, p. 7). The physical, emotional, and spiritual needs are met in the message of prophetic preaching. Prophecy comes into clearer focus, for new life is evident. The persuasive power inherent in the changed life of the speaker has transforming power. This is the power of the Spirit that preachers need in their proclamation and appeals today.

The appeals of Jesus brought conviction. The Spirit of God spoke through His life and His words. Jesus demonstrated the complete range of persuasive appeals in the context of prophetic preaching. He asked people to get ready. “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. . . . Blessed is that
servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes” (Luke 12:40, 43).

Christ emphasized that He had come to bring division (Luke 12:51). His ministry could be complete only if it called for a decision for or against Him. Certainly, His preaching was reminiscent of John the Baptist’s when He said, “Can the blind lead the blind? . . . And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? . . . Hypocrite!” (Luke 6:39, 41, 42). He brought hidden secrets into the light and condemned the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Luke 12:1-3). The Savior chastised the multitude when He said, “Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?” (Luke 12:56). When Christ was blunt with His words, He demonstrated that He was an advocate for the downtrodden. The style of Christ’s prophetic preaching must become our own if we are to persuade.

Perhaps the best known of Christ’s appeals, found in Matthew 11:28, will help us sense His style: “Come,” He said. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Everyone who labors to do right apart from Jesus fails to achieve the desired results. It is all senseless, wearisome labor. It is a heavy burden. Prophetic preaching invites people to come to Jesus Christ and find rest for their burdens.

The second appeal is to “take,” “Take My yoke upon you.” Third, He says to learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” This tells the hearer that we have a sympathizing, compassionate, understanding Savior. Again, rest to the soul is guaranteed, “for My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt 11:30).
In exchange for hard labor and heavy burdens that we are unable to bear, Christ offers His yoke—a yoke that completely satisfies the soul. Christ is seen here as the Master of the positive appeal. Many appeals miss the mark because they are not winsome. Couching appeals in negative connotations will not likely bring winsome results.

The presentation is incomplete until hearers have had the opportunity to accept the biblical truth proclaimed. The presenter becomes confident, knowing of God’s power to change lives, for God has changed them. The power of Christ is alive within so the speaker is not afraid to make the appeal. There is no holding back because of those who might not respond. Everyone is given the opportunity to respond to the call of the Savior.

Jesus continued making appeals after His ascension. He is still the Master of persuasive appeals. Christ preached persuasively to Saul of Tarsus. Saul immediately gained a new standing as the Lord said, “Rise and stand on your feet” (Acts 26:16). As Holmes emphasized, “He deserves our adoration but He treats us with dignity. No groveling. Stand upright. The correct position for one who will speak for God” (as quoted in du Preez, Samaan, & Clouzet, 2004, p. 454). Paul first learned the importance of appeals from his experience on the Damascus road. In our day, appeals for decision come from the preacher’s own Damascus road experience with Christ.

The last biblically recorded appeals of our Lord are in the book of Revelation. From the seven churches to the last appeals of chapter 22, Jesus is still reaching out, prophetically preaching in the context of the last days. In each of His letters to the seven churches Jesus makes promises for the overcomer to claim. He entices all to respond to His everlasting love so they will be victorious in their experience as His followers.
The Appeals of Paul

Saul’s conversion experience was radical. The bright light that knocked him off his horse turned his life upside down in every other way as well. It took a few days for him to get re-oriented. No sooner was Saul back on his feet with a heart transformed than he “immediately . . . preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20). Such preaching stirred minds. Often there was ridicule. “Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, ‘What does this babbler want to say?’ Others said, ‘He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,’ because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18).

For Paul, an educated cosmopolitan turned apostle, there was only one interest: “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). He knew how foolish his new focus looked to those who held the worldview of his day. What he possessed was a compelling personal experience with “the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). Boldly he taught that God chose the “foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe” (1 Cor 1:21). For the apostle as for Christ, the message derived its authority from the Bible. His affirmation of the Bereans is strong in Acts 17:11: “They received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”

Paul’s strongest personal legacy was given to a young preacher named Timothy. In 2 Timothy 3:15, Paul gives a theology on the primacy of Scripture: “From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Timothy was instructed, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season” (2 Tim 4:2). Based upon the Bible teachings, Timothy
and all ministers who followed him were to “convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim 4:2).

As in Paul’s day, many today choose to believe only if the biblical message meets certain conditions. They want a message accompanied by miracles or a theology that fits with their own ideas. Some want preaching that is supported by the more popular conclusions of science. Often, the truth will not meet the “tests” imposed upon it by the skeptic. God expects that it will take an act of faith to accept His truth. Preaching Christ crucified is preaching faith. It goes against natural inclination. To surrender to a crucified man is seen as weakness. For Jews, this was a stumbling block and for all others, foolishness, but Paul preached it as “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:22-24).

Paul saw the gospel and the preaching of Christ as the same thing. You cannot have one without the other.

Now to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen. (Rom 16:25-27)

The preaching of this gospel of Christ was recognized in these words to be from the fountain of the “prophetic Scriptures.” Paul recognized the Scriptures as the true source of all he preached of Christ. He recognized that prophecy is fulfilled in Christ; it is centrally focused in Christ. In Paul’s gospel, we are taught that people respond in faith to Christ in order to receive power for obedience (Eph 2:8-10). Preaching that falls short of this is shallow and fixed upon the earthly. It fails to comprehend the prophetic urgency that transforms by faith.
Real preaching glorifies Christ, not the messenger (2 Cor 4:5). Preaching is not giving a speech. Nor is it political jargon, seeking to take advantage of an opponent. Though forever unpopular, it does not compromise by seeking acceptance. It remains a stumbling block and foolishness until one chooses to believe. The attraction in prophetic preaching is the potential to arrest and hold the attention of the truth-seeker. In this way the heart can be prepared for the appeal.

Preaching is not a perfect means of communication because humans deliver it, but preaching may be unmatched in its effectiveness. Through hearing, people’s lives are changed (Rom 10:17). Emotional responses due to preaching run from mad to glad. Good sermons reach the emotions of the hearer. Sermons that reach the emotions bring people to decision and change the direction of their lives. Biblical preaching is a powerful tool designed by God (1 Cor 1:20-22) to keep His people awake, focused, and moving under God’s direction. Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). The focus is His way, truth, and the way of the cross leads to life.

Paul’s sermons moved his hearers emotionally. His words came from a warrior who cried aloud, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21). These words are expressions of the apostles’ daily experience in the crucible of life. Paul affirms, “I die daily” (1 Cor 15:31) and he explains, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20). It was his work to call for surrender. Only the hearer who chose to answer that call could realize for himself the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:21, 24). This changes everything for the new believer.

Paul preached from the vantage ground of the cross. For the Apostle, preaching was the act of boasting of our Lord’s cross. “But God forbid that I should boast except in
the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to
the world” (Gal 6:14). The word “except” allowed for the bold, forthright proclamation
of all that made the apostle proud—that Jesus had died for his sins and those of the world.
Paul the preacher was dead to self-interest and boasting, and alive only to Christ, and
Christ was alive in the preacher, Paul.

Only as we realize the fullness of God’s love have we come to know Him.
Manning (2009) wrote, “(B)y sheer grace, the Jesus I met in the grounds of my own self,
has furiously loved me regardless of my state—grace or disgrace. And why? For his love
is never, never based on our performance, never conditioned by our moods—of elation or
depression. The furious love of God knows no shadow of alteration or change. It is
reliable. And always tender” (p. 35). Nothing puts life into our message more than
knowing that we ourselves are saved by grace.

It is no wonder that the very preaching of Paul caused disruptions, even riots.
What else could be expected when a “dead” man preached a living sermon! What would
happen today if, for every sermon preached, a prophetic force would impact hearts,
causing them to receive healing from pain and bitterness? What could happen if people
were moved to surrender idols? What changes would occur if publicans were led to cry,
“God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

Is such powerful preaching possible today? Yes, if we are willing to lose all for
Christ. Is prophetic preaching among the attributes God would have us covet? Yes,
because it is unafraid to preach truth to the powers that be. “Prophetic preaching occurs
when the preacher has the courage to speak truth with power not only inside the church
building but also in the streets and boardrooms and jail cells of the secular order”
As the book of Acts draws to a close, we see an aged apostle, bound in chains. He is humble, but full of assurance in Christ. He can rejoice and is content, even in bonds. He owns nothing and has no status. From prison he wrote, “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (Phil 3:7, 8).

God has a way of getting His servants from the prison to the pulpit to preach before governors and kings. The message in the heart of Paul was fit for the greatest monarch on earth. Christ willed that His servant would preach before Caesar in Rome, if only the monarch would grant the audience. For two years the Spirit waited. Paul preached at last by means of martyrdom. His Roman ministry was accomplished through divine appointments to preach before Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice before being sent to the capitol of the world’s greatest ruling empire. In these final chapters the ‘appeal’ is made in the context of the Greek word επικαλεομαι, “to call upon.”

Without specific detail, Luke shares the main themes of Paul’s preaching before Felix (Acts 24:25). These included “righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.” It is certain that the apostle spoke in a very persuasive manner for the governor felt that he had to make a decision. In two separate appearances before the Roman governor, Paul defends the gospel and is quickly turned aside (Acts 24:22, 25). Appeals for decision are often rejected, but appeals must be made. The sacrifice of Jesus demands that everyone be given the opportunity to decide.
Paul employed the persuasion of personal testimony before Governor Festus, King Agrippa and Queen Bernice in Acts 26. Theological reflection must include a personal appeal. The hearer must understand that what we preach has changed our own lives. This brings the audience to the moment of decision. People are compelled to choose, either “yes” or “no.” Real appeals do not offer a middle route as a satisfactory response.

In current culture, we often refrain from the appeal because we, ourselves, are not persuaded or changed by what we preach. When a deeply held personal experience is not present, any appeal offered will lack strong conviction. Too often, we live within both the heavenly and the earthly domains, and claim citizenship in two worlds. Likewise, this world calls Christians to tolerate nearly every moral persuasion.

If we preachers of the gospel are first of all tolerant, then we will have no compelling message for the audience we seek to reach. Why would they choose to become like what the preacher appeals to when no radical change is needed? There must, of necessity, be a contrast, a better and more attractive alternative set forth in the preaching and the living. It comes down to Christ and what He has already done in the life of the preacher. Things new and old must be brought out of that experience. New life becomes a visible reality. The un-persuaded preacher is not capable of stirring the heart of the listener, because the Spirit of God has not been allowed to stir the heart of the preacher.

This is the sentiment of Shuler (1939): “It is really inexcusable for any minister to present the truth without that vital force which comes from a connection with heaven, and which sends the spoken words home to the hearts of men. With the word of God in our
hands, and the Holy Spirit in our hearts, our preaching should have a directness and a force that will send conviction home to the conscience. With such a message as we have from God, we certainly ought to preach with compelling power” (p. 187).

Powerless preaching was not Paul’s problem. He was bold. His words bore the impress of personal conviction. He showed that God was calling all, both Jew and Greek “to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18). Two extreme opposites are cited. No compromise is deemed acceptable. The listeners understood that.

Paul used the strong word, “repent” to persuade, as did Christ (Mark 1:15). The phrase in which he used the word includes “turn to God” (Acts 26:20). He called even his royal audience to repent. It is impossible to persuade without a call to repentance.

Festus concluded that Paul was mad. It is important to remember that the most persuasive preacher of Christ did not always meet with success. This is the most extensive account of a direct appeal given by the apostle. The audience did not make a positive response. The preponderance of evidence indicates that God counts it as success if we give His appeal from the heart, not by how many accept the invitation.

Paul was not discouraged by objections. Instead, he took his appeal to the next level. Speaking in courteous language, he defended his case, then he went confidently forward, calling upon the king to make his decision at that point. Objection was met with an immediate appeal: “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. For the king, before whom I speak freely, knows these things. . . . King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.” Agrippa’s response indicates that

Paul was ready with one last argument in favor of Christ. In fact, he extended the call to all who were present. He invited all to make a decision that very day. You can sense the pathos in the voice of the apostle as he eloquently concluded, “I would to God that not only you, but all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains” (Acts 26:29).

In spite of his bondage Paul was declaring himself to be the one who was free! That a prisoner would have anything to offer a king seems unreasonable, but in the gospel context, it is true. We should not hesitate to give an appeal, fearing that we have nothing to offer. If Paul, while bound in chains, had something of value to offer a king, we have no excuse.

Paul also realized that ‘today’ was the most important day to give his appeal. Writing to the church at Corinth, he said, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2).

“No then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20). Paul persuaded, pleading with us to be the type of ambassador/preacher for Christ that he was.

The Appeals of Peter

The sermon presented in Acts 2 by the apostle Peter was given in the power of the Spirit of God. The miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit was the extraordinary manifestation that day. That sermon preached on Pentecost was the means the Spirit used to bring
conviction. No preacher can do this in human power alone.

Note Peter’s appeal to the fulfilling of the Joel 2 prophecy. He also cited Psalm 16. The apostle showed himself to be a biblical prophetic preacher. He opened his splendid defense of the gospel biblically. This is true prophetic preaching. It is persuasive. The context for all was his central focus on Jesus as the Christ. The Spirit then brought the message home to the heart of the listener.

We see a strong confrontational appeal from this disciple of Jesus in the next chapter (Acts 3:12-26). Two major foci are seen in this presentation: Jesus and the verification of Jesus as Messiah. Christ, the central focus, and the Bible, the authority for such belief. This became the divine template for all the preachers of the New Testament.

The appeals of Peter were biblically based. Acts 4:4 makes this evident: “Many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.” The preaching of the Word led to belief and decisions for the growing New Testament church. “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42). The preaching of prophetic appeals was driving the growth of the church.

The reference to Philip is an outstanding example of this type of prophetic preaching. The preaching of a sound biblical hermeneutic has Christ as its central focus. This meets the real heart needs of the people listening to the message. “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. . . . Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him” (Acts 8:5, 35).
The Appeals of James

The prophetic preaching of appeals includes calling to a deeper commitment. It brings to light a clearer demonstration of what it means to be a Christian. Preaching is not a showcase event or a “spectator” sport. It was never meant to be entertaining.

Our Lord’s brother gives us an inside look at what made the appeals of Jesus so revolutionary. He grew up with Jesus. James knew how Christ lived His life. From James 2:14-17 we can rightfully surmise that the power of Christ’s appeals were due to the kind of empathy that our Lord carried into His preaching. He was real. People could relate to what He said because He shared their lot in life. He spoke in terms and illustrations that they could understand. Christ met them where they were. His preaching brought hope. The faith of Jesus was demonstrated in works. Even Christ’s enemies acknowledged, “No man ever spoke like this Man” (John 7:46)! Christ could preach as He did only because He lived as He did.

God is deeply disturbed by the suffering on this planet because it afflicts the people Jesus died for. The preaching of Jesus is pointed in this regard. Matthew 25 is not a prosperity gospel sermon. Consider verses 31-46. It is a tough message.

How could Christ and His brother James get away with such a strident homily? How can anyone dare say what Jesus and James said? The answer is clear: Christ’s love in action more than kept up with His rhetoric. In a personal interview, I asked Walter Brueggemann, “What of the social gospel?” He answered, “We ought to do social justice, but it is not directly the task of the prophet.” For Brueggemann, the primary task is the Word of God, but we should not neglect the social aspects of Christianity that open the heart and make it receptive to that Word.
In this personal interview, the professor was asked to respond to the statement, “Please define prophetic preaching.” “Prophetic preaching,” according to Brueggemann, “is imagining the world as if God is a real character and if God is a real character that changes everything . . . a fundamental belief (in the world culture) is God is not a real character. God is an idea, a symbol. Old Testament prophets rarely talk about an issue. Almost always spoke in poetry . . . they tried to get people to imagine the world differently”. He went on to say concerning the practice of the prophetic imagination, “The prophet’s imagining what the world would be like if God is. The idea they spoke in poetry is significant” (Personal correspondence, January 12, 2012). The preacher must be a believer that God is, and that He still does things that are impossible from a strictly human perspective.

As stated earlier, this is the “adventus” in Adventist prophetic preaching. God chose poetry for the prophets because it reaches to the heart, not just the intellect. An appeal, to be effective, must reach the imagination of the individual. Jesus knew this when He stated, “but their heart is far from Me” (Matt 15:8).

James brings a straight call for a gospel of faith in action. He would advocate for involvement within our communities, for healing, community service, and disaster relief. Sometimes the best preaching does not heal the wounded. Often, the appeal that matters most is the helping hand, the sympathizing heart, the visit beside the sickbed, the party hosted for youth, the support group ministry for the addicted or outcast, the homeless shelter ministry, the mission trip, the letter of encouragement, the door you went to for the church’s annual humanitarian appeal, the home that you helped build for someone else, the healthful living outreach, or the small group with which you are involved.
McMickle (2006) would agree with James. We must speak the truth to those among us who are the blessed with material things.

There is a deafening silence on such matters as society’s care for ‘the least of these’. . . Instead, there is a constant call to ‘praise God’ that is seldom, if ever, followed up with a challenge to serve God in tangible ways that are a benefit to our brothers and sisters, to our neighbors and friends, or to the widows, orphans, and strangers who are constantly referenced in the Bible. If you listen to sermons on religious television . . . you will hear this theme of praise severed from the prophetic message. (p. 79)

The issues that affect the poor are the issues of the gospel, for we are all in reality poor and needy before God. In Genesis 4, God makes it clear that we are our brother’s keepers. The best oratory will not make up for the wanton neglect of those less fortunate among us. The “gospel” according to James would keep us humble in our work. Prophetic preaching is vital, but only “as it is in Jesus.” Christ especially identified with the poor in all aspects. He commissions us to the same commitment. Where the people of God choose to be naïve or ignorant about injustice and the other issues that cause suffering, there they destroy their effectiveness as preachers of the gospel. Words are cheap when they are presented in the place of necessary personal action. The Christian Adventist pulpit must be a living beacon of truth and hope.

Knight (2008) pleaded for balance here. Without it, he feared that the Adventist message would be neutered, and would lose its distinctive identity. He argued that while Christ “helped the outcasts and fed the poor, his primary ministry was the radical route of preaching a gospel that led to the cross. That same balance appears in the commission to Adventism as God seeks to prepare the world for the kingdom culmination that Christ initiated 2,000 years ago. The ultimate message of both the book of Revelation and the synoptic apocalypse is that the only real solution to poverty and injustice is the return of
Jesus. It is the solution that makes the Adventist message truly relevant to a dying world” (Knight, 2008, p. 101).

Our preaching of appeals can become ineffective if our message does not resonate with hurting people. For example, this is what the prophets often did; such as when God mentions His hatred of their hypocritical religiosity in Isaiah 1:2-15. However, immediately after this, through the prophet, God gives His direct appeal for transformation in verses 16-18. The prophet highlights the result in verse 19, “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.”

The right doctrine must be delivered, but with the heart of an unselfish giver. We preach from the honest life of a fellow sufferer among those we attempt to reach. True prophetic preaching calls us first to live out our appeal. We are called to be examples. What can humanity expect from other Christians if they decide to be Christian Adventists themselves? The “social” gospel alone is not the gospel, but neither is “correct” theology alone the gospel. The “correct” theology is to be presented in the context of a heart demonstration that the religion of Christ changes people for the best.

The Heart of the Appeal

The appeal is always necessary because life can change course at any moment. The unexpected too often becomes reality. Life is tenuous, and what of eternity? “The minister of Christ should be a man of prayer, a man of piety; cheerful, but never course and rough, jesting or frivolous . . . a man who is chosen to stand between the living and the dead, and to be mouthpiece for God” (White, 1948, p. 320).

We see such ministers giving a life or death appeal in the story of the jailer of Philippi (Acts 16). The Philippian jailer, supposing his prisoners had escaped, was ready
to take his own life. Paul and Silas immediately said, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here” (Acts 16:28). Appeals give hope. Just one hope-filled sentence and the jailer responded, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). In just one more sentence the apostles sent home their appeal, saying, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31). This is the heart of every appeal - to believe in Jesus for salvation. Only He can save.

The heart of the preacher must be alive and passionate about what Jesus has done for us. “If there is anything in our world that should inspire enthusiasm, it is the cross of Christ” (White, 1962, p. 81). His blood justifies us. We are saved by His grace.

We must proclaim the good news of the transforming power Jesus gives through the Person and power of the Holy Spirit. We must make plain the sanctifying work He does in us. We must invite “the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God” (White, 1962, p. 92).

White (1962) wrote expressly on these two points:

Neglect this great salvation, kept before you for years, despise this glorious offer of justification through the blood of Christ and sanctification through the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. I entreat you now to humble yourselves and cease your stubborn resistance of light and evidence. (pp. 97, 98)

Appeals always come with a message. Paul and Silas had more they needed to say to the jailer of Philippi. The chapter says they spoke God’s word (Acts 16:32) and explained what the jailer needed to know about God. There is a similar three-step process to what Jesus offered in Matthew 11: Come, Take, Learn. We invite listeners to come as they are, to receive the gift of salvation/forgiveness of sin(s) and then we call upon them
to grow, to learn, to be disciples. That night, upon receiving the message, the jailer and his family were baptized. Life out of death. That is the power of the persuasive appeal.

**Conclusion: Appeals That Reach the Heart**

The appeal is based upon the body of the message already presented. It draws its force from what the people have just heard. It shines a light on their potential decision and its results. In reference to the need to preach what people need to hear and yet persuade them to a life-changing choice, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “If we’re going to be sound in our doctrine of who we are, we’ve got to be concerned about man’s physical and his material well-being. It may be true that man cannot live by bread alone, but the mere fact that Jesus added the alone, means that man cannot live without bread. Religion must be concerned about, (sic) the conditions that people face as they live everyday” (as quoted in Bell, 1999, p. 2).

We must invest our hearts in our preaching. In her address to ministers, White (1948) wrote,

A great and solemn truth has been entrusted to us, for which we are responsible. Too often this truth is presented in cold theory. . . . Most precious gems of truth are often rendered powerless by the wisdom of words in which they are clothed, while the power of the Spirit of God is lacking. Christ presented the truth in its simplicity; and He reached not only the most elevated, but the lowliest men of earth. The minister who is God’s ambassador and Christ’s representative on the earth, who humbles himself that God may be exalted, will possess the genuine quality of eloquence. . . . With an unction of the Holy Spirit upon him, giving him a burden for souls he will not dismiss a congregation without presenting before them Jesus Christ, the sinner’s only refuge, making earnest appeals that will reach their hearts. He should feel that he may never meet these hearers again until the great day of God. (pp. 313, 314, 316)

As to the urgency of making appeals, the call given in Joshua 24:15 can be cited, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . .” Paul wrote, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2).
The preaching of persuasive appeals for decision needs the absolute moral ethic of Scripture. This was defined most decisively and coherently in the ministry of Jesus. To reach the heart with persuasive appeals, we must care enough about the people who listen to our preaching so that they can hear the tender love of the Savior in every sermon and in every appeal. Then the persuasive, prophetic voice of God’s Word, full of grace and truth, will rekindle faith, restore relationships, and transform lives among those choosing to believe. This is the power of the persuasive appeal.
CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

“Ask yourself right now if the Holy Spirit is calling out to you, ‘Come!’”

(Graham, 2011, p. 232) Graham has spoken to a greater live audience than any other individual in history. He is known foremost for his appeals given for Christ. The giving of the appeal is also the primary work of the Holy Spirit. Appeals are given to the heart on behalf of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every pastor/evangelist should then consider this of utmost importance! Truly, without His work, ours is in vain.

Through the work of giving the appeal, the preacher of biblical truth reaches out to or invites the Holy Spirit to bring conviction of sin to the listeners. The appeal is to open their hearts to the distinctive message they have just heard. The Holy Spirit and the preacher become a team when an appeal is given for decision. Why present a truth-filled message with no intention of making a call for His presence to bring conviction to the heart? The power of the message is coalesced in the strength of the appeal. The Spirit adds a supernatural element that brings a desire for change and then a decision to accept the truth is made.

To preach distinctive Seventh-day Adventist doctrines using persuasive appeals with a prophetic preaching focus is the purpose of this project. Responding in a positive way to the appeal allows the Holy Spirit to ignite a new burning within the listener’s
heart. This is a new creation brought forth by the Word of God.

**Appeals Preached With a Prophetic Focus**

A leading Seventh-day Adventist evangelist of our time wrote a seminal work, stating that we must preach to the times and preach right to the heart. We must have a word to preach (Bradford, 1975), something with the potential of causing a change to occur. Prophetic preaching brings more than knowledge of the times. This preaching calls forth the promise of hope for deliverance or the awesome judgment where one must face God. Just as at the cross, mercy and judgment meet in prophetic preaching.

Responding to appeals is costly. This leads to discipleship and disciples must always surrender their lives to Jesus. Even before his martyrdom within days of German liberation in 1945, Bonhoeffer had died the death to which I refer. He wrote of devotion, the ultimate question of life (1963). His words carried the impact of a martyr’s sentiment. They are timeless and needed in our day when relatively few have written on making appeals for our Savior.

The heart of prophetic preachers shares the burden of the Spirit. Their other-worldly focus is to bring appeals to the hearts of their listeners. Appeals are “calls” within which we extend an invitation to relinquish sin and accept the gift of salvation. They are a warning that a decision is crucial, that spiritual life or death is in that very moment. They proclaim that no other earthly decision is of greater importance. Our response to Christ ought to be as current as today: “For he says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2). This makes every sermon we preach the most important one of our life.
Preaching with a prophetic focus challenges mortal wisdom to think after divine reasoning. Compromising just conforms to the norm of the world, rather than being transformed by God’s word (du Preez, 2006). A prophetic focus to appeals for decision has the potential of breaking through our clogged spiritual perceptions.

The imperative of Adventist claims must have a prophetic voice to match, a biblical “thus says the Lord.” “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12). The words of the apostle are inspiring, not the compromise of a third alternative. Appeals reject a lukewarm approach that seeks to please both sides of an issue. This upsets God (Rev 3:16) and causes attenders at evangelistic meetings to resist such “evidence.”

McMickle (2008) urges that our preaching must “appeal to our listener’s minds, hearts, and behavior” (p. 56). Without that, not much can be expected from our preaching, he observed. Indeed, the teachings of our Lord were and are radical according to Morris (2009). Jesus’ ministry was so against the grain, so extraordinary, that it took Him directly to a cross. Paul, the theologian for the New Testament church, preached with the prophetic voice giving the choice of being conformed to this world or choosing transformation by the renewal of our minds (Rom 12:2). The Old Testament prophets preached a complete change of life and direction from the ruling cultures of their times. Not only is change needed, but it is possible because the mind can be transformed. That is the object of appeals preached with a prophetic focus.
The Distinctive Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists

Giving persuasive appeals begins with an urgent end-time message. Revelation 18:1-4 is an “altar call” given by angels. They give a call to come out of Babylon, the religious confusion of the last days. Such language is meant to provoke a decision.

We can ask where we should place our trust. Waggoner (1972) brought out the point that we place our trust in Christ (p. 58). He is all-sufficient to enable us to overcome, even stronger than the sin that has overcome us time and again (p. 83).

Waggoner’s book is a gospel primer on righteousness by faith. For our doctrines to be really distinctive, they must be full of Christ and the plan of salvation. This study of Christ’s righteousness is the proper beginning and ending of all preaching with a prophetic focus. LaRondelle (1980) studied salvation’s various aspects. What happens when a person is saved and what do we mean by being saved? What are justification, sanctification, and glorification?

The work of Hasel (1982) remains a standard for in-depth understanding of Old Testament theology among Seventh-day Adventists. The work cited describes the role of the blood of Christ in the covenant from the beginning of the redemptive story. His blood made the difference for our salvation.

The centrality of Christ in the message of Scripture is vital for the life and hope of any gospel presentation. It must also be what revives the prophetic preaching that relies too heavily on emphasizing the needs of fallen humanity. Humans can only do so much to relieve the very real needs of the suffering among us. Christ alone can change the human heart that so quickly reverts to sinful pleasures. These pleasures cause much of the
chronic dilemmas of the world. For this reason, each volume written by Hardinge (1991, 1996, 2005) is useful in bringing Christ into the heart of this project. He is the Person of prophecy, the central figure in the writing of the prophets. He is the template for the true interpretation of Bible prophecy. Hardinge sees Christ as the focal point of each chapter in Revelation. Without Christ, the prophetic message would be skewed.

Sharing from his personal experience in the occult, Morneau (1993) demonstrated that the battle for our souls is of cosmic proportions. There are unseen forces of good and of evil in this conflict. He validated the scriptural record of death as a sleep until the resurrection. Going into all the details of this Bible truth without monotony, Bacchiocchi (1997) traced the issue of the Bible teaching on death, hell, and resurrection. These are the big issues of life itself. What next, people want to know. This extensively documented work leaves “no stone” unturned, including word studies from the texts.

What we believe concerning our beginning determines where we go with Scripture. Kelly (1997) argued for a literal Genesis account, asserting that it affects what science does. The young earth is a viable alternative and more than just another opinion as the many footnotes and resources indicate. The greatest appeal to creation is God Himself who spoke and it was done. For Adventists to preach appeals with conviction, we must believe in the creative power of God’s word and its ability to change lives. Creation is the basis for this and our core beliefs (e.g. Sabbath) and for all the doctrinal structure to which we adhere.

Sin broke the “shalom” of the beginning according to Plantinga (1995). A master craftsman of thought-provoking sermons, he dealt with the topic of sin, its dynamics, and what comes of it. A book that deals with the complexity of sin is needed to bring
persuasion to the appeals this project hopes to foster, for all have sinned and sin adapts its poison to each of our carnal tastes. Just one of the intriguing insights offered in this work brings out the fact that sin is both fatal and fertile, showing its complexity and perplexity.

God’s love is the answer to the sin problem. “Love is the only source of true obedience, and true obedience is not a burden. In fact, it is the highest blessing the believer knows” (Gibson, 1996, p. 57). Considering our distinctive truths, Gibson showed them in the light of God’s love. Love is who God is. It is the most distinctive truth about God. His love must be in the heart of the distinctive truths for them to be rightly presented. Every true doctrine flows from God’s character of love.

In a similar vein to Morneau’s, but not from the experience of dabbling with the occult, came Reid (2001). His thought-treatment of the supernatural and also of the role of God’s Holy Spirit in drawing souls to the truth and God’s love is a major theme of his book. He traced the power play of the warring spirits from Bible times to the last-day deceptions. Through behind-the-scenes news accounts, he showed the play and counter-play of this struggle up to the Second Advent of Jesus Christ.

Philosophy and sacred sarcasm entice the reader in any of Goldstein’s volumes. Polemics they may be, but even more. Indeed they are Christ-centered treatises with a prophetic edge. Each volume is reflective, questioning, and solidly held together with biblical answers. They are written for the layperson, but professional enough to please the scholar, these volumes contain Goldstein’s sentiments on distinctive biblical doctrines (1992, 1994, 1999, 2003, 2007).

Recognized as an authority concerning end-time events, Wohlberg (2004) had the distinct advantage of working in direct evangelism. Delusions are closely associated with
the last days and many of these are specified here. This book brought the headlines into focus and fulfilling prophecy gave us continuing confidence that God’s word is true.

Douglass’ (2006) volume is a theological work that brings out the Great Controversy theme as Adventism’s unique contribution to biblical understanding. The author contended with Rick Warren’s philosophy, but not before devoting a chapter to giving Warren credit for his contributions in regard to living the Christian life. Douglass warned of the inroads of spiritualism and emphasized the depravity of human nature, unredeemable except for the grace of God. We cannot save ourselves, but we can now choose to surrender and Jesus is ready to accept us. For his comparisons in theology and his call to remember our unique contributions and mission, this book is a standard work on the distinctive doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists.

The title for MacCarty’s (2007) work gets to the heart of the issue. Adventists, it is explained, have a sanctuary message that includes the law of the Ten Commandments. Therefore, we observe the seventh day. It is interconnected. However, this law is to be within us, not just on tables of stone. That is the Adventist concept of one covenant. The “new” covenant is in the heart; it has not changed, as God’s law cannot change. If a change is needed in the law, it is where it is. God’s covenant was made by God to abide in the heart of the faithful. MacCarty (2007) explained this nicely (pp. 81-85). This fulfillment of the law is so life-giving that it can breathe new life into the presentation of the covenants and help people understand that God’s law has not changed.

When it comes to the Sabbath, du Preez (2008) takes on the challenge of the Hebrew and Greek language use of ‘Sabbath’ and its use and meaning in Colossians 2:16. His research leads to the conclusion, both in its linguistics and from contextual
investigation, that Paul’s intent was to refer here to ceremonial Sabbaths not the seventh day Sabbath. Finally, the use of the Old Testament and literary chiasms are studied in depth to strengthen the conclusion.

Closely related to two books by Douglass is Knight (2008). He sensed, as we near the Second Coming of our Lord, that significant numbers of clergy and laity within our denomination are divided on our traditional view of apocalyptic prophecy. He feared our distinctive doctrines are not being preached on Sabbath mornings. This leaves our people to believe whatever they want. Adventism has been stripped of its distinctive meaning by many among us. Many within the church are going to lose their faith, claimed Knight. We are asleep and about to sleep far too late. He mentioned all ten virgins in the parable of Jesus (Matt 25) slept, but the difference was that the unwise virgins woke up too late to make preparations. They never got ready for the bridegroom, as did the wise virgins. This book is full of profound thoughts on salvation, the Sabbath, the judgment, and the Second Coming and they are troubling thoughts. While it is good to help people with their needs, the only real hope is to remain an apocalyptic people. The coming of Jesus is the hope; nothing else will cure the ills. If we doubt and give up on the remnant message, we will no longer be the remnant. The distinctive Adventist faith would die as other Millerite descendant churches. This thought-provoking call invokes the need for us to be a provocative remnant.

Considering the conflict over truth, the Discover Revelation series desires to be aware of ways to lead people into a greater understanding of Bible prophecy. Some keys will help and Paulien (2009) gave seven that can enhance and simplify these prophecies
for the attender. Much of our distinctive doctrine is birthed in the crucible of fulfilling prophecy.

Among Seventh-day Adventists, our most distinctive beliefs in regard to end-time prophecy revolve around the seventh day being the Sabbath (Tonstad, 2009). We understand that we are saved by grace. That we need grace means there is a law we cannot keep except by the grace of God.

In our times, we hear of how we are saved by grace through faith, and that is true. Unfortunately, the keeping of the Sabbath commandment is considered by many to be legalism and not of grace.

In the time of the end, the Bible indicates there will come a power that disregards the law of God. In Daniel 7, a foundational prophecy is given describing characteristics of this power as it forms. The little horn of the chapter seeks to war against God’s times and law (Dan 7:25). From the Aramaic, the importance of the Sabbath in this text is clearly shown. We find that the words for “time” and “law” in Daniel 7:25 share the same context. Gregor (2010) described how they stand as related, not separate, items (p. 107). He pointed out that only the Sabbath commandment “regulates the relationship between God and His people in respect to the day of worship” (p. 107). He continued in this context, “This transgression is also evident in chapter 8. The same power will throw truth to the ground (v. 12). In this context the word (truth) is synonymous with God’s law” (Ps 43:3; 119:43) (p. 107).

Douglass (2010) asserted that the heartbeat of Adventism is the Advent of Christ. We are not to slip away in oblivion. We are destined to be there at the Advent. The
distinctive truths hidden in our hearts are the truths of Jesus, the One who is coming again.

Even the most basic of Christian doctrines is under attack today. Scarone (2011) went in-depth to document the trinity doctrine of the Bible. The book shows this evidence to be more than persuasive.

**Researching the Postmodern Generation**

A preaching theologian for over 40 years Holmes (2011) wrote of spirituality and its interrelationship with Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. He set the stage for presenting distinctive truths set in a relationship and instructed on the dangers of a subtle counterfeit within the emerging church, postmodern community. If we are to preach, we have to have theology and the author did both well. The book is well documented and admonishes readers to focus on the “inner life, on being” (p. 65). When we live it out, that is evangelism (pp. 151, 152). This is a reflective book. He mentioned the road he left behind and previous theology and experience and went deeper by probing the road he then traveled as an Adventist. In one of the many “sights” along the way, his thoughts that the threat to true spirituality is spiritualism were discussed (p. 226). Of note, he quoted a mainline news radio star who had an accurate evaluation of our religious culture today. The Lord of the communion table seeks to commune with us, causing a more reflective spiritual journey in the reader.

Formerly an atheist, now a noted journalist, Strobel (1993) gave insights for reaching secular people who avoid church. Included are spiritual “sticking points” (pp. 103-120) and a call for excellence, as this attracts the unchurched.
Barna (1995) research shows that while each generation changes, the gospel is most effective when it is unchanging. There is a drawing power to the changeless that is a strength and attraction in itself when all else is changing and we ourselves are ever changing from one generation to the next.

It is not an easy task to win souls; at times it can be more difficult in a cross-cultural setting. McMickle (2000) has written particularly of a growing middle class among America’s blacks and how we can preach among this cultural group. His sample sermons and knowledge of their unique culture will be useful. They also, along with other cultures, are affected by the postmodern day in which we live.

Hall (2008) has sought to bridge this kind of gap in his study of cross-cultural preaching so that no culture is left out of making that decision for Christ. It is common for several cultures to converge at an evangelistic event. Hall’s dissertation provides understanding for meeting them where they come from and why they think as they do.

The story of U. S. Senate Chaplain Black (2011) is a compelling story from which he has written a practical spiritual guide drawn from the experiences of growing up as an African-American. Adversity was known first hand. Just reading Black’s accounts and the positive pointers he has learned from them will help the preacher with a prophetic focus to make the connections that, by God’s grace, will lead more to Christ from every ethnic group.

For a fuller discourse on postmodernism and its effect on how the church functions Kimball (2003) provided valuable research. His volume explains the emerging church movement and shares how these churches have sought to meet the spiritual needs of people by adaptation and being relevant to the times. Kimball’s book persuades
because preachers desire relevancy. It should be asked, at what cost? Is our distinctive identity to be compromised? Distinctive doctrines identify what is unique in our beliefs, so the Scripture must test them. How much do we adapt to the culture before distinctive truths lose their relevance? No matter what the areas of disagreement are, we can thank Kimball for challenging us to be aware of the needs of emerging generations.

Bell and Golden (2008) challenged popular culture with their book full of pointed criticisms. Of interest here is the fact that youth and young adults have made up a large percentage of those attending Mars Hill Church, the church Bell founded in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The traditional approach to preaching no longer works, asserted Loscalzo (2000). It seems to be going upstream to expect the same results as in the past. Thus, let us learn what we can from a polished teacher of preaching. In this generation, even the churched may not know why they believe. Here are some answers to a postmodern preaching dilemma.

How to reach the postmodern culture is a reality that Altrock (2004) addressed. Postmodern values are shared along with the use of media to reach this culture. Helpful resources are included. He encouraged “experiential worship” (p. 128). Image and video are part of the way the sermon reaches this generation.

MacArthur (2010) took issue with the postmodern entertainment culture that has come into the Christian church. This book provides more reasons why prophetic preaching in the present cultural context is vital.

The political culture within the evangelical community is the concern of Neff (2012). His editorial in Christianity Today from the March 2012 issue entitled “Why Last
Saturday’s Political Conclave of Evangelical Leaders was Dangerous” encapsulated his argument. He brought out the desire of evangelical leaders to have a voting bloc. He feared evangelicals would be used by the political system. Instead, he encouraged evangelicals to use the influence of education and persuasion to bring their cause forward. Christians should “exercise our influence by focusing our talent on the institutions of influence.” He warned of being “betrayed by good intentions and the seduction of power.” This is a welcome “prophetic” word from the evangelical community.

In a new book from the Barna group, Kinnamon and Lyons (2011) shared the fact that 25% of the Boomers and Elders (ages 42 and up) generation view Christianity from the outside looking in. Among adult Mosaic and Busters, one third are in this category. In the 16-29 age group, there are 40%. Of the youngest generation, the Mosaics, 38% have a “bad impression of present day Christianity, while 17% of this age group have a “very bad” impression. The authors address backgrounds, why the generations view religion as they do, and how the church can respond. A preacher must be knowledgeable of the generations and face the concerns. That is part of crafting the prophetically focused sermon and appeal.

We live in a secular age, according to Stephens and Giberson (2011). American evangelicalism has failed in that a few speak for millions who let them think for them. The authors have their roots in the evangelical tradition. They explain that those who perceive that they are anointed by God to speak like the biblical prophets have become isolated from the world about them.
If we are to reach the post-moderns, we need to have grace says Oluikpe (2012, p. 12, 13) in this compelling, confronting, and “punishing” look at Christian discipline. He pleaded for a redemptive community of faith. If more work was done in this way, perhaps more of those who have lost touch with us or Christianity at large could respect the gospel and its amazing deep wisdom and healing power to save to the uttermost (Heb 7:25).

**Preaching With a Prophetic Focus**

My assumption is that evangelistic preaching would be considered more along the line of deductive rather than inductive. However, after giving definition to these terms, Nelson (1986, p. 13) developed the effective use of both strategies for the large congregation at Pioneer Memorial Church. This comparison and input will show that sermons of both types can be of equal value in presenting truth and that inductive sermons allow the listener to come to obvious conclusions without each truth being “proved” for them. No doubt we must respect the need of those attending an evangelistic series to see the truth in such a way as to feel they are discovering the truth as they hear. Persuasion is a two-way street as the Holy Spirit works on the preacher and the hearer.

Poetry reveals feelings more adequately than prose. Often poetry is song. The prophets used it. Is there a place for this kind of “poetic” preaching when we preach with a prophetic focus for appeals? There must be. Brueggemann (1989) looked into the story of Daniel to find poetry in action, a man living the alternative life for God, even in the presence of the earthly king! From Daniel’s story comes a message for the preacher. Bring the subtle new language of daring into the pulpit, a daring for poetic healing against all odds, a transforming, rescuing faith. An alternative possibility is born. “Can
we not be the poet in a land of prose?” is the lament of this scholar.

The cadence of home must be something the prophet knows well if he has the lot of preaching to exiles who are not home and may never have been there, according to Brueggemann (1997). If a prophet were to leave this out, he or she would be no prophet at all. Brueggemann (2001) took us into the mind of the prophet and encouraged the prophetic imagination to become a reality in the life of the modern-day prophetic preacher. How could one preach with a prophetic focus and still be concerned only with the royal imagination of the dominant culture?

Gushee and Long (1998) made the case for a bolder moral dimension in preaching. Ethical preachers and ethical preaching is needed. A variety of prophetic sermons is offered in the second portion of the book.

Considering the need for enthusiasm in giving the sermon, Boyd-MacMillan (2006) chose to write passionately for an explosion in giving the Word of God. Preaching distinctive doctrines with a prophetic focus needs and deserves the life of the presenter. We must put our lives into the message. The author recognized that a crisis in preaching stems from the lack of effective communication due to poor homiletics. The problems, elements, forms, and issues of preaching are dealt with. His definition for preaching as reaching the whole person in love with the Word from above right where he/she lives is included. This seems to be a worthy emphasis to include in this project.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. believed he was called by God to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ (Bell, 1999). The author intended to demonstrate that the preaching of the eighth century B.C. prophets was the template for King’s preaching style. Several of his sermons are studied to demonstrate his role as a prophetic preacher. Just three sentences
help to bring out the thesis of Bell’s article: “One day the question will come. How have you been living? . . . I choose to identify with the poor, I choose to give my life for the hungry.” Preaching with a prophetic focus and the persuasive appeal is seen to be closely intertwined in King’s delivery.

**Prophetic Preaching and Adventist Prophetic Preaching Contrasted**

There are a number of Adventist commentaries on the two primary Bible books of end-time prophecy, Daniel and Revelation. They do not always agree in particulars. Adventists, for the most part, subscribe to the historicist school of prophetic interpretation.

Scholarly works, still appreciated by pastors and laity alike, include the following authors: Doukhan (2000, 2002), who has written a two-volume work on the books of Daniel and Revelation. His focus is to unlock secrets and he uses his unique experience of being raised as a Jew to great advantage in revealing the prophetic secrets of these books, such as literary structures and chiasms. Stefanovic (2002) possesses a deep desire to bring the centrality of Christ into his writing. Without Jesus Christ being clearly focused, prophetic interpretation becomes confused and immediately loses its whole focus. Shea (2005) is an excellent Old Testament scholar and his work in Daniel is complete with graphs and the traditional historicist Adventist understanding. Nelson (2010) has a solid chapter-by-chapter review of both books, written so lay people can follow.

As prophetic preaching is discussed in this project, a helpful evaluative resource is the Ferguson (2001) dissertation. His project was developed in the context of a church
and this project will develop in an evangelistic context. The author addressed the various roles of the prophets and that they preached unpopular truths and preached to the unperceived needs of their people. There is a double challenge that may qualify a sermon as prophetically focused today. Preach what people do not think they need and do not want to hear. How can it be accomplished? He has good material on communication and one way to work through the aspect of problem areas is to preach a series (pp. 116, 117).

For more answers, the preaching resources of both Jones (2005) and Morris (2005, 2011) are helpful. Jones interviewed prominent black preachers and Morris, more preachers who are not of our faith on success and insights in their approaches and methods, including appeals. Of special note are the answers shared by well-known Adventist evangelists C. D. Brooks, E. E. Cleveland, Mark Finley, and Hyveth Williams and how they approach the appeal. Obviously an appeal of some fashion will be used because of the nature of the material presented, especially if it is an unpopular topic or an unperceived need being addressed, and of course, if both of those are true.

A vivid account of what Jesus did for all of us is written by Nelson (2005, p. 96). Jesus uses His people today to go into the filth to reach the most down and out with the gospel. It takes the passion of Christ, the grace of Christ, the love of Christ. God, have mercy on us for our hardness of heart! We need to realize that to preach with a prophetic focus is reaching where the needs are, appealing for resolution as well as conversions.

Adventist prophetic principles are studied in du Preez’s (2007) edited compendium from leading scholars. To preach with a prophetic focus, one must be focused correctly on biblical hermeneutics.
The book of Revelation, a love story? Yes, said Lichtenwalter (2008). The gospel, he claimed, is about real people facing real pain and hurts. It is the provision Jesus has made for our redemption. Without Him, all the beasts of the book would turn the love and good news into the worst nightmare of all time. This is a call for preachers to bring the real answer in Christ front and center. In receiving Him, he asserted that we are to heal by receiving even our own worst enemies.

In what is a pastor’s guide to ministry, Cassimy, Jules, and Satelmajer (2009) reminded us that pastors need to recognize that their role includes that of being a preacher and an evangelist. This would seem to be a given, but this should no longer be taken for granted. Cassimy, Jules, and Satelmajer forcefully brought out this need in this area of a pastor’s life (pp. 80-88).

**Prophetic Preaching and Homiletics**

For a compendium on homiletics that continues to stand the test of time Richards’ (1958) book covers the landscape. This volume remains the inspiration for the annual H.M.S. Richards Lectureship on Preaching.

Long (2009) offered a textbook on preaching style with the added punch of theology and polemic against the heresies that weaken and compromise the biblical message of hope. He called “for a bold and joyful approach to preaching . . . preaching . . . that clearly and confidently proclaims God’s past, present, and future to a spiritually disoriented age” (p. xv). The word treasured and properly exegeted brings it into the memory and this allows it to be preached with hope. Of special note, Long dealt with eschatology and proclaimed, “Vibrant Christian preaching depends upon the recovery of its eschatological voice, an eschatology that avoids literalism while insisting that the full
disclosure of God is not fully contained in the present tense” (p. 123). This is a contemplative read worth being a permanent resource on effective preaching. This is especially relevant for giving transcendent truths to people who need hope.

The best contribution that Tisdale (2010) gave in her book is the practical examples of the art of prophetic preaching with an emphasis on knowing your subject and speaking the truth in love. She brought out how counter to the dominant culture prophetic preaching is. I agree, but cannot agree on some of her positions such as the pro-homosexual agenda that endangers the integrity of the gospel.

For a study of applying biblical hermeneutics to the delivery of a sermon from the Old Testament prophets, the work by Greidanus (1999) is worthwhile. As a theologian and homilectician, he combined both specialties in an easy to use work. It is involved and intricate in his style of writing, but can be digested in parts. The most central theme is bringing Christ out of the text, while staying true to the original intent of the writer. Due to our theological differences, there are places in the book where I cannot agree with his conclusions such as his thoughts on the Sabbath and his view on what Solomon meant when he said “all is vanity” (Eccl 12:8) (pp. 271, 272, 274, 275, 276).

Among young Adventist evangelists, perhaps no one has traveled or spoken as widely in the past fifteen years as Asscherick (2009). Gifted with rhetorical ability, an engaging style, advanced vocabulary, and astute observations, he has written on the challenging topic of ‘why sin and suffering?’ and how this makes God feel. This book gives some valuable insights and helps bring balance into preaching for the decision of those listening. We must simply relate to the heart concerns of those who hear us. This project could not ignore this effective evangelist and his passion in giving appeals.
In his interview with Williams, *Ministry* editor Morris (2011) explored with her the definition of prophetic preaching and what that should mean for us in the Adventist context. Often misunderstood, prophetic preaching speaks to power and presents hope for the oppressed and, within Adventism, gives the message of the blessed hope.

What is the secret for making a difference, for shaking the world? Havner (2011) wrote of Paul. This is practical and useful application for the preacher who would preach a message with power.

Brueggemann (Personal correspondence, January 12, 2012) has given the prophetic voice as much theological thought as any modern biblical scholar. In a personal interview, I asked him to define “prophetic preaching” and the social gospel. His answers were enlightening and not what I expected. For Brueggemann, prophetic preaching is about imagining this world like we really believe God is real. That dynamic will change everything in our preaching, bringing it to life.

**Preaching the Prophetic Appeal With Success**

We live in an age of the lost appeal when we ought to live in the age of the last appeal. Haynes’ (1939) book is a gem of intelligent design for crafting sermon appeals that reach the heart. If we preach sermons for everybody, we are likely to reach nobody. The prophetic message ought to have a natural aim for bringing a call for decision, action, and response. More pastors should bring the message from his book into their present preaching.

After 50 years, evangelist Ford’s (1966) work is still worthy of contemplation. Not many, other than Billy Graham, have ever seen the number of people brought to decision for Christ. The chapter “The Place of Decision” is my favorite. Ford (1966)
quoted James Black who said of evangelists, “Our business is serious gunfire with a
target” (p. 119). Ford’s (1966) book is on the appeal; the target, the reason we begin our
sermon, is to end it with an appeal, the “necessity of a personal decision, Yes or No” (p.
119). Not many write about the appeal, but no matter how many do, this book will always
be a standard work.

In his syllabus on soul-winning, long time evangelist Colon (1985) went into the
details of various appeals and the fundamentals of communication, including how minds
work. He brought out the concept of distorted reality in the minds of listeners and what to
do in bridging this gap. For instance, people are visual, auditory, or kinesthetic dominant.
That has an impact on how they respond. The success of the appeals we give takes place
early when we establish rapport and build trust, by our listening to them, as well as their
listening to us. Personal visitation leads to resolving many issues and provoking a
favorable response to the appeal(s) when they are presented. Colon, a seasoned
evangelist, successful for many years, wrote a “must read” guide for evangelists today.

For the appeal to reach the heart, it must truly be the greatest motivator above
what has ruled there. A theology of the cross is imperative for the setting of the appeal.
The theme of this project is the appeal this theology deserves to be most associated
with—the appeal to the heart. The cross is more than a symbol; it was not used as an
emblem for 500 years after Calvary, according to Stott (1986, p. 21). Why did Jesus die if
He had no sin (Stott, 1986, p. 65)? What is the relationship of his suffering to ours? These
are just two of the questions Stott grappled with and issues people in our audiences
struggle with, as well. The answers are in a deep study of what happened at the cross of
Christ. If the cross is misunderstood, nothing else matters.
*Padded Pews or Open Doors* by Finley (1988) is a book that teaches all the successful elements of conducting evangelistic programs. From pre-work to the evangelistic appeal, the strategies shared come from the author’s first 20 years of successful soul winning. Chapters 8 to 10 are outstanding for their practical insights on getting decisions. In *Persuasion* (1994), Finley deals in more detail with the process of gaining the decision for Christ. Chapter 11 is specifically on appeals. The secrets to increasing their results including essential elements to the appeal are stressed.

Galli and Larson (1995) asked preachers to learn from journalists. The book encourages the mastering of effective communication that reaches people and wins hearts. Through appealing language, they can preach a better appeal. They win their listeners’ attention, than they win their hearts. This is a good book for working through thoughts, to paper, to presentation, to appeal. A message worth hearing is worth responding to.

Persuasive appeals connect with people. They are also the result of a sermon that was well thought out; it does not happen just in the last five minutes. People will tune out if the connections are not there. Loscalzo (1995) said part of the problem when we preach evangelistically is that it sounds like an evangelistic sermon. He wrote of our need to craft, as it were, a new generation of fresh sermons for the unbeliever today. We need to keep it fresh and connected inside of us.

Preaching with power and prophetic preaching go together. Was there ever a true prophet who did not preach with power? In a small but powerful book, Williams (1998) conveyed ten basic steps to preaching with power. Preaching must not only be information for the intellect, but a message that reaches the heart. The first step and
article included is from Bresee on emotion in preaching, Williams covered additional steps including the text to be used, the subject to be presented, the topic, theme, transitional sentence, outline, main points, and illustrations. A powerful appeal must have a firm structure on which to build and Williams (1998) filled in the detail to the steps and provided the kind of sermon that would also allow for a powerful appeal to be made at the conclusion.

McMickle (2001) contributed helpful insights into ending the sermon “with an appeal to action that is designed to energize the will of those who heard the sermon” (p. 180). Biblical exegesis is described in nine practical chapters with a sample prophetic sermon illustrating each of the “8 L’s” of the exegetical preaching style.

**Persuasive Appeals**

Cleveland (1971) dedicated his book on appeal stories to reversing the trend in society “in which life degenerates to the animal level and men become worshipers of the creature instead of the Creator.” The book is 141 short vignettes or sparks, as Cleveland put it, to command attention, arouse interest, connect and capture the heart. These stories illustrate an evangelist who was an extraordinary communicator. Deep thought went into his persuasive preaching resulting in tremendous response to his appeals.

Cleveland (1994) believed in several kinds of appeals, beginning with the early meetings of a series, when most could respond in a favorable way. The four basic appeals are mentioned and he took the reader through several short samples. Perhaps the most encouraging word from this successful evangelist on appeals was that “the only way to overcome the fear of making appeals is to make them” (p. 9).
One of the few books on gaining decisions was one written by Torres (2001) that went into the science of soul-winning, including the public call. The appeal begins from the start, but pulls everything together at the end. He brought out what to do, what to avoid, the place of conviction, and how to proceed, point-by-point, including samples. Now there is a companion volume (2008) available of illustrations the evangelist can embed in the call.

Preaching for Decisions in the Writings of Ellen G. White

White often united the words preaching and prophetic in her writings. Her thoughts are on the times in which we live, their relationship to the coming of our Lord, and the fulfillment of prophecy. She urged, “Give the trumpet a certain sound” (1946, p. 194). This is an appeal to the hearts of people living in our generation. It carries the thrust of what has been defined in this project as “prophetic preaching.”

How practical and awe inspiring is White’s statement directed toward ministers that there is no time to lose and we are to “watch for souls” (1962, p. 118) as ministers will be held accountable for them. Therefore, it would seem emphatic that we give invitations uplifting Christ to the hearers of our message.

In the story of Zacchaeus (White, 1940, p. 553), the Master Preacher’s heart is touched even by the “unuttered desire” of the publican. When our hearts are touched by the hearts to whom we have the privilege of preaching, our preaching will touch their hearts, too.

Worthy of note here is the helpful study of Ellen G. White on evangelistic preaching found in Burrill (2007). This is a ready and compelling reference.
The references listed above enrich the knowledge of preaching and the prophetic preaching of appeals. Preaching must be biblically focused and preachers must preach Jesus. However, when we preach Christ, we preach the distinctive beliefs of Christ. The references can help us see more keenly the battle for truth. Finally, they will help the preacher to deliver more persuasive appeals for these distinctive Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. Our next chapter will disclose the strategy of developing these persuasive appeals in the context of the Discover Revelation evangelistic series.
CHAPTER IV

A FIELD TEST OF PROPHETIC APPEALS FOR DECISION

Introduction

The previous chapter focused on literature supportive of prophetic preaching for decisions in evangelism. The literature review chapter sought to coalesce significant writing on the subjects of prophetic preaching and giving appeals for decision.

In this chapter, the field test for giving more persuasive appeals by means of prophetic preaching is explained and developed. The philosophy and methods section includes the inclusion criteria for participants in this project. In the methodology and implementation section, the details of the evangelism program are discussed. Learning components are reviewed that help participants move toward decision. Finally, the theory for giving more persuasive appeals in the context of prophetic preaching is shared with outline examples for implementation.

Rationale and Schedule

The distinctive doctrines of the church are generally presented in an evangelistic series of sermons. This evangelist desires to be more successful in the presentation of these distinctive doctrines and in seeing the results of his labor. Through the means of a prophetic preaching style, more decisions for Christ as Savior, more baptisms into His
church, and more disciples will be made for His glory. Following upon theological reflection, this project seeks to assess and compare the effectiveness of evangelistic appeals for decision. The doctrinal appeals included are presented in the Discover Revelation series preached by the researcher. The prophetic preaching focus will be what makes the appeals of the researcher different from prior appeals.

For this research project, the following distinctive beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were used: Salvation/Baptism by Immersion, Seventh-day Sabbath, State of the Dead, Second Coming of Christ, Remnant Church, and Sanctuary.

This study will assess the effectiveness of my preaching these appeals by means of prophetic preaching compared to giving these appeals for decision without including such a focus. The field test will comprise Discover Revelation presentations beginning in July 2014 in Holland, Michigan and ending in November 2014 in Cadillac, Michigan.

**Philosophy and Methods**

The philosophy and methods used for the study are explained below. The following thoughts capture the essence of prophetic preaching:

Preaching itself can be a highly prophetic act of confrontation with the principalities and powers of this world. However if we are to reclaim it as such, we will also need to recover the eschatological theology that lies at the heart of all prophetic witness. . . . This world of ours desperately needs hope, and prophets are uniquely equipped by God to bring it . . . prophets speak truth. In the midst of willful ignorance or avoidance of the injustices that surround us, prophets compel us to see and to respond to the evils of our day . . . prophets invite us to envision and to live into what will be: the future as God intends it. (Tisdale, 2010, pp. 104, 105)

It is hoped that prophetic preaching for more persuasive appeals will express these elements of eschatology and hope in Jesus, transforming those attending Discover Revelation.

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A qualitative evaluation using the focus group method was done following each of the two evangelistic series of presentations. Three separate groups met during August, September, and November 2014.

**Inclusion Criteria**

All non-members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, former members, and those members choosing to re-commit their lives to Christ and who attended the *Discover Revelation* Bible prophecy seminar were participants. Who the participants would be and the precise number of participants involved could not be known specifically before the commencement of the seminar. Those who attended did so voluntarily by responding to personal invitations and/or public advertising. Some attended throughout the evangelistic series; others, for only one or two meetings. The majority of participants indicated to us that they attended due to their interest in Bible prophecy and other related spiritual matters. The registration form for our series of meetings had ten different possible reasons for their attendance that gave us some general indication as to their interest in the study of the Bible.

The responses of the focus group were totally anonymous and identities of participants were confidential. Going into this study, I hoped to show that prophetic preaching was a particularly persuasive means of making public appeals for decisions regarding distinctive Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, thus resulting in more conversions and baptisms.

It was imperative that compiling the statistics from the project study of all participants be anonymous so no individual would be uncomfortable with the process. This was crucial for guests not of the Adventist faith, guests who had come seeking
answers to their spiritual interests and concerns. A personal survey questionnaire was initially introduced with the project in the Holland series and discontinued. This was because of what I perceived as a possible negative reaction to the survey or the means by which it was announced. More details are given in chapter five. No personal interviews were given as part of this project and no one person felt under pressure from me to give a supposed “right” answer.

A brief survey of six questions was the study of each of three focus groups. Free gift books on the given subjects were given to them for their participation. After each group meeting, a free gift book was given to each participant.

On a personal level, my quest to preach more persuasive appeals has become the passion of this degree program. The study focus is on the Discover Revelation series of prophecy lectures that I conduct. This makes the project applicable in the context closest to mine, yet of use to all who work in a similar context of public evangelistic meetings.

**Methodology and Implementation**

Many good sermons seem to fall short of expectations. Why do many sermons fail to be bold and persuasive? Why do we fail to remember sermons, even our own? Could it be that the lack of a persuasive appeal is the answer? “The most important part of a sermon is also the most neglected. Perhaps it’s because we tend to run out of preparation time. . . . The Spirit seldom overrides indolence” (Bresee, 1990, p. 24). Why would we preach and not give an appeal? What excuse can we offer? Do preachers not believe their message is so imperative as to include an appeal? What would happen to enthusiasm for the biblical message if the speaker were committed to giving persuasive appeals for
decisions? Answers to such questions were sought during the course of this project evaluation.

My wife and I have served the church in pastoral ministry since January 1976. From that time until June 2000, we pastored in multiple church districts and also in senior pastor positions. Our experience included five pastoral districts in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Michigan. Since July 2000, we have served full-time as an evangelistic team for the Michigan Conference.

Most of the major prophecies of the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation are presented within the Discover Revelation evangelistic series. This lecture series presents truth from the framework of end-time Bible prophecy. Each presentation is a study of one or more of the biblical topics included among the 28 fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.

The strategy of emphasizing Jesus first in the context of this series corrects the unfortunate tendency to over-stress the role of the Antichrist within Adventist evangelistic meetings and Evangelical protestant studies of biblical prophecy. As correctly observed, “the truth is: Jesus is the very best news we must never, ever leave behind” (Nelson, 2001, p. 17).

To support these claims for the primacy of Christ in prophecy and biblical doctrine, the Bible passage under study needs to be interpreted within the context of the biblical book where the passage is found. The biblical passage or related topical study is assessed in its immediate context. Finally, the inclusion of other relevant supportive Scripture to the study of the passage or topic is included.
Outline of the Daily Program

All preparations are concluded and set up is complete a half-hour before the beginning of the program. Preliminary music is played. Volunteers are in place no later than 15 minutes before start time. This includes greeters, teams working at the registration and Bible tables, media team in charge of public address and video cameras, prayer team, small group leaders, and ushers. The volunteers all have handouts detailing their individual duties. Those involved have attended two one-hour training sessions during the month prior to the beginning of the seminar concerning the details of their responsibilities.

The program lasts from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and includes the following elements: Guests are greeted at the door and shown to the registration table. The registration form includes a checklist to provide information of why the seminar captured their interest and what they hope to receive from attending. The survey states, “Answering this survey will help us make this Seminar more effective for you: (You may check one or all). I came to Discover Revelation because

1. I am curious.
2. I want to deepen my relationship with Jesus Christ.
3. I want to understand the books of Daniel and Revelation.
4. I want to understand the Bible better.
5. I want to know how the events taking place in our world line up with the Bible.
6. I like to study the Bible.
7. There is more in the Bible than I currently know.
8. I am looking for Bible truth.

9. I want to be ready to meet Jesus.

10. Other.

This form has also provided some reliable information concerning the depth of their spiritual interest. This is a voluntary questionnaire.

From the registration table, they are directed to the Bible table where they receive a copy of the Andrews Study Bible, New King James Version. The page numbers from the Andrews Study Bible texts are posted on keynote slides during the presentation.

The service begins with a welcome and announcements pertaining to the program. Prayer is offered and a theme song—usually “Open Our Eyes, Lord” — is sung. Next, there is a question-and-answer session. The audience submits questions that pertain to the subjects being presented. During this time, the pastor reads the questions drawn from the question box to the speaker. There is some dialogue and the answers are given using Bible texts. This is a more informal time.

A ten-minute health presentation follows the question-and-answer segment and is presented by my wife, Patsy. These messages are entitled *Living the Healthy Lifestyle*. The subjects include most of the current topics regarding health that are popular in America. During this evangelistic series conducted since October 2000, it has been observed that the health message has contributed to the interest level of those attending.

The sermon is next or after a special musical selection. The topics cover the doctrines of the Adventist Church in the framework of Bible prophecy in a Christ-centered approach.
The Order of Topics and Calls of Invitation

1. Bible: Dan 1, 2  
   *Life’s Purpose and a Mysterious Prophecy That Predicts the Next World Super Power*

2. Jesus: Rev 1  
   *The Star of Revelation: Life’s Last, Best Hope*
   Prayer Card call

3. Origin of Evil: Rev 12  
   *The Real War Behind the Guns: The Lion vs. The Dragon*
   Decision Card

4. 7 Churches: Rev 2, 3  
   *How You Can Have Revelation’s Overcoming Faith*

5. Salvation: Rev 4, 5  
   *The Dynamics of Hope in Revelation*
   Decision Card altar call

6. Israel in Prophecy: Rev 7, 14  
   *Jerusalem Showdown*
   Prayer Card call

7. Armageddon: Rev 15, 16  
   *What You Need to Know Today About Armageddon*

8. Daniel 7  
   *Prophecy Reveals the Story: From Bondage to Freedom*

9. Baptism: Rev 7  
   *The Blood-Washed Robes of Revelation*
   Decision Card altar call

10. Law and Grace  
    *Finding the Lost Ark of the Covenant*

11. Sabbath: Rev 7  
    *The Seal of Revelation: How You Can Receive It*
    Decision Card

12. “Change” of Sabbath  
    *The Last Days Controversy Over the Seal of Revelation*
    Decision Card

13. Revelation 19: Second Coming  
    *Is the Second Coming of Jesus for Real?*
    Decision Card

14. State of the Dead  
    *Revelation Solves Death’s Mystery*
    Decision Card

15. Mark of Beast: Rev 13  
    *Discover: What is “The Mark of the Beast”?*
    Decision Card

    *Where, How Long, and How Hot is Hell and Who Will Be There?*
    Decision Card
17. Daniel 8
   Amazing Discovery of the Bible’s “Lost” Prophecy

18. Denominations: Rev 6-8
   Discover the Four Horses of the Apocalypse:
   What Are They?

19. True Church: Rev 10-12
   Decision Card altar call
   Revelation’s Remnant and the Truth

20. Revelation 13: USA in Prophecy
   Decision Card
   Revelation Reveals America’s Future

21. Daniel 9
   The Tribulation and the Mystery

22. Stewardship: Rev 17, 18
   Decision Card
   How to Survive Prophecy’s Final Financial Collapse

23. Spirit of Prophecy
    Decision card
   Discover the Truth about the New Age, Channeling,
   and Prophets

24. Revelation 14:6-12
    Decision Card altar call
   Revelation’s Last Three Messages for the World

25. Holy Spirit
    Devotions altar call
   Guaranteed! How to Build Your Faith

**Varied Appeal Card Calls**

Appeals vary from raising hands, standing, and coming forward to the altar. In most cases, a response card is included. One kind of card call is for prayer. This is to be brought forward to the speaker with requests for prayer. Burrill (2007, p. 150) has used a similar card call with good results as it is non-threatening and prepares those in attendance for future altar call responses. Our experience tells us that people respond when they know you are praying for their requests. We use a special prayer card from the first night, introducing the card by reading through it and promising our prayer “team’s” dedication to pray daily for these requests. The value of having a prayer card is that participants easily respond and connections can be made.
Each presentation in this series provides new information, as well as new perspectives, on the character of Christ. Knowing this, it is essential that the opportunity be given for a response to every topic. “Christian evangelistic preaching means preaching to a verdict. It is first the indicative mood: a declaration of what Christ has done. But it is also preaching in the imperative mood: a demand for what God commands man to do” (Ford, 1966, p. 118).

After the core message, a prophetic preaching form of invitation will be presented and the appeal made from that context. On some evenings, people will be invited to respond by raising their hands or by standing to affirm their response. During other appeals, they will be invited to respond by means of the decision card and invited to hand it to their small group leader. There are nights indicated for a decision card call. At these appeals, people are invited to bring their card and hand it to the evangelist or pastor at the front of the auditorium.

No one way of responding to the appeal is dictated as a varied means of response protects the integrity of the call. It should be noted that no two people share the same comfort level with all types of appeals. Just as in fishing with different lures and bait, the catch will be different with each type of appeal used.

As each of these calls in regard to distinctive truths is made, new perspectives will increase awareness and the potential of successive positive responses is increased. An evangelistic series gives a natural progression in the topics presented from those doctrines shared with many Christians to more distinctive beliefs.

Different venues and attendance numbers can dictate to some degree the appeal call presented. It would be unnecessary and incorrect to presume that every prophetic
preaching appeal requires the hearer to respond by coming forward in an altar call. However, every meeting must give some kind of opportunity to respond to the message presented. “In every discourse fervent appeals should be made to the people to forsake their sins and turn to Christ. The popular sins and indulgences of our day should be condemned, and practical godliness enjoined” (White, 1948, p. 159).

“Repetition with variation of appeals has proved an important element in the process of persuasion. This suggests that people will tend to accept our doctrines most readily if they are repeated at intervals and in a different form with a different appeal” (Wiggins, 1975, p. 103). Wiggins also believed in spacing out the distinctive doctrines in the series of meetings and holding the number of sermons on a particular topic to no more than four (p. 103). Wiggins explained, “Even where people have been convinced by our books and Bible courses, best results are obtained by getting them to a crusade and securing the decision after some preaching” (p. 106). This is particularly true as repeated positive responses bind the individual to those truths and the interrelated doctrines that follow.

**Learning Components**

There are a number of vital learning components embedded within Discover Revelation. Each of these facilitates a learning environment and contributes to decisions made for baptism and church membership. Beyond that, they teach the importance of personal devotions. Ongoing follow-up through DVD or CD presentations are available with the series. Continued fellowship with church members through the mentoring activities of small groups, Sabbath School, visitation, and social connections is also encouraged.
When people come through the door for the first time, they receive a one-inch notebook binder that is theirs from that moment. Within the binder is a card detailing all the items listed below:

- A prayer request card that can be handed in to our prayer team. The designated prayer team remembers these requests throughout the series.
- A question card that can be handed in for the nightly question and answer time.
- A copy of the book *Keys to Happiness*, better known as *Steps to Christ*.
- A two or three-page four-color sermon guide for that evening’s presentation. The notes have several blanks in them that are highlighted in the keynote sermon presentation each evening.

Following the conclusion of the program, each participant also receives the items listed below that they are invited to insert in the binder.

- A Bible study guide written for each presentation in the *Discover Revelation* series. These average about seven questions each.
- The health presentation sheet for each evening.

Other items that are received during the course of the series for the binder are

- A magazine on the Sabbath
- A magazine on health
- A copy of *Gift of Light*, a book by Roger W. Coon on the gift of prophecy

Participants also receive the seminar edition of the Andrews Study Bible. The
participants are informed that this is their own Bible from the first night they attend. They
are asked to leave it at the Bible table at the end of the meeting so they will have it for
each session. After they have attended 14 sessions, they can take their Bible home if they
so desire. This usually means that by 14 times in attendance, they have been exposed to
most all of the core beliefs of the church. In addition, they treasure the Bible by that time
because they have invested time learning from it.

For attendance on the immediate Sabbath following the Sabbath doctrinal
presentation, each attendee is given a copy of the DVD “Cosmic Conflict.” This is a
study produced by Amazing Facts on the origin of evil. The very next Sabbath after that,
they are given a copy of “Final Events,” a DVD produced by “Amazing Facts” about the
last days surrounding the Second Coming of Christ. Mark Finley’s book The Next World
Super Power is also given to them.

The participants receive a free book for every five Discover Revelation Bible
study guides filled out. During the course of the series, five gift books can be earned in
this way. The books cover the range of distinctive beliefs of the church in story form in
an easy-to-read format.

Small groups are always a part of the program. They are allotted ten minutes at
the conclusion of the message after the special music, appeal, and closing prayer. The
small group leaders have training as disclosed above and serve as staff members to
disciple the visitors seated at the table or in the rows of chairs in their section of the
meeting site. At the two series in this project, round tables were used throughout the
series to connect better with visitors. The exception was on Sabbath morning worship
when a prophecy lecture was given in the sanctuary setting. Each session is a time to
begin filling in the *Discover Revelation* Bible study guide and to answer questions that may be asked. It is a time to connect.

When the Sabbath message is introduced, the *Discover Bible Class* is convened the very next Sabbath. The order of the program begins with breakfast each week and then an hour of Bible study on the distinctive doctrines of the church. The evangelist will usually teach the class for the first two weeks, then the pastor or an attending elder is introduced as the new teacher, while the evangelist continues to attend the class. This is an informal style. Each week, a new study guide especially for the class is given to each participant. In this way, the concept of Sabbath School is introduced to them. This is also a good way of developing another connection and fellowship with the guests. The class is open to anyone from the church.

*Discover Revelation* continues on Sabbath mornings from the Sabbath presentation onward. After the morning service, a vegetarian extravaganza is presented at the first Sabbath fellowship dinner with a special gift handout. A copy of all the recipes on the menu is also presented to the guests. Labels on the beautifully decorated tables identify each item. From that Sabbath until the end of the series, a fellowship dinner is served.

Following the health presentation on caffeine, four caffeine-free beverages are available at a refreshments table from that day on. Many enjoy this and the light refreshments that are also available.

During the series, the pastor, the elders, and the evangelist conduct an intensive visitation program. It is the goal to have weekly personal visits, either in homes or at the meeting site for those guests in attendance. This is an opportunity for questions
concerning the topics presented to be answered. During these visits, friendships are established, barriers are broken down, and decisions for Bible truth are made.

When baptisms occur, the church gives each candidate gifts of books. These titles vary from church to church. Usually the gifts consist of a book or books such as those of the Conflict of the Ages series, a baptism certificate, and a rose. Each newly baptized member also receives a mentor from the congregation. The mentor is assigned to share with them over the course of the next couple of years in a discipleship-friendship setting. This is a time for integration into church life and becoming active members of the church.

Each learning component of Discover Revelation lends itself to building the credibility of the message, the credibility of the series as a whole, and the credibility of the evangelist. People sense that it is a quality program and they enjoy the voluntary learning process.

Experience from tracking attendance records since October 2000 indicates that at the conclusion of Discover Revelation, the total average attendance from religions other than Adventists will be 75 to 100% of the opening day figures. Baptism figures vary on average from 15 to 50% of the number of guests in attendance on opening night. There has always been a harvest of souls at the conclusion of the series. More baptisms usually follow within three to six months.

The Theory for Prophetic Preaching for More Persuasive Appeals

I believe that prophetic preaching is a learning mechanism that is a powerful catalyst for change. There is an intrinsic influence of motivation built into an evangelistic series. Those attending are among a group of people with similar interests in the Bible.
As they attend, the interrelated components of Bible study become evident. Jesus often gave public appeals for decision. They are an imperative and effective means of bringing people to a decision. If a decision is not appealed for, it is less likely that a decision will be made.

In a natural manner, peer accountability is thus built into the seminar. The task of giving the appeal is repeated at intervals throughout the series of meetings. Thus, as the theory of biblical truth is presented, the listener receives an education about what God requires and His gift of grace to live it. With each positive response, there is a greater chance of further acceptance of appeals.

**Prophetic Preaching and Surrender**

A surrendered heart in the preacher gives courage to go into the unchartered territory of the public appeal. Wilson wrote, “One cannot preach what one has not received” (Childers & Schmit, 2008, p. 43). “The people must know where God’s man stands! He must, in pulpit and in private, in word and in manner, eliminate any uncertainty that might invite temptation. He must follow the path that he points out to others” (Cleveland, 1996, p. 59).

More important than sermon preparation is the preparation of heart and mind to be a spokesperson for God. The Lord needs to prepare ministers by giving them His treasure. “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us” (2 Cor 4:7). God appoints certain people to preach. In order to preach the Word of God, preachers first need the Word of God in them. Pastors/evangelists are appointed to their work. This appointment is their ordination to preach the Word of God (1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11). “In both of these passages the apostle
declares that he was appointed or ordained to preach, and the preaching was to be a proclamation of the gospel” (Richards, 1958, p. 111).

Prayer and Bible study are the foundations before any gospel presentation at Discover Revelation. “The men of prayer are the men of power” (White, 1958, p. 509). Jesus cried out to God with “vehement cries and tears” (Heb 5:5-7). James 5:16 affirms the need of fervent prayer. Evangelists need to “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matt 5:6) according to their Lord.

Prophetic preaching should be deeply spiritual, fed from one’s devotional experience with Christ. Preaching is introducing Christ, asking friends to receive Him as their Lord. “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20).

There is an immense probability that even those who regularly give appeals are not naturally inclined to do so. A call for decision is a call to surrender to Christ. Surrendering is giving up one’s will to another. The decision of the evangelist must be as Paul’s in 1 Corinthians 15:31: “I die daily.”

Appeals are about persuasion. Appeals for decision are essential for the sermon to be evangelistic. To be effective for the gospel, the speaker must include the invitation, an opportunity to respond. Wilson said, “The pulpit provides a measure of distance from the speaker that is essential—good communication depends on the listener having a choice to close the emotional or spiritual gap with the preacher” (as quoted in Childers & Schmit, 2008, p. 45). Without this call to decision, the “gap” remains and communication is compromised. Therefore, the researcher cannot presume a positive life-changing response from attendees of the evangelistic series without giving the invitation to respond.
These prophetic appeals require boldness. We could refer to nerve. It is, as Williams stated, “prophetic in terms of content, standing in the gap in the tradition of Paul and Peter. After all, it must be as we near the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. . . . Prophetic preaching is not necessarily shouting the counsel of God, but living what you preach” (as quoted in Jones, 2005, p. 128).

The Appropriate Amount of Time

The appeal deserves the attention of the speaker from the beginning of the presentation. The messages in this series usually last an average of 50 minutes. For effective appeals, 10 minutes are needed including the appeal, passing out the decision card, a musical selection and prayer. This important part of the sermon brings the message together and invites a response. An appropriate time must be set aside for preaching the conclusion, the final appeal.

Everything preached up to that point may well be lost or of no effect if enough time is not allowed for the appeal/invitation. “The first part of the conclusion should be a summary of the sermon. The last part ought to be a call to action. . . . You can drive your point deeper home if your summary pulls together your whole sermon. . . . The summary instructs the mind. The call to action confronts the will. A discourse is not really a sermon at all unless it does both” (Bresee, 1990, p. 24).

To begin an evangelistic message and not move the sermon from introduction to the concluding appeal is like an archer shooting his arrow at the target with no intent of an impact. A sermon without an appeal loses impact. This project has helped to show that giving prophetic appeals will give preachers a legitimate reason to follow through. Even where the message has been weak in its core elements, a good appeal can make it
memorable. Of John Chrysostom we read, “He calls the closing doxology of the sermon a ‘fitting end.’ It is so because it recalls the direction of the whole sermon toward God” (Lischer, 2002, p. 446).

Potential from the sermon should be fulfilled in the persuasive appeal. The fearful reality is that we must answer to God for the appeals we have failed to give (Ezek 33, 34). Therefore, priority time was given for preaching the appeal in this series.

In this project, the length of the presentation is limited so the importance of appeals becomes a larger priority. The prophetic preaching of an appeal confronting a current issue while proclaiming the claims of Christ will bring the theme of the evening into sharp focus. The sermon should be powerful at its conclusion, bringing conviction.

Evangelistic Preaching and Prophetic Preaching Complete Each Other

Prophetic preaching in the Discover Revelation series was shown to bring more persuasion into the appeal. A prophetic preaching appeal must be aware of the issues of the times. Then the preacher must be willing to confront the power, the issue, and the heart with the truth. The lines are drawn clearly. Williams correctly asserted, “Prophetic preaching critically challenges the status quo. Prophetic preachers are not preoccupied with being politically correct. Unlike so-called ‘patriot pastors,’ prophetic preachers are willing to confront injustice in the nation as well as in the local communities with divine authority” (as quoted in Morris, 2011, p. 6). One cannot just simply ignore the message. It is a message that is appropriate for the times.

This most neglected of sermon elements must make honest, earnest attempts to address, with a prophet’s message and heart, the questions asked by this generation.
People come to a worship service or evangelistic series to hear a word from the Lord. Their plea is “Where’s God? Does God still have something to say about our world? Does God care? Is there a God? Is there a word from God today?” By addressing these concerns in the message, the strength of the appeal is enhanced.

When an appeal for a decision is not extended at the end of the sermon, it weakens the core arguments of the presentation. As such, the importance of that message is not strongly perceived by the audience. It sets in motion a learned non-response to remaining sermons in the series. Prophetic appeals must be set up by a strong biblical message.

Biblical prophets called their hearers to make a decision (Isa 1:18; 2:5, 10, 22; 5:3; 8:13; 51:7; 55:1-3 6-8; 58:13, 14; 60:1; Jer 3:12-15, 22; 29:13, 14; Matt 3:3; Mark 1:4; 6:18; Luke 3:4-14; John 1:29, 36; Acts 2:38; Jas 4:7, 8, 10). These appeals of invitation were made following the warnings God spoke through the prophets. The appeals were brief, to the point, and memorable. These appeals of the prophets are magnificently prepared for by prophetic preaching.

The Holy Spirit moved holy men to speak for Him (2 Pet 1:21). Paul wrote, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). When a person receives faith through the Word, the Holy Spirit is at work. Faith leads to a response. The conviction of the Spirit is confirmed when the opportunity is given in the closing appeal to affirm belief. A positive choice creates momentum that leads to baptism and a life lived for Christ.
To Preach Prophetically is to Take up the Mantle of a “Prophet”

Prophets spoke to and challenged the norms of their day. They spoke with a biblical unction of a “thus says the Lord” (Isa 66:1). The very urgency of their message was an appeal in itself. Of our Savior it was written, “And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes” (Mark 1:22). To preach prophetically is to be persuasive and definite. Prophetic preaching arouses the conscience. Right and wrong are brought into focus. People are invited to relate to the problem brought forth in the core of the message. Specific issues were dealt with at the time that distinctive doctrines were introduced (see chap. 5 for details).

As McMickle (2006, p. 96) has observed, “In the eighth century B.C.E., prophets of the Old Testament voiced God’s displeasure with people who disconnected their personal piety from any personal responsibility for giving voice and shape to a more just social order.” Prophetic preaching must be concerned for what affects the audience being addressed.

“The Adventist preacher must call attention to the issues. Speculation and sensation are out of place, but using the best hermeneutics available and the soundest principles of prophetic interpretation, we are under solemn obligation to carry out the ‘watchman’ function of our ministry” (Bradford, 1975, pp. 101, 102). The message is prophetic in terms of prophecy, but also prophetic to these times with a message of hope concerning Jesus Christ.

Minimal Understandings That Lead to Decisions

Engel and Norton (1975) believed in “three basic categories” as a “minimum level
of biblical understanding required for one to make a valid life commitment to Jesus Christ” (p. 47). These are “1) a belief in one God, 2) a proper recognition of the biblical significance of the nature of man as a sinner, and 3) a grasp of the uniqueness of Jesus in salvation.” To give evangelistic appeals correctly, the evangelist must recognize this. We must give the listener a reason to believe. These levels lead to commitments that are life changing. Failure to recognize this leads to inappropriate persuasion. Patience is required. Giving appeals and responding to appeals given is hard work. The hardest work for preacher and hearer is learning to exercise faith.

The interested observer must reach a level of problem recognition that “occurs when the Holy Spirit, by producing conviction, brings about a perceived difference between the actual state of affairs and the ideal state of affairs. This, of course, serves as a powerful motivating force for change, which, in turn, is usually followed by a search for information and high receptivity to relevant communication. The filter now is open and responsive and this is the key indicator of ‘fields ripe for the harvest’” (Engel & Norton, 1975, p. 48). Then we know the harvest is ripe. Then the preacher can make an appeal such as the following: “In closing, I want to make an appeal inviting your response . . .”

Ward (1964) promoted four things an evangelist wants people to do that encourage decision. This shows where we need to make appeals: “1) To be saved from both conscious and unconscious guilt of sin, 2) To establish a willingness to forsake everything to follow Jesus, 3) To maintain the conviction that one should obey every Bible truth, and 4) To be a true Christian by doing right as fast as one learns the truth from the Bible” (p. 6). It is evident that appeals must build upon the amount of information presented.
Christian persuaders ought to know that a buy-in and investment of belief in the truths presented build initiative and momentum. Many accept the full message only after several invitations. They may not have responded to begin with. They may have rejected an appeal a number of times. However, for each appeal given, the chances of acceptance would seem to increase according to Maxwell (2002, p.158). The principle in causing a positive response is message and repetition of appeals.

**Appeals Should be Appealing**

The preaching of appeals is most effective when presented in a positive way. “Here is an important point: To state or phrase a suggestion in an affirmative way is to use a positive suggestion. Psychologists say that suggestion is strongest at its positive pole. This means that it is more effective to say what you want done than it is to say what you do not want done” (Wiggins, 1975, p. 102).

Pastors and evangelists often sense pressure to bring people to decision. However, Christian ethics demand that we give the most appealing of appeals without coercion or manipulation. Not all agree with the altar call. In his opposition to such an appeal, Lloyd-Jones (2011) wrote, “Man consists of mind, affections and will; and my contention is that you should not put direct pressure on the will. The will should always be approached primarily through the mind, the intellect, and then through the affections. The action of the will should be determined by those influences” (p. 286). He attacked directly pressuring either the emotions or the will.

For these reasons, it seems appropriate to impress the mind and emotions with truth because these forces compel one to make decisions. Though the altar call is not always imperative, it is useful as positive pressure for a righteous decision. As Brooks
stated concerning the most important part of a sermon, “I would say it is the appeal. In
the appeal the preacher must talk about Jesus, His blood, His matchless love, and His
desire to save. The appeal must be emotional, but not purely or completely emotional.
The emotions must drive the intellect to decide . . . preachers must always make an
appeal. I am never embarrassed if no one responds, believing that the response or lack of
one is up to the Lord, not me” (as quoted in Jones, 2005, p. 41).

Appeals at their best are inclusive. According to Cleveland, there are three classes
of people at every meeting that make up potential responders to appeals.

First are former Seventh-day Adventists whose walk with the Lord has soured . . . the
second group consists of Christians of other faiths . . . then there is the third class of
people. This group consists of people who have never experienced conversion until
that day. (as quoted in Jones, 2005, p. 53)

These three groups are invited to come forward for (re)commitment of their life to
Christ and the message they have heard. It is of note that music is involved in moving
people forward. Cleveland used “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior.” Graham used “Just As I
Am.” Discover Revelation uses a special musical appeal that is sung and continues to be
played by the pianist until the appeal is ended.

Ford’s counsel is reassuring, as we must remember that people are responsible for
making their own decisions. “God holds me responsible for ‘faithful evangelism,’ not for
success. Therefore I may plead, but never coerce. Our pattern is Jesus, who never
manipulated or forced people. . . . He neither lowered His demands nor increased the
pressure” (Ford, 1966, p. 122).
What is Meant by Prophetic Preaching of Appeals During Discover Revelation?

The prophetic preaching of appeals in presenting distinctive truths must be relevant, persuasive appeals to repentance and conversion. The prophetic preaching of appeals speaks truth to power and culture. This appeal style should show how the truths relate to the challenges of our times. In prophetic preaching, these persuasive appeals are interrelated, adding to the persuasion that it is time for a decision that builds upon the process and repetition mentioned above.

“God’s plan is not to send messengers who will please and flatter sinners; He delivers no messages of peace to lull the unsanctified into carnal security. Instead, He lays heavy burdens upon the conscience of the wrongdoer and pierces his soul with sharp arrows of conviction. Ministering angels present to him the fearful judgments of God, to deepen the sense of need and to prompt the agonizing cry, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ Acts 16:30. But the hand that humbles to the dust, rebukes sin, and puts to shame, is the Hand that lifts up the penitent, stricken one. With deepest sympathy He who permits the chastisement to fall, inquires, ‘What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?’” (White, 1943, p. 435).

Notwithstanding the presence of some apocalyptic authors within evangelical circles (Rosenberg, 2012) who warn of the last days, the distinctiveness and persuasiveness of sermons have morphed according to Long (2009):

Just so, eschatology, once a major motif in American theology and preaching, did not really disappear. Rather it reappeared in the morphed form of confidence in the doctrine of progress, confidence in human powers to transform society in the present tense. The language of an eschatological future, now turned to vapor, was sucked up into the engine of the optimistic present tense, and mainstream American preachers, deprived of eschatological language, devoid of a future hope, became instead apostles of progress in its many forms—moral progress, social improvement, the ‘power of
positive thinking,’ church growth, and the psychotherapeutic gospel. (Long, 2009, p. 117)

That being the case, we can emphasize the importance of distinctive, persuasive appeals leading to conversion and acceptance of Christ and His biblical truths.

**Prophetic Preaching of Appeals Must be Bold and Clear**

“Thus says the Lord” (Isa 66:1). The relevancy of the biblical text engages the mind to see the epic truths of the Word of God. This style of preaching appeals may startle the hearer as it did those who listened to Jesus. “And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matt 7:28, 29).

The boldness and clarity a preacher seeks in the prophetic preaching of the appeal begins with the mindset. It is well encapsulated here in the words of Driscoll: “In studying a passage to preach, I ask three questions: Who is God? How is He revealed in this text? What are the most natural inclinations that resist or deny that truth? Then, for the rest of the sermon, I seek out that resistance and break it” (as quoted in Larson, 2012, p. 76).

Boldness in giving appeals has set the ministry of Billy Graham apart: “I have always asked people to make this public confession in our meetings because Jesus in His earthly ministry demanded a definite commitment. He had reasons for demanding that people openly follow Him. Jesus knew that an unwitnessed vow is no vow at all. Until you have surrendered to Christ by a conscious act of your will, you are not a Christian” (Graham, 2013, p. 181).
Prophetic Preaching of Appeals Must be Timely and Relevant

During a time when the Jews were threatened with extermination, Mordecai admonished Esther, “Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esth 4:14). This has ever been the challenge of the prophets.

Our generation seems ready to accept anything except truth. Never has there been a more appropriate moment to be more persuasive in our appeals by using prophetic preaching in our presentations. A well-known commentator wrote of our culture, “There seems to be a sense in which we’ve blurred the lines between shame and fame. In fact, it’s as if we have equated, even elevated, both characterizations as if they were character qualities. In a culture that worships celebrity rather than substance, we ought not to be surprised that those who want to be the leaders of our political institutions are playing by the same rules as those who lead the entertainment industry or sports” (Huckabee, 2013, pars. 7, 8).

Prophetic Preaching is Urgent

In the Bible there is an urgency about salvation and timing. “Now” is the word the apostle received from the Lord, “‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2).

It is urgent for it is more than a call to baptism. Preaching prophetically means we must preach for conversions. “We need to remember that the goal of preaching is conversion, justification and sanctification, whether that preaching is in the context of worship or evangelism. The goal of evangelism is conversion, not baptism. Only those
who have been converted and give evidence of transformed lives should be baptized. For
them Baptism can truly signify death to self and newness of life in Christ” (Holmes,
1987, p. 113).

Jesus recognized this urgency and proper motivation when He said in Mark 1:15,
“Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). The urgency of the gospel of Jesus is
the message to repent of our sins. Those attending must choose obedience to the law of
God, the law all have broken, the law that cannot be kept apart from the grace of Christ.
All must accept Christ to have this salvation (Acts 4:12) for He bought grace for the
human race at the cross. Accepting His purchase of redemption is a willing act of
surrender and turning away from sins. That is repentance. The theme is continued on the
day of Pentecost. Peter preached repentance first: “Repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38).
It signifies change and turning away from sin and turning to God.

Finley (1988) said, alluding to Spurgeon, “The audience must perceive that you
believe that the call is significant, that you are in earnest about it, that God has given you
an urgent message” (p. 126). He emphasized earnestness and also urgency as being
essential in the methodology of giving persuasive appeals.

In the words of Williams, “Rather than to simply inform, prophetic preaching
aims to redeem and transform, to bring people back to a saving relationship with God.
We don’t have much time to return. That is why prophetic preaching has a sense of
urgency” (as quoted in Morris, 2011, p. 7).

At this time, we live in the midst of a swiftly changing culture. Moral landmarks
are being redefined. Existence of truth is questioned. It is time once again for the
preaching of the word to capture the interest of the listener in such a way as that of
Martin Luther King, Jr. 50 years ago. King “never quit trying to shape a ‘congregation’ of people that would be capable of redeeming the moral and political character of the nation” (Lischer, 1995, p. 12). This is a worthy ambition for evangelistic preaching. It is more than the series; it is shaping the preacher and the congregation for a new legacy, hence, the urgency of prophetic preaching.

**Prophetic Preaching is Never an Emphasis on the Social Gospel**

As current issues dealing with social themes including justice, poverty, and equal rights are approached, they will be checked by clear biblical exegesis. The biblical emphasis must be the priority, not the legislative pursuits or rallying cry of the crowd. Prophetic preaching without the Bible message and the Christ of Calvary being the heart of the distinctive truth will fail to bring the hope only Jesus gives. If, in this life, we have all justice and yet do not live surrendered and converted lives, we have nothing.

Further, if one falls into this as the dominant feature of this style, there are dangers that can overcome the good. In his interview of Taylor, Morris (2005) asked, “What is the preacher’s responsibility in confronting the maladies of a culture?” Taylor’s response brings the balance to the subject that is needed. “The first thing one ought to do is not preach at people. I think one ought to be careful about censuring people and accusing people. This is a futile undertaking. It may also be a way of vindicating our own prejudices! We ought to recognize that we are all sinners and come at preaching about social issues from the point of view of the gospel and not merely from our own limited viewpoint” (p. 34).
Examples of Prophetic Appeals

1. Introduction including opening illustration. The appeal will be shared from the beginning of the message. As Laurie (2007) said, “When I’m preaching in an evangelistic setting . . . essentially the invitation begins at the beginning of the message. . . . I make it very clear that I am preaching for a decision, and I make it very clear that I am going to bring them to a point of decision by the end of the message. . . . It creates a tension that I think is really important” (par. 7).

2. The core elements and biblical proofs in a Christ-centered focus preached in a prophetic preaching form. The apostles chose this style of preaching: “Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, was the theme of every discourse. . . . As they proclaimed the completeness of Christ, the risen Saviour, their words moved hearts, and men and women were won to the gospel” (White, 1911, p. 594).

   The words of Chappell (2013) are emotionally moving: “We love God most deeply—most compulsively—when the realities of His grace overwhelm us” (p. 159). The heart of the message must move the listener deeply with the grace of Christ. This illustrates the core elements of the sermon preparing the hearers for the closing appeal. Their hearts are softening; their minds are opening to spiritual truth.

3. The conclusion that includes an illustration with a persuasive prophetic preaching appeal. The appeal should capture the imagination of the hearer. They should hear a clear and convincing call to repentance. Of John the Baptist we read, “John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4). Peter summarizes his sermon on Pentecost with these words of appeal:
“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

Conclusion

According to United States Senate Chaplain Barry Black, Adventist pastors are “sleeping through a revolution. . . . And the reason why we are not experiencing the miracles that God would have us experience, is because we’re not prepared to speak the truth to power” (as quoted in Reid & Allston, 2013, pars. 1, 2).

Chaplain Black spoke of truth and the prophetic preaching connection when he said, “We need relevant truth, and present truth is relevant if we recognize what is going on in the world around us. You pray with relevance and you preach with relevancy. If there had been Adventist ministers alongside Martin (Luther) King . . . if there had been Adventist pastors in (apartheid) South Africa . . . There need to be Adventist ministers who will speak out against some of the really touchy issues, because people are listening for a prophetic word; but too often, we’re bringing up the rear. . . . We need to be prepared to speak the truth to power because our silence prevents us from opening the eyes of the blind” (as quoted in Reid & Allston, 2013, pars. 5-7).

The researcher is encouraged by the ultimate good of this approach. Some resistance, even from those who respond, is to be expected. In the words of one who found a new life, “It is natural to feel fear and insecurity when confronted with the radical demands of the Christian commitment. But enveloped in the lived truth of God’s furious love, insecurity is swallowed up in the solidity of agape, and anguish and fear give way to hope and desire. The Christian becomes aware that God’s appeal for unlimited generosity from His people has been preceded from His side by a limitless love, a love so
intent upon a response that He has empowered us to respond through the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Manning, 2009, p. 120).

Following implementation of these methods, the evaluation conducted by the researcher helps to determine how using prophetic preaching has affected the persuasive quality of the sermons in the Discover Revelation series. Sermons preached in this form are compared with the same topical sermons not using prophetic preaching appeals. Distinctive beliefs of the Church mentioned earlier are the focus. Examples of appeals given for these distinctive beliefs are included. This report will be the subject of the following chapter of this project.
CHAPTER V

NARRATIVE OF INTERVENTION IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

Seventh-day Adventists preach a distinctive message. The purpose of this project was to field-test the delivery of six appeals for these distinctive doctrines. The preceding chapters emphasize the need of preaching these appeals in a manner that challenge the mind-set of a post-modern culture. This field-test reveals the effects of sharing these doctrines in the prophetic preaching style.

Within these two evangelistic series, six appeals for decision are studied for this project. Six distinctive Adventist doctrines are preached in each of the two series among other topics as listed above. Within the two separate series, these six distinctive doctrines are preached twice each. By the conclusion of the two series, each distinctive doctrine has been preached with a prophetic appeal and also on another occasion, preached without a prophetic appeal. Comparisons of these styles preached for these six distinctive beliefs were the study of two focus groups in Holland and one focus group in Cadillac.

Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic preaching has always been known for its emphasis on Bible prophecy. Six distinctive biblical teachings of Seventh-day Adventists were chosen for this project. Those topics were Salvation/Baptism by Immersion, Sabbath, Second Coming, State of the Dead, Remnant Church, and Sanctuary.
Implementation Narrative

The First Three Years

This project’s title, *Persuasive Appeals for Decision: Preaching the Distinctive Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs in the Michigan Conference*, was chosen in consultation with Dr. Ron du Preez, project adviser, in July 2011. During the first preaching cohort with Dr. Hyveth Williams, prophetic preaching style was introduced. This inspired the research to go forward. The process next included the strategies for chapter 1. The Literature Review, chapter 3, including the relevant literature that embraces the basis of the project was written next.

Description of the Ministry Context was studied and written the next year. Elder Monte Sahlin taught classes on ministry context. The lead professor of the second year was Dr. Joseph Kidder. His emphasis was on the essential spiritual experience of the Doctor of Ministry candidate. Dr. Jon Dybdahl also taught during the intensive. The Theological Reflection chapter was added by February 2013. Chapter four, the description of the intervention, introduces the proposed specifics of the field project. Dr. Finbar Benjamin of Oakwood University led our third year intensive. Chapter 4 and all post-intensive classwork were completed by February 2014.

During the months from January to June 2014, the Internal Review Board (IRB) approval was sought. In March, it was decided to change the plan of evaluation from a statistical analysis to a focus group evaluation. The researcher wanted personal reflections to tell the story of the project’s effectiveness. The concern going into the implementation has been how commencing a project would impact non-Adventists attending a *Discover Revelation* evangelistic series.
Required government testing for the IRB approval was completed in May. The project protocol and questions for the focus group were sent to the Andrews IRB committee. After counsel from the committee, I arranged a meeting with Mordecai Ongo, Research Integrity and Compliance Officer at Andrews University, on June 25. Appropriate survey questions for those hearing these distinctive doctrines for the first time were discussed. How to introduce the project to guests without creating undue concern among these “volunteers” was examined and explained. A proposal for IRB acceptance was agreed upon and sent to the committee for approval. This was obtained on July 17.

Holland Church Project

The Holland Church board extended an invitation for the *Discover Revelation* series on November 11, 2013. I confirmed the appointment on December 18.

The church members and I were involved in preparation for the series for several months. On Sabbath, March 1, I presented a lead-in message for *Discover Revelation* entitled “Eight Life Transforming Secrets.” The sermon emphasizes the need for prayer and giving multiple invitations to build opening attendance at the series. In 2 Kings 13:14-19, the prophet Elisha rebukes King Joash for not striking his arrows on the ground five or six times, instead of three. The key lesson is not giving up on inviting and establishing friendships. Giving multiple invitations has shown me the effectiveness of this approach.

That afternoon, an information and training session on series committees and small group ministries was conducted. The pastor and evangelistic series chairperson selected session participants.
The pastor was given the responsibility for selecting an evangelistic series chairperson. This person would coordinate every aspect of the *Discover Revelation* meetings under the supervision of the pastor. The pastor and evangelism chair chose committee chairpersons from the congregation. These individuals selected others from the church to assist them. They were responsible for schedules for each of their committee volunteers. This organizational model allows buy-in from the leadership of the church. It is another way of guaranteeing an encouraging attendance from the start of the evangelistic series.

The pastor was commissioned to build and update the interest file of names for contacts, invitations, and personal letters of invitation from the church. This resulted in 200 letter invitations. Church members became aware of friends from the list that they invited to *Discover Revelation*.

May 17 was our second Sabbath with the church. My sermon for Sabbath worship was entitled “Perspectives.” The sermon emphasized the fact that every person’s view of life and the world is unique. We need to be aware of giving them understanding. Second, we share the absolute truths of the word of God because these give hope.

In the afternoon training session, we went into the details of committee work for the meetings and had a separate session for training the small group.

On July 7, the fourth Doctor of Ministry intensive began with “Preaching the Literary Forms of the Bible” with Dr. Kenley Hall. The *Discover Revelation* series of prophecy lectures started the same evening, July 7. This was part of a larger advertising campaign tagged *Keys of Revelation*. Twenty-two Seventh-day Adventist churches of the West Michigan area were involved with *Keys of Revelation*. The geographic area
included metropolitan Grand Rapids and the cities of Muskegon, Grand Haven, Fremont, and Holland. Thus, the project assumed the moniker, Keys of Revelation.

Those in attendance came from local Adventist congregations and surrounding communities near the participating churches. Members and guests received invitations by a variety of means. These included personal invitations, radio, handbills mailing, church mailed letters, Bible study students, billboards, an Internet website, and church announcements. Handbills were received in the mail the week before the first night of the meetings. Promotional efforts resulted in a total of thirty-eight visiting non-Adventist guests on the first night in Holland and eighteen in Cadillac.

The complete schedule for the Holland series is shown below with the six presentations included in this project in bold print. The series began at the Tiara Yacht Showroom in Holland.

1. Monday, July 7: (Bible, Dan 2) *Life’s Purpose and a Mysterious Prophecy That Predicts the Next World Super Power*

2. Tuesday, July 8: (Jesus, Rev 1) *The Star of Revelation: Life’s Last, Best, Hope*

3. Thursday, July 10: (Origin of evil, Rev 12) *The Real War Behind the Guns: The Lion Vs. The Dragon*

4. Friday, July 11: (7 Churches, Rev 2, 3) *How You Can Have Revelation’s Overcoming Faith*

5. Monday, July 14: (Salvation, Rev 4, 5) *The Dynamics of Hope in Revelation*

6. Tuesday, July 15: (Israel in Prophecy, Rev 7, 14) *Jerusalem Showdown*

7. Thursday, July 17: (Armageddon, Rev 15, 16) *What You Need to Know Today About Armageddon*

8. Friday, July 18: (Dan 7) *Prophecy Reveals the Story: From Bondage to Freedom*
9. Monday, July 21: (Salvation, Baptism, Rev 7)\textit{The Blood Washed Robes of Revelation}

10. Tuesday, July 22: (Law and Grace)\textit{Finding the Lost Ark of the Covenant}

11. Friday, July 25: (Sabbath, Rev 7)\textit{The Seal of Revelation: How You Can Receive It}

12. Sabbath, July 26: (‘Change’ of Sabbath)\textit{The Last Days Controversy Over the Seal of Revelation}

13. Monday, July 28: (Rev 19, Second Coming)\textit{Is the Second Coming of Jesus for Real?}

14. Tuesday, July 29: (State of the Dead)\textit{Revelation Solves Death’s Mystery}

15. Friday, August 1: (Rev 13)\textit{Discover: What is ‘The Mark of the Beast’?}


\textit{Seminar changes to Holland Church beginning August 5}

17. Tuesday, August 5: (Dan 8)\textit{Amazing Discovery of the Bible’s ‘Lost’ Prophecy}

18. Friday, August 8: (Denom., Rev 6-8)\textit{Discover Four Horses of the Apocalypse: What Are They?}

19. Sabbath, August 9: (True Church, Rev 10-12)\textit{Revelation’s Remnant and the Truth}

\textit{11:00 am}

20. Sabbath, August 9: (Rev 13, USA in prophecy)\textit{Revelation Reveals America’s Future}

21. Tuesday, August 12: (Dan 9, Sanctuary)\textit{The Tribulation and the Mystery}

22. Friday, August 15: (Stewardship, Rev 17, 18)\textit{How to Survive Prophecy’s Final Financial Collapse}

23. Sabbath, August 16: (Gift of Prophecy)\textit{Discover the Truth about New Age, Channeling, and Prophets}
It was the intent to establish a comfortable credibility with the audience in Holland. Efforts were made to provide for an excellent first impression. The Showroom, part of the Tiara Yacht Company facility, was chosen as the site. A total of 109 were in attendance for the evening, including our 38 guests. No immediate effort was made to announce that the speaker was involved with a scholastic project during the seminar. Throughout the series, church support in attendance was high.

The order of service for each evening was as follows:

6:45 p.m. preliminary music on CD

7:00 p.m. Welcome, announcements, prayer  
Pastor

7:05 p.m. Questions and Answers from audience question box  
Pastor and Evangelist

7:10 p.m. Living the Healthy Lifestyle Health Feature  
Patsy Towar, R.N.

7:20 p.m. Keys of Revelation Message  
Daniel Towar, Evangelist

8:10 p.m. Small Groups  
Table Leaders

8:20 p.m. Final announcement and Prayer  
Evangelist

The meetings continued without significant difference from our prior evangelistic series conducted over the past fourteen years. Our average non-Adventist attendance per meeting was 35. Project approval was gratefully received on July 17. A strong salvation theme was presented during the sermon topic of salvation/baptism on July 21, meeting number nine. I felt this strengthened the salvation component by linking it with the more distinctive doctrine of baptism by immersion.

Believing it would be beneficial for the project protocol to have a voluntary
individual response component, such a series of questions were also IRB approved. They were introduced at Keys of Revelation on Monday, July 21. The concept of the Doctor of Ministry project was verbally communicated to begin the evening program.

The volunteer surveys were placed at the 15 small group tables. The title of the sermon was The Blood Washed Robes of Revelation. The attendance that evening was 35 non-Adventist visitors. Several surveys were returned. One regular attending couple seemed in some way troubled with the presentation.

The following night, our guest attendance fell to 18. Neither the topic of salvation nor baptism ever caused significant drop in attendance in 38 years of meetings, let alone losing half of our guests in one night. I made an educated guess that it was discomfort with the survey, or perhaps the matter of presenting it, more than any other factor of influence.

The title of the presentation was Finding the Lost Ark of the Covenant. The subject was on the biblical teaching of the Law and the grace of God. Never in 14 years of being a conference evangelist did I lose half of the guest attendance from one night to the next night at this early stage in a series. Other than the drop in the attendance of guests, our total attendance was unaffected. My conclusion was that the introduction (or perhaps the manner of presentation) of the Doctor of Ministry project and the voluntary individual survey affected the next evening’s attendance.

Usually guest attendance is settled from the eighth evening until after the Sabbath presentation. I made another appointment for Wednesday with Mordekai Ongo at Andrews University. We spoke of the dramatic fall in attendance. He was helpful, explaining that the actual implementation of protocols will oftentimes be revised during
the project. It was decided that the volunteer individual surveys for the six project
sermons would cease. However, a number of these surveys were in circulation for the
next project sermon already and individual small group leaders handed them out on
Saturday evening, July 26. There were no public announcements about them.
Nonetheless, attendees returned some of these surveys as well. After this, the non-
Adventist attendance very gradually increased and hit a peak of 32 on Sabbath, August 2.
This was the 16th meeting and the topic was on heaven and hell.

The concern of this project paper is specifically six distinctive messages that
included appeals for decision. At issue is a comparative study of the more effective
appeals comparing the use of prophetic preaching or traditional story preaching in these
appeals. These messages are listed below. Included are brief descriptions of the type of
appeal for that presentation and a brief summation of its content.

Please note that prophetic appeals were preached for Holland sermons numbered
nine, 13, and 21. The topics for those presentations were Adventist doctrinal beliefs on
Salvation/Baptism, the Second Coming, and the Heavenly Sanctuary. For each of these
appeals for decision, a decision card was used as part of the response process.


Prophetic appeal: The sanctity of human life. “Watching the human fetus develop
is awe-inspiring. In less than three months from conception, the little hands and feet are
quite recognizable and distinct facial features characterize cute, but very tiny human
beings . . . neurons of the brain are proliferating at a rate that will yield a staggering 100
billion neurons by birth” (Carson, 2014, par. 6). The amazing body that develops leading
to birth is God’s creation. Our re-birth at baptism is His creation when God makes all things new.

12. Sabbath, July 26: (‘Change’ of Sabbath) 

*The Last Days Controversy Over the Seal of Revelation*

Appeal: It would be impossible to change someone’s birthday. We presented a “birthday cake” to a gentleman during the morning meeting and to another man in the evening meeting. (The problem was that it was not either of their birthdays. They were surprised but enjoyed receiving the cake.) The point is that just as we cannot change their birthdays, even more so, it is impossible to change the Lord’s Sabbath day.

13. Monday, July 28: (Second Coming) 

*Is the Second Coming of Jesus for Real?*

Prophetic Appeal: America’s West is burning tonight. Something else is also burning and destroying our America, and that is marijuana (Tolat, 2012). The effects of marijuana on the brain make it difficult for addicts to become free of this bondage, preventing them from being ready for the Second Coming of Christ. We are dependent on our minds to be able to make intelligent decisions. Marijuana prevents this by “mal-adapting” the circuits of the brain (Marcus, 2010). We assume no medical consequences and this is inaccurate according to recent medical research. The legalization of this harmful drug is another sign that Jesus is coming soon. Tonight, we can decide to dedicate ourselves to being ready for His return. Is that your decision tonight?

14. Tuesday, July 29: (State of the Dead) 

*Revelation Solves Death’s Mystery*

Appeal: Sir Winston Churchill believed in the resurrection of the saints at the Second Coming of Christ. He planned his service in advance. It took place in 1965 in St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. At the conclusion, a bugler on one side of the cathedral’s
dome played “Taps.” Then there were three minutes of silence, after which another bugler on the opposite side of the dome played “Revelry.” Death is “taps,” but the resurrection day is coming when Jesus comes again. That will be “Revelry!” Will you decide today to be ready for “Revelry” when the angels sound the trumpets at the coming of our Lord?

19. Sabbath, August 9: (Remnant Church)  

Revelation’s Remnant and the Truth

Appeal: From Ethiopia in 1905 comes the story of Sheik Zacharias and a dream (Coon, 2000). An angel told him about the black book and what it taught about Jesus, the Sabbath, death, and resurrection and healthful living. He was instructed to look for three men preaching with a black book. Finally, after his death, his son-in-law found the three men preaching with the black book. They were three Seventh-day Adventist preachers. Their message was accepted and the Seventh-day Adventist church in Ethiopia had its beginnings. This is our call as well. Look for the church with the message of the Bible, the black Book.

21. Tuesday, August 12: (Sanctuary)  

The Tribulation and the Mystery

Prophetic Appeal: Two bakers in the western United States (Young, 2014) are facing criminal charges (Klukowski, 2014) because of their refusal to bake cakes for homosexual weddings. We are losing our religious freedoms. In contrast to this, we still have an Advocate in heaven’s courtroom. He has never lost a case and He (Christ) is also willing to judge in our favor!
As the meetings were drawing to a close, I decided to forego any other public announcements of the project. There seemed to be a direct correlation to earlier efforts and the drop in attendance. The risk was not worth it.

Instead two focus groups were solicited by my personal invitation. I told them that participation was voluntary and that all information gathered would be anonymous and protected. In the first focus group, the participants represented half of those I contacted. In the second focus group, the participants represented everyone I solicited to be members of the group. It was essential for the members of the group to attend most of the total number of meetings in the series. This was so they would be able to relate to the series as a whole. Each focus group consisted of five responding adults and one media person from the church. All of these signed the Consent Form.

For both groups, a separate multi-media person was present who played videos of the six appeals referred to in this project. This individual was not a member of either focus group as such.

The first focus group met on the evening of Tuesday, August 26 in a Holland Church Sabbath School classroom. This group was an all Holland church member group. The meeting lasted just over ninety minutes. There was very good participation. All present got involved; no one individual dominated conversation. The six IRB approved questions were reviewed and six sermon appeals from the concluded series were studied. Results from this focus group are in chapter six.

The next focus group met on the evening of Tuesday, September 2 in the same Holland Church Sabbath School classroom. This group was an all “non-Adventist” group. Three were evangelical Protestants, one had a Roman Catholic background, and
one had fallen away from being Adventist for twenty years. None of the five was active in a church prior to the evangelistic series. All five were new to the church. Four were new baptisms into church membership from the *Keys of Revelation*; one focus group member at the time was not baptized. The same multi-media person was present as with the first group.

All participated, but the conversation did not flow as easily. There was not as varied a response, but all seemed to agree with the conclusions. There was also marked appreciation that they were asked to be in the focus group. Results from this focus group are in chapter six.

The agenda for both groups was identical:

- Welcome and prayer at 7:15 p.m.
- Explanation of the project
- Researcher’s definition for prophetic preaching shared: *Prophetic preaching style addresses current issues of morality and social issues. Prophetic preaching style challenges popular cultural norms that prevent God’s salvation and justice from being accepted into one’s personal life.*
- Consent Form read and signed
- Review of the six appeals from the *Keys of Revelation* series
- Six IRB questions were discussed after each videoed appeal was watched.
- Thank-you and presentation of gift books
- Closing prayer at 8:50 p.m.
Cadillac West Church Project

The pastor and church board extended an invitation in the fall of 2013. The church was visited in preparation on December 21, 2013. On this Sabbath, we introduced the Discover Revelation series for the Fall of 2014. The worship message came from 2 Kings 13:14-19 and dealt with the promise of persisting in prayer and invitation.

A return visit was made on Sabbath, July 19 for another message and an organization meeting. The presentation for worship was entitled “Open For Me” and was a comparative study from Revelation 3:20 and Song of Solomon 5:2. The content of the message emphasized the importance of inviting Jesus into our lives so we can be the witnesses for Christ that He desires as the meetings approach.

During the afternoon meeting, the pastor and I selected an evangelistic series chairperson. This was confirmed before the meeting dismissed. This person coordinated every aspect of the Keys of Revelation meetings for the Cadillac West Church, under the supervision of the pastor. The pastor and evangelism chair chose committee chairpersons from the congregation. These individuals selected others from the church to assist them. They were responsible for schedules for each volunteer.

The pastor was also commissioned to build and update the interest file of names for contacts, invitations, and personal letters of invitation from the church. This resulted in 50 letter invitations. Church members became aware of friends from the list that they wanted to invite and a number of them did invite their friends to attend. Several visitors came in response to personal invitations from church members.

On Sabbath afternoon, August 23, there was a training session for all involved with committee assignments and performance of their tasks. Time was allotted for
training small group leaders, as well (see appendix for the committee and small group leader handouts for this training session).

In the week that the meetings began, a visit was made to establish contact with five interests who had attended a preliminary seminar on prophecy. On the Friday of set-up for the meetings (September 19), three women from the Holland Church came and gave a training session for the registration table and Bible table leaders. They also helped arrange these tables for the series that began that night.

The series was retitled from *Discover Revelation* to *Keys of Revelation* to keep this project identical in name throughout with the project in Holland. The weekly schedules were the same as in the Holland series. All sermon topics and titles, except for the last presentation, also remained identical. Following is the schedule with the six presentations where an appeal was made for this project in bold print. The series began at the Kiley Chiropractic Center Conference Room in Cadillac.

1. Friday, Sept. 19: (Bible, Dan 2) *Life’s Purpose and a Mysterious Prophecy That Predicts the Next World Super Power*
2. Sabbath, Sept. 20: (Jesus, Rev 1) *The Star of Revelation: Life’s Last, Best, Hope*
3. Sunday, Sept. 21: (Origin of Evil, Rev 12) *The Real War Behind the Guns: The Lion Vs. The Dragon*
4. Monday, Sept. 22: (7 Churches, Rev 2, 3) *How You Can Have Revelation’s Overcoming Faith*
5. Friday, Sept. 26: (Salvation, Rev 4, 5) *The Dynamics of Hope in Revelation*
6. Sabbath, Sept. 27: (Israel in Prophecy, Rev 7, 14) *Jerusalem Showdown*
7. Sunday, Sept. 28: (Armageddon, Rev 15, 16) *What You Need to Know Today About Armageddon*
8. Monday, Sept. 29: (Dan 7)  
**Prophecy Reveals the Story: From Bondage to Freedom**

9. Friday, Oct. 3: (Salvation, Baptism, Rev 7)  
**The Blood Washed Robes of Revelation**

10. Sabbath, Oct. 4: (Law and Grace)  
**Finding the Lost Ark of the Covenant**

11. Sunday, Oct. 5: (Sabbath, Rev 7)  
**The Seal of Revelation: How You Can Receive It**

12. Monday, Oct. 6: (‘Change’ of Sabbath)  
**The Last Days Controversy Over the Seal of Revelation**

Seminar changes to Cadillac West Church beginning October 10

13. Friday, Oct. 10: (Rev 19, Second Coming)  
**Is the Second Coming of Jesus for Real?**

14. Sabbath, Oct. 11: (State of the Dead)  
**Revelation Solves Death’s Mystery**
   11:00 am and 7:00 pm

15. Monday, Oct. 13: (Rev 13)  
**Discover: What is ‘The Mark of the Beast’?**

16. Friday, Oct. 17: (Heaven, Hell, Rev 20-22)  
**Where, How Long, and How Hot is Hell, and Who Will Be There?**

17. Sabbath, Oct. 18: (Dan 8)  
**Amazing Discovery of the Bible’s ‘Lost’ Prophecy**
   11:00 am and 7:00 pm

18. Monday, Oct. 20: (Denom., Rev 6-8)  
**Discover Four Horses of the Apocalypse: What Are They?**

19. Friday, Oct. 24: (True Church, Rev 10-12)  
**Revelation’s Remnant and the Truth**

20. Sabbath, Oct. 25: (Rev 13, USA in prophecy)  
**Revelation Reveals America’s Future**
   11:00 am

21. Monday, Oct. 27: (Dan 9, Sanctuary)  
**The Tribulation and the Mystery**

22. Friday, Oct. 31: (Stewardship, Rev 17, 18)  
**How to Survive Prophecy’s Final Financial Collapse**

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23. Sabbath, Nov. 1: (Gift of Prophecy)

Discover the Truth about New Age, Channeling, and Prophets

24. Monday, Nov. 3: (Rev 14:6-12)

Revelation’s Last Three Messages for the World

25. Sabbath, Nov. 8: (Holy Spirit)

Guaranteed! How to Build your Faith

Based on our re-evaluation of what had happened at the Holland meetings, it was decided not to inform the general audience that the speaker was involved with a scholastic project during the seminar. The decision was made to avoid any misunderstanding as to the intent of the project among the non-Adventist guests.

The order of service for each evening was as follows:

6:45 p.m. preliminary music on CD

7:00 p.m. Welcome, announcements, prayer Pastor

7:05 p.m. Questions and Answers from audience question box Pastor and Evangelist

7:10 p.m. Living the Healthy Lifestyle Health Feature Patsy Towar, R.N.

7:20 p.m. Keys of Revelation Message Daniel Towar, Evangelist

8:10 p.m. Small Groups Table Leaders

8:20 p.m. Final announcement and Prayer Evangelist

One focus group was solicited by personal invitation after the meetings were concluded. It was communicated that participation was voluntary and that all information gathered would be anonymous and protected. The focus group participants represented seven of eleven contacted by the researcher. It was essential for the members of the group to attend most of the total number of meetings in the series. This was so they would be able to relate to the series as a whole. The focus group consisted of seven responding
adults—five from the Cadillac West church membership and two non-Adventist guests who came throughout the series.

The focus group for the Cadillac West *Keys of Revelation* series was held on Monday, November 24, 2014 at the Cadillac West Church sanctuary/fellowship hall.

The agenda of the meeting follows below:

- Welcome and prayer at 6:00 p.m.
- Explanation of the project
- Researcher’s definition for prophetic preaching shared: *Prophetic preaching style addresses current issues of morality and social issues. Prophetic preaching style challenges popular cultural norms that prevent God’s salvation and justice from being accepted into one’s personal life.*
- Consent Form read and signed
- Review of the six appeals from the *Keys of Revelation* series
- Six IRB questions were discussed after each appeal was presented. I “re-enacted” the exact keynote slide presentation used for each appeal during the series.
- Thank-you and presentation of gift books
- Closing prayer at 7:50

The following six appeals were reviewed and contrasted.

Please note that prophetic appeals were preached for Cadillac West sermons numbered 12, 14, and 19. The topics for those presentations were Adventist doctrinal beliefs on the Sabbath, the State of the Dead, and the Remnant Church. For each of these appeals for decision, a decision card was used as part of the response process.
9. Friday, Oct. 3: (Salvation, Baptism)  

The Blood Washed Robes of Revelation

Appeal: Thirty years ago, I met a 44 year-old man who was dying of mesothelioma due to asbestos. He was on his deathbed. His wife had called asking me to come since he was requesting to see an Adventist minister. We had never met. His question was “Can you baptize me? I am dying and I have never been baptized and I don’t want to be lost.” I was told that he could not physically withstand baptism. However, by accepting Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, the baptism of Jesus would stand for his baptism. Tonight, we have learned that when we accept Christ, the Bible requires baptism. This is your choice. Will you make your decision for Jesus this evening as we take these decision cards?

12. Monday, Oct. 6: (‘Change’ of Sabbath)

The Last Days Controversy Over The Seal of Revelation

Prophetic Appeal: Dov Seidman works with companies to create more ethical structures. He wrote How: Why How We Do Anything Means Everything. Now he is suing the nation’s largest maker of Greek yogurt over their use of the word “how.” That is Chobani Yogurt and their mantra, “How Matters” (Mahler, 2014). In this world, we can be so concerned over the word “how” and decide to sue one another over use of one of the most common of all words. “How” is it that we will not pay attention when God Himself says “Remember”? “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” We are willing to argue over “how” and yet, we have chosen to forget “remember” even though God said it. As we close this presentation, I invite you to take your decision card and check the appropriate squares.
13. Friday, Oct. 10: (Second Coming)  

Is the Second Coming of Jesus for Real?

Appeal: We have seen the magician hold his hat and show its “empty” contents. Then he taps the hat. All the evidence suggests that there is nothing inside his hat, but he shows a silver quarter to the audience. While they are distracted by the silver coin, all of a sudden he pulls a rabbit out of his “empty” hat. In much the same way, we have seen this evening that we are being misled about how Jesus is coming again. The Bible evidence has shown us the truth of God’s Word: Jesus is coming in power and great glory. Is it the desire of your heart tonight to be ready for His appearing? Let’s take our decision cards and I invite you to check these squares tonight in response to the message.

14. Sabbath, Oct. 11: (State of the Dead)  

Revelation Solves Death’s Mystery

Prophetic Appeal: Jesus is the “Resurrection and the Life” and He has promised to come back. Yet so many are destroying their lives with marijuana; it is known to “maladapt” the developing brain (Marcus, 2010). If our minds are clouded due to the use of marijuana, or we are unable to make wise choices due to its use, how can we have victory over death as we prepare for the coming of Christ?

19. Friday, Oct. 24: (Remnant Church)  

Revelation’s Remnant and the Truth

Prophetic Appeal: Jesus has one bride. Many on earth are not faithful to one bride. There are those who choose to be “married” to several brides at a time. Polygamy is even portrayed on a couple of popular entertainment television programs. There are others who are unfaithful to their marriage vows with their one spouse, but Jesus is always faithful. There is confusion in our culture as to what marriage is. There are those who claim it can be man and man or woman and woman.
However, we see Jesus is in love with His *bride*, the church. He loves all people in all churches. In fact, He has died for the sins of the whole world, but Jesus has a people who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus. He has but *one* bride. During the time when the world is going through trials and tribulations, His bride has made herself ready. You can make your decision this evening to be part of His bride, the body of Christ. In making this decision, you can have the assurance of being ready for the Second Coming of Jesus. I invite you to make this decision tonight as we share our decision card.

21. Monday, Oct. 27: (Sanctuary) *The Tribulation and the Mystery*

Apex: We have a friend in heaven’s court on the Day of Judgment. Our Friend is Jesus. He is our Judge and our Advocate. He has never lost a case. By simply asking Him to be your Savior, He will take your case and cover you with His righteousness.

There was a good flow of responses during the focus group. There were many comments in reaction to the six IRB approved questions. Prophetic preaching was the central point of discussion. The researcher took notes between each keynote presentation as the focus group responded. Comments of the Adventists and non-Adventists were differentiated from each other. The non-Adventists in the focus group in Holland and Cadillac expressed that it was a very positive experience for them. Focus group participants also wrote out comments in response to the questions and discussion. These responses were all studied and made available for this project evaluation. Evaluation from the focus group discussions and written responses are shared in chapter six.
CHAPTER VI

EVALUATION AND LEARNINGS

The previous chapter dealt with the details of implementing this project. The chronology timeline was shown from inception to completion for both participating churches, Holland and Cadillac West. This chapter compares the persuasiveness of giving prophetic appeals with the traditional story appeals. Focus groups are the evaluation method employed.

The settings were quite different. Holland is a church with 250 in attendance. They are blessed with many young families. Holland is a well-led and established church that holds public evangelistic series on a bi-yearly basis. The city of Holland probably has the best employment rate in the state.

Cadillac West is a church plant from the Cadillac Church, being birthed from evangelistic meetings in 2003. They have built their own church and have a billboard for advertising on the highway corner where they are located. They are a small church with 25 in attendance. They need more young families. Employment is more of a concern in Cadillac. This church is very supportive of evangelism.

It was the assumption of this project that prophetic preaching in the Discover Revelation series would be a more persuasive means of giving appeals for decision. This has been evaluated by three distinct focus groups from the two venues. The first focus group in Holland consisted of five Seventh-day Adventists. The second focus group in
Holland consisted of five individuals who were non-Adventists when the evangelistic series began. The third focus group in Cadillac consisted of seven people, five of whom were Adventists and two who were non-Adventists. This chapter shares the evaluation of three focus groups.

**Description of Method Used to Evaluate the Intervention**

The method chosen for evaluation is that of the focus group. “They are a research method for collecting qualitative data, they are focused efforts at data gathering, and they generate data through group discussions” (Morgan, 1998, p. 29).

Each focus group discussed six questions approved by the IRB. They are as follows:

1. Were the appeals clearly introduced by way of explaining what it is that the speaker expected you to do, such as responding by raising hand, standing to express agreement, checking appropriate squares on a “decision” card or coming forward to the front in acceptance of the appeal made by the speaker?

2. How clear were the two types of appeals used in the presentation(s) to you—the prophetic preaching style and non-prophetic preaching style? And which one did you find more persuasive?

3. Did those appeals that the presenter noted as “prophetic preaching style” appeals address the current issues that are prevalent in the media or culture?

4. How do you think the prophetic preaching style appeals shared biblical truth that challenges cultural practices and issues of morality?

5. Were appeals that did not include the above mentioned “prophetic preaching” emphasis more or less persuasive in your opinion? Why would this be true or why would this not be true?

6. Did the appeal express sympathetic or empathetic concern to where you may find yourself presently and to the needs you have personally?
Introduction to Focus Groups Evaluation

Following are the reflections from the three focus groups to the six IRB questions. The focus group evaluations cover the thoughts of the groups concerning the six appeal presentations. The researcher has chosen to retain much of the deliberative style. This evaluation accurately and clearly reflects the conversations and opinions of the participants and their respective groups. Words of the responders are in quotations or very nearly summarized as they were expressed.

It also needs to be acknowledged that not all focus group members spoke to all six questions above as it related to each of the six presentations evaluated below. In our 95 minutes together, that would have made the group conclusions redundant. Such an agenda would have been rather difficult to achieve. Clarifying interjections I suggested are included to summarize where helpful for understanding.

It is hoped that this style will give a definitive indication for what the actual thoughts and conversation were surrounding the six questions. Many of the thoughts as you read them are interrelated, intersecting with a number of questions. The responses give specific indications of their thinking.

Focus groups serve this project’s objectives as well. The human responses to evangelistic appeals are vital in terms of this particular project. I also chose for this to be at the center of this evaluation because all too often, evangelism is reduced to being a “numbers” game.
Three Focus Group Evaluations

1. Holland: August 26, 2014

The group: Five adults, four men and one woman, members of the Holland Church.

Salvation/Baptism by Immersion Prophetic Appeal

To begin, the focus group expressed satisfaction with the clarity of the prophetic appeal. “Very clear, no questions.” “Very explanatory.”

Discussion followed on responding to appeals with the following thought: “Some were not ready to commit yet, so they filled it (the decision card) out and brought it back the next day.” One group member said, “I believe no matter what I think . . . when you make an appeal, I believe the Holy Spirit led out. We asked Him to be present.” Then another added, “Your point was clear tying it in with Dr. Carson’s quote. Purity of relationships.” The individual then interjected, “My first response to all the prophetic appeals was I was real comfortable.” Another summarized, “Powerful message.”

There were ten decisions for baptism from 35 non-Adventists in attendance. Five of these thirty-five were baptized at the conclusion of the series.

Sabbath Appeal

“On question 2: (do they understand the difference between the prophetic and non-prophetic appeals) I see the difference, I get it. I understand.” From another, “I agree.” Another stated, “I appreciated the illustration—it broke the ‘ice’ a little bit.” A member stated, “There was a lot of tension in the room. The people next to us were not taking this in well.” Another agreed that as the Sabbath and the supposed “change” in the
Sabbath were presented, “I was praying. I missed three or four minutes at times to pray.”

The “cultural” shock was brought out, “I have noticed . . . when people go to the Seventh-day Adventist Church it is a whole different ‘ball’ game. . . . One denomination is not much different from one to the other. When you have the truth like this, it is pretty radical.” Then from another, “Oh yeah, it is.” Yet another, “There is tension out there.”

The good from all this is that they believed the closing illustration brought the tension level down. “This illustration eased the tension. They can associate” (see chapter five for sermon appeals as given in Holland and Cadillac West).

There were 20 non-Adventist in attendance; 13 made decisions for the Sabbath. Seven of these 20 joined the church and one other made a decision to become a member.

**Second Coming Prophetic Appeal**

This appeal used the dangers of marijuana as an illustration as we need to prepare for Christ’s return. The discussion began with the following comment: “I wasn’t always a good Seventh-day Adventist Christian . . . I struggled with this one particularly. It didn’t do nothing for me . . . my mind shut off, uncomfortable with it.” This was followed by the following response from another in the group. “Sometimes it is necessary to lead a person out of their comfort zone to show them where we are going. If you never lead them out of the comfort zone, then we wouldn’t get any decisions would we? . . . The appeal must be made in a skillful way to reach the heart . . . We all face a moment of truth . . . I felt the Holy Spirit was in that appeal.”

The discussion went back to the first observation and I think it helped me to understand more of what this group member meant. “There is so much more that affects human behavior than marijuana . . . I had a hard time connecting marijuana use to the
Second Coming. It would be helpful to list others . . . ten other things could have been listed.” Another admitted, “The night of the presentation, I had a hard time connecting marijuana use to the Second Coming.” In response, there was an observation from a member, “If God calls you to keep from doing those things, then we will have to answer Him.”

Among this group of Adventists, there were strong feelings against and on behalf of this appeal. I agree that it was a strong appeal. The reaction was a surprise. Nonetheless it was a very open discussion that showed real opinions were being shared. Obviously, this group felt at ease in my presence to say what was on their minds.

There were 11 decisions at this presentation from 16 non-Adventists present. Six of these eleven joined the church at the conclusion of the meetings.

**State of the Dead Appeal**

Here are some comments about the appeal: “I found that appeal very persuasive . . . that had an impact on me. Very persuasive.” “That was cut and dry.” They felt this non-prophetic appeal was clear and powerful, making its point. “I remember the pastor squirming,” said another who was a small group leader where a non-Adventist pastor and his wife sat. They attended to the conclusion of the series. The opportunity came to visit them on a number of occasions at the meeting sites and also twice at their home. A gift book *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* was presented to them at their home. The non-prophetic appeal of this message carried an impressive positive response for this focus group.

There were 12 decisions among 19 non-Adventists present. Six of these 12 joined the church.
Remnant Church Prophetic and Non-prophetic Appeal

The appeal was a story from the history of the Adventist Church in Ethiopia. “That fit, from traditional appeal to a cultural appeal.” In this appeal, the idea of faithfulness to one bride or husband was stressed. This appeal blended the non-prophetic story with a prophetic preaching concept. This was considered “refreshing, biblical.” The story appeals gained more strength with a prophetic element. “Very effective use of current issues and biblical truth.”

There were seven decisions made to be members of the church from 20 non-Adventists in attendance. All seven of these became members.

Sanctuary Prophetic Appeal

“I thought everything was real good on this one. A really strong appeal.” “Our government won’t defend our rights anymore. It was very persuasive, right on.”

“Appealing.” “I agree.” “Here’s a story and the connection: Jesus is our Advocate.”

I spoke of lawsuits against two bakeries for refusing to bake wedding cakes for same-sex couples. Then the truth of the importance of an Advocate that we have in Jesus was declared. Interwoven was mention of the recent death of James Foley, beheaded by Islamic State terrorists. He was not given his day in court, but Jesus is in the sanctuary for us right now, in the judgment hour.

It resonated with the focus group. “When you used the James Foley illustration, current, right now, this week.” “Can relate to that more; impressed me very much.” “Very effective use of current issue and biblical truth.” Another focus participant who is a newer member said, “Being from the outside, the Bible, that’s refreshing to me. You are
not making something up. It’s here; so many other times I went to churches and you
didn’t hear that.” And an observation that gives credence to the use of prophetic appeals,
“The importance of this appeal requires a strong message.” They may have meant to say,
“The importance of this message requires a strong appeal.” But both are true.

There were 11 decisions for baptism and church membership out of 24 non-
Adventist attending this meeting. Of those responding to this message, six have joined
the church.

The Adventist focus group was quite traditional, though they were varied in age
from their forties to seventies; two of the participants were newer members who had
joined the church in the past couple of years. They liked the prophetic appeals, but
wanted a story combination. That was a valuable insight.

2. Holland: September 2, 2014

The second focus group from Holland consisted of five non-Adventists. Four of
these joined the church at the conclusion of the series. There were three women and two
men, ranging in age from 30 to the sixties. Their observations follow below:

**Salvation/Baptism by Immersion**

**Prophetic Appeal**

“On the sanctity of human life, what I saw was very powerful. Hard hitting, we
were impressed. I support that also. My concern is if someone had aborted before if they
would feel shame at that time. . . . Our bodies are the temple of God. Or a rape case . . . ”
I found this comment very interesting and appreciated it very much. It shows connections
are made readily. I did speak on the sanctity of human life, even from the womb, but
never mentioned abortion or rape in the DVD recorded presentation.
Sabbath Appeal

“I had never heard that before, something so fundamental. . . . It was pretty hard hitting.” Another appreciated the birthday cake illustration where we sang ‘Happy Birthday’ to a member of the audience even though it was not his birthday. All realized that as you cannot change a birthday, no more can anyone change the day that God chose for the Sabbath. They liked the humor of the cake illustration. “I like the way you explain and use examples.”

Second Coming Prophetic Appeal

This appeal received a very positive response from the non-Adventist group. “Very effective, a real big effect on me. I have a lot of pain and I was leaning toward trying marijuana until that presentation. The part that got me is I don’t want to be in a bar when Jesus comes and I don’t want to be under the influence of marijuana.” This participant connected with the intent of the appeal from the speaker. Another participant said, “This appeal may cause people to take another look. This kind of appeal may go a long way to making a decision against marijuana.” The researcher asked for a consensus on how they felt about the appeal. Information was not shared in any discussions about the first focus group meeting. This focus group said that they were “very comfortable with it.” Someone said, “I thought where would I be if Jesus came at the time I took marijuana?”

State of the Dead Appeal

The funeral service of Sir Winston Churchill also made a positive impression with this group. “That appeal gives us all hope. A very strong message. Makes us believe we
all have a chance.” The consensus was that it helped make sense of the Adventist teaching of the resurrection.

**Remnant Church Prophetic and Non-prophetic Appeal**

“It ended with a challenge not to let misconceptions of marriage in the church.”

“It helped me open my eyes,” said one. They also enjoyed the story of the three men preaching. “You look at churches today and how many really follow Bible truth? When you look at the whole thing, you see what God really wants out of the ‘marriage.’”

**Sanctuary Prophetic Appeal**

“Right on the mark, couldn’t be better.” Of special note one participant said, “It was good for me because until then I didn’t know if the church made a stand against homosexuality.” On the issue of religious liberty and the judgment, another mentioned, “It was very powerful for us to understand and get us prepared for the coming of Jesus.”

**Overview of Appeals**

When questioned in more detail about the six IRB questions, these responses were shared. “The appeals were empathetic, sympathetic.” “Since I came, I compare, and see things in my church that are not right in the eyes of God. Why do they slip things ‘under the door?’ Why didn’t I see it before? Now I see it.”

“This church is not wishy-washy and I appreciate it.”

“All (appeals) were effective . . . the things that pertain to me will have a bigger effect on me. It was all pretty powerful.” “It was like a message to me.” Again, as before, this group appreciated the current events, feeling it helped make the material easier to
understand. “I went to a Revelation class before, but this effected me more. It brought a clear picture to me.” “None of us can deny it.”

3. Cadillac West: November 24, 2014

This focus group was the largest at seven participants, five members of the Cadillac West Church and two who are not Seventh-day Adventists. The researcher has written the evaluation in a different style to reflect the makeup of this group. Compared to the other focus groups, this group reviewed the six questions more as an overview. What was similar was that the six appeals were reviewed and discussion occurred after each appeal. Following are the reflections of this focus group on the above six questions.

“The content of appeals is the key” to persuasiveness. “Regardless of the type of appeal, prophetic or a story, the appeal is carried best by means of a story.” The appeal is where the people want to know you are showing empathy for what they are experiencing. The understanding of the content, the analogies used that assist that understanding help people connect. Prophetic appeals helped them see that culture cannot always be trusted. It also helped this group think of things quite differently than they had in the past. Comments such as, “I never thought of it that way before” were expressed.

Comparisons between Christ and culture were persuasive, but not necessarily more than a story. That is why this experience shows that combining an effective story line into the prophetic appeal was where the prophetic appeal matched or surpassed the “closing story” tradition.

Though very general statements of comparing the two preaching approaches, for these appeals, two stand out in particular. First, “The style of preaching the Holy Spirit puts on your heart, to present the gospel to reach the people, they are all wonderful.” If
the Holy Spirit is not sensed to be present in the appeal, no good will result. Second, “In
giving the appeal you have to know your audience. Sometimes what you don’t say is
more important than what you do say.”

“The target audience needs to be considered” when dealing with controversial
subjects. My prophetic appeal that included scholastic references regarding marijuana
was mentioned. Thus, by means of illustrating his/her point, one of the non-Adventists
cautioned that there are “thousands of articles pro and con on coffee. You could be dizzy
with the issue.” Another respondent said concerning his/her past, “Alcohol used to make
me feel good.” Another said, “They don’t know how it will affect them. I thought it was a
good connection. You can apply it to any of your faculties.” A non-Adventist responded
that he/she was impressed in a positive sense because of the news that marijuana affects
the frontal lobe of the brain. It may not have been the favorite appeal of some, but it
grabbed attention in each of the three focus groups.

It is my hope that persuasion is increased through prophetic preaching. It was said
well by a non-Adventist participant, “When I watch these my heart goes thump (4 times)
faster. It gets me revved up for the decision card.”

This group was clear on the difference between the two approaches given in the
appeals. They were pleased with and found the various calls used in the appeals to be.
There was little more said on the issue. There was a strong consensus on the clarity of the
appeals given.

The prophetic preaching style was clear, persuasive, addressing current issues;
they were more persuasive. The same participant reflected that these appeals “lacked
sympathetic or empathetic concern for the needs you have personally.” Another noted
that in every prophetic sermon appeal there was “concern expressed.”

On the other hand there was not a clear group consensus on what type of appeal they preferred. The most suggested response was that the type of appeal should be adapted to the topic. Two “opposing” thoughts should be considered here. When preaching on a topic of prophecy, perhaps a more traditional appeal should be made. The other was appreciation for bringing out the current events and issues. It tied the messages into what is happening in their world. They “really appreciated this.” One respondent shared the fact that the prophetic preaching appeal had more “teeth,” meaning that it was the stronger appeal for decision.

Outcomes

Holland

The series was supported consistently well throughout. We enjoyed a core group of some sixty to seventy individuals who participated. More than one hundred from the church supported Keys of Revelation with their attendance.

The results specifically include eight new members for the church, six by means of baptism and two, by profession of faith. Three more have made the decision for baptism and church membership. Two others have made the same decision since the end of the meetings. They continue their preparations for baptism. We expect eleven baptisms. Two others are attending a follow-up weekly Bible study at the church.

Cadillac West

Most of the attending membership participated. Most of these were on the evangelism staff with assigned duties. All through the series, support was evident. From
the second night we had fourteen visitors. The series ended with eleven interests who came most nights. In addition, various members supported from the Cadillac church.

The specific results include two new members by means of baptism. Eight others attend church, one at the Cadillac “mother” church. Of these eight, six have requested baptism and are preparing for membership.

**Conclusions**

Statements such as the following observations have encouraged this research project. As to whether preachers “have a responsibility to address sensitive issues . . . from the pulpit,” Buchanan leaves no doubt. “Absolutely. The approach we take in our church is, if we’re not taking on those issues and doing so in a way that’s biblically substantive, grace-filled, Christ-centered, and giving hope without giving excuse to people, then we are participating in the ongoing irrelevance of the church to the broken world” (Larson, 2012, p. 21).

When people hear of prophetic preaching, they usually assume preaching on Bible prophecy subjects. Preachers often assume the same. Thus, when preaching, we must make sure we understand the definition for prophetic preaching.

This project has impressed upon me the fact that appeals can be effective and captivating when a prophetic preaching style is included. This genre challenges the ordinary trends by being an unusual voice that grabs the attention and is adapted to bringing people to decision. I found that this project caused my sermons and appeals to be more prophetic in nature. This allowed for more passion in my presentation of the sermon.
People have left the meetings knowing that the speaker was aware of the cultural issues that challenge all. Prophetic preaching carries with it a very serious call to express empathy and sympathy for the sinner and any who struggle with the issues we address.

The prophetic preaching of appeals for decision is a call to be a relevant preacher. I believe that biblical truths can be presented in a more persuasive manner that inspires truth where every wind of doctrine is blowing. Prophetic appeals can bring home to the heart the message of Jesus for a final generation.

Prophetic preaching of appeals for decision opens a whole new vista. However, caution should be observed, as it can be potentially divisive. A preacher cannot always avoid this if he is a biblical preacher. My suggestion is to combine the prophetic preaching appeal facts with a story that will bring home the facts with a heart. It would also be appropriate to include 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 when dealing with any particular sin, to encourage the listener that God will and does provide victory over any weakness or sin. This passage is direct, but may help diffuse or avoid conflict due to a prophetic appeal. Having stated this, the focus groups indicated that the non-Adventist participants were more drawn to the prophetic appeals than were their Adventist colleagues.

It should be concluded that prophetic appeals enhance the overall giving of appeals because they help bring variety and keep the topics current. They simply cause people to reflect and consider the relevancy of the message. After further thought, I would have asked the focus groups in Holland the following: Did the prophetic preaching emphasis help our attendance recover following the drop in attendance at meeting ten?

The evangelistic audience comes voluntarily and introduction of a doctoral project should be introduced in a one-to-one setting. The public posting of
announcements is a negative idea. The public announcement of the project, in my opinion, should not have happened in Holland. In retrospect, as the speaker gained credibility with his audience, a personal introduction to the project worked well. In spite of following protocol and an excellent introduction, we lost attendance. In evangelism, we are not working with people we know and who know us. Credibility must be established first. Once this is accomplished, the series enters the presentation of testing truths. This also prevents a more public “staging” of a Doctor of Ministry project. Following the usual protocols of a pastor-church context will not necessarily work in an evangelistic series context.

I am grateful for the privilege of adding to the materials on appeals, especially so in the context of the prophetic preaching of appeals. If, by means of this project, preachers are encouraged to preach appeals that can be more persuasive, then this study is a success. If the preaching of prophetic appeals becomes an influence that brings more decisions for these distinctive Adventist beliefs, I praise God. As our appeals become more persuasive, the goal of winning more souls for Christ can become a reality. It is my burden that the Lord will breathe new life into our preaching by the persuasive preaching of prophetic appeals for decision.

**Professional Transformation**

The discipline involved in obtaining this degree has transformed me into a more thorough and organized person. Schedules are viewed more positively. Goals are strategized and fulfilling them anticipated. A more positive attitude has developed in regard to my abilities. I have a far greater appreciation for the spirituality of academic
study. It is gratifying to observe the profound impact this project had on participating individuals.

The Doctor of Ministry project has helped me understand how necessarily inter-connected many others are to its outcome: my spouse Patsy, fellow cohort student and son-in-law Micheal Goetz, family, professors, advisor, coach, mentor, the IRB office, Ministry Context Group, fellow cohort students, and our original work group from the cohort, all gave encouragement and skill, and made this project possible. A project such as this is a cooperative effort with many others who provide support. Finally, this project experience has humbled and helped me grow in Christ, becoming more dependent on Him. All praise goes to Him for the blessings and the learning!
APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DOCUMENTS
July 17, 2014

Dan Tower
Tel: 517-526-7193
Email: dltower@msu.edu

RE: APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

IRB Protocol #: 14-073
Application Type: Original
Dept: Doctor of Ministry
Review Category: Expedited
Action Taken: Approved
Advisor: David Perino
Title: Persuasive Appeals for Decision: Preaching the Distinctive Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs in the Michigan Conference

This letter is to advise you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your IRB application of research involving human subjects entitled: "Persuasive Appeals for Decision: Preaching the Distinctive Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs in the Michigan Conference" IRB protocol number 14-073 under Expedited category. This approval is valid until July 17, 2017. If your research is not completed by the end of this period you must apply for an extension at least four weeks prior to the expiration date. We ask that you inform IRB whenever you complete your research. Please reference the protocol number in future correspondence regarding this study.

Any future changes made to the study design and/or consent form require prior approval from the IRB before such changes can be implemented. Please use the attached report form to request for modifications, extension and completion of your study.

While there appears to be no more than minimum risk with your study, should an incidence occur that results in a research-related adverse reaction and/or physical injury, this must be reported immediately in writing to the IRB. Any project-related physical injury must also be reported immediately to the University physician, Dr. Reichert, by calling (269) 473-2222. Please feel free to contact our office if you have questions.

Best wishes in your research.

Sincerely,

Mordecai Ongo
Research Integrity & Compliance Officer

Institutional Review Board - 4150 Administration Dr Room 322 - Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355
Tel: (269) 471-5311 Fax: (269) 471-6543 E-mail: irb@andrews.edu
June 16, 2014

Institutional Review Board
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355

To Whom It May Concern:

The Holland Seventh-day Adventist Church welcomes the opportunity to cooperate with Evangelist Daniel Towar and Andrews University in his graduate Doctor of Ministry research project entitled: "Persuasive Appeals for Decision: Preaching the Distinctive Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs in the Michigan Conference". He has permission to conduct his survey among our church members. Pastor Towar also has permission to conduct a small focus group of members from our congregation that attend the Discover Revelation series. We understand that there will be a focus group made up of members from our church and another small focus group made up of non-Adventists near to the conclusion of the meetings.

Yours truly,

Gene Hall, Pastor
June 16, 2014

Institutional Review Board
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355

To Whom It May Concern:

The Cadillac West Seventh-day Adventist Church welcomes the opportunity to cooperate with Evangelist Daniel Towar and Andrews University in his graduate Doctor of Ministry research project entitled: "Persuasive Appeals for Decision: Preaching the Distinctive Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs in the Michigan Conference". He has permission to conduct his survey among our church members.

Pastor Towar also has permission to conduct a small focus group of members from our congregation that attend the Discover Revelation series. We understand that there will be a focus group made up of members from our church and another small focus group made up of non-Adventists near to the conclusion of the meetings.

Yours truly,

[Signature]

Pat Milligan, Pastor
APPENDIX B

PROTOCOL DOCUMENT
1. **Title and Purpose of the Study:** The title of this project is ‘Persuasive Appeals for Decision: Preaching the Distinctive Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs in the Michigan Conference.’

The task of this project is to develop, implement, and evaluate a strategy that improves the giving of the appeal for decision regarding distinctive truths of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the Discover Revelation evangelistic series that I conduct as an evangelist in the Michigan Conference. This new approach in making the appeal will concentrate on the effective role of preaching with a prophetic focus, as such, key components of an effective evangelistic appeal will be identified.

The purpose of this project is to develop more persuasive appeals for decision for decision for six distinctive beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The project and research would create a re-producible template whereby other evangelists, pastors, and lay people could learn to do persuasive appeals for decision in public evangelistic meetings. A qualitative evaluation to test the effectiveness of the training will be done after the two series of meetings are concluded.

On six different evenings during each of the two series of meetings voluntary surveys will be filled out by the general audience concerning the appeal that was made for the subject presented. Names will not be gathered from these surveys as they are to be anonymous, no names received or accepted. On this voluntary survey
form it will be written at the top of the page that by checking the form they have
given consent to be involved anonymously in the project. It will also be stated that
there are no direct benefits to me, that the information provided is anonymous and
that there is no known risk to those participating in filling out the survey.
There will be focus groups involved in this project. It is the plan to have no more
than five to seven individuals in any one focus group. Two focus groups will be
identified simply as focus groups ‘A’ (for SDA members only) and ‘B’ (for non-
SDA members or newly baptized from the non-SDA group) at each series. Two
separate focus groups per series. One focus group will be comprised of Adventists,
the other focus group will be comprised of non-Adventists. During the last week of
the series these groups will each meet one time, each for a two hour meeting
beginning at 6:30 and ending at 8:30 p.m. All six of the distinctive beliefs to be
studied in this project will have been presented by this time. Only one or two more
topics of the 25 in the series will be presented after the focus group meetings. The
method will be verbal question and answer of the attached survey. The plan will be
for five to seven in each focus group, ‘A’ and ‘B’.
For purposes of accurately writing the reactions and opinions received and to keep
focus group meetings within the two hour limit, the focus group sessions will be
recorded. These will not be played back for anyone’s use. Only the researcher will
have access and he will not place any names with any information received.
Holland focus groups will meet at the Tiara Yacht Showroom at 725 E. 40th St.
Holland, Michigan 49423 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, August 19, 2014
(focus group ‘A’) and on Wednesday, August 20, 2014 (focus group ‘B).
Cadillac focus groups will meet at the meeting hall at 9116 E. 13th St. Cadillac, Michigan 49601 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 5, 2014 (focus group ‘A’) and on Thursday, November 6, 2014 (focus group ‘B’).

A qualitative evaluation on the success presenting these appeals will be done by January 1, 2015.

2. **Subjects and Criteria:** None of the subjects shall be minors and all are to be over the age 18. They all have the full capacity to secure their own rights and give informed consent. No vulnerable groups of people such as prisoners, hospital patients, mentally impaired, pregnant women, etc. will be targeted in this research project.

The focus group recruitment will include a letter of explanation. If an individual is interested in being part of the focus group they will be asked to call the researcher at this 517-242-0369 or e-mail the researcher at towar@andrews.edu. Members of the focus groups must be volunteers. The researcher will seek to make it a representative group including both genders and ethnic groups attending the meetings as possible due to the voluntary nature of the project.

3. **Recruiting:** There will be four focus groups. Two each for Holland and Cadillac.

They will be recruited by a general invitation to the audience attending the *Discover Revelation* evangelistic series. There will be one group of Adventists and another group of non-Adventists in Holland and Cadillac.

They will be invited to participate in this project through general announcement of the local pastor, not the researcher. *The script for this announcement is included in*
the IRB documents section on recruitment materials. It will be stated clearly that no pressure or coercion will be used to get people to participate. It will be stated clearly that no concealment or deception will be used in the project.

4. **Consent:** All subjects will be given the Informed Consent Form to participate in this project. The Informed Consent Form is attached. As to subjects who are to give informed consent: only those able to give 1st informed consent will be part of this research study.

5. **Voluntary Participation:** All participation will be voluntary, and subjects will be free to join or leave at will without any penalty or loss of benefits. As to the benefits of the research to the human subjects, these volunteers would be able to help mentor and encourage lay people or pastors on elements of effective appeals that were most helpful in their making positive decisions on distinctive beliefs. There will not be monetary remuneration for participation. There will be a gift-book remuneration.

6. **Procedures:** The main activity of this project will be attending the series, particularly the six presentations where appeals will be made regarding six distinctive beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. These subjects will be on salvation, the seventh-day Sabbath, the heavenly sanctuary, the state of a person in death, the Second Coming, and the remnant church. Appeals will be made for decision following these presentations. Appeals will be compared for effectiveness using a prophetic preaching model and using a model for giving appeals for decision without prophetic preaching.
Participants will be asked in a two hour-long maximum focus group setting questions that will evaluate the effectiveness of the two approaches during the last week of the meetings. A training session for purposes of information and passing out the questions to be asked will precede the focus group. It will be stated that there will be no right or wrong responses. It will be stated that no responses will be identified by name in the writing of the project or otherwise identified. There will not be any physically invasive procedures of any kind (e.g. drawing blood, etc.) during the entirety of this project.

7. **Risk:** The level of risk to those who participate in this project would be considered as minimal (no greater than the normal activities of life). Regarding any need to minimize any deleterious effect or violation, there are no known risks involved to people in this research.

8. **Data Collecting:** The data collected will be from anonymous surveys handed in from the focus group participants and from notes written of responses to questions and answers during the focus group sessions. These notes will not identify responders by name. The data will be collected at the time of the focus group session (dates and location described above). The researcher of this project will collect the data. There will not be an audio recording of the focus group for purposes of accuracy in writing the data received. It will remain anonymous and no names will be linked with opinions shared. There are not any wrong answers or
opinions. All present will be free to express their opinions. The researcher will be the moderator and the only other individual present with the focus group.

9. **Securing Data**: The data will be anonymous (no one will be able to connect the data with a person). The data will be confidential (the researcher alone may be able to connect the data with a name although no written surveys will have a name attached). No one would be able to connect data to a person’s name. Only pseudonyms would be used of focus group notes or written surveys. This researcher will not track names with responses or record names with responses. Confidentiality refers to protection of a subject’s privacy so that information collected about them, as part of the research process, is not disclosed. Information may be revealed in-group form, or as individual examples, but not in a way that an individual may be identified.

If data are recorded in cases where the researcher personally knows subjects, it must be acknowledged that the researcher knows the subjects personally, and the data must be treated confidentially, because anonymity is not possible. The data must be collected in such a way that the identity is never revealed. All data will be stored in a way that the person is not identified.

Data will be collected in the least intrusive and most confidential way to serve the purpose of the research.

*Due to focus group participation, there is a lack of confidentiality due to the group situation. The information and data received by the researcher will be kept confidential without the use of personal names. Due to this it is requested that all*
focus group discussion be confidential outside of the focus group. Risk is considered minimal.

Subjects may waive the right of confidentiality. This may occur, for example, when a subject specifically requests to be quoted. All confidential data will be stored by the researcher on a password-protected computer for 3 years before being destroyed.
APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT DOCUMENT
Recruitment for a Focus Group Study

Dear Potential Voluntary Participant,

Following is an explanation of my research in giving more persuasive appeals for decision during the Discover Revelation series. Currently, I am enrolled as a student in the Doctor of Ministry program at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Your participation as a voluntary focus group member will (1) help me determine the effectiveness of my appeals. It will (2) help others like myself who give similar appeals in seminars such as Discover Revelation. This will (3) also help immensely toward my goal of obtaining this advanced degree! Appeals for decision are (4) essential for these presentations to truly be good news. To be good news, opportunities for people to respond must be included. Personal decisions provide us with opportunities for positive life changes.

If you have interest in being a voluntary member of a small focus group please contact me at 517-242-0369 or by email at towar@andrews.edu. If you volunteer you can change your mind and discontinue at anytime. There are no risks involved and no medical or invasive procedures such as a blood draw. There is no remuneration except for a gift book. You will be given all the information you need. There will be one meeting for no more than two hours. Following are basic goals of this research for your information.

Thank-you sincerely for your help,

Daniel Towar

Director, Discover Revelation
1. Invitations will be included that are current to the times. These will be Christ centered appeals to accept distinctive biblical truth.

2. Some appeals will be given in the context of ‘prophetic’ preaching. These will be ‘prophetic’ in two equal paths. One, it will be biblically presented in its application. Second, the appeal for the sermon will speak truth to power. That is, it will challenge the status quo of any given non-Christian paradigm within popular culture. Many in attendance will be able to recognize the issue(s) presented and challenged. They can know that the issue presented impacts them where they live today and that the distinctive biblical belief presented will help them overcome current negative realities.

3. ‘Prophetic’ preaching should demonstrate that the researcher is willing to confront the cultural context that may prevent people from accepting biblical truths.

4. These appeals will seek to demonstrate that the researcher is aware of the cultural issues of the day. As such it will be imperative that the appeal recognizes various potential challenges that listeners will face. This recognition will give the researcher the opportunity to address how the hindrance(s) to decision can be met more successfully.

5. These appeals should demonstrate that the researcher is sympathetic to the needs of those attending Discover Revelation. A personal story of how the presenter was changed by accepting particular biblical beliefs being considered is significant.

6. The results from the ‘prophetic’ preaching of appeals for decision in the context of distinctive biblical doctrines will be compared with the preaching of appeals without this emphasis within these Discover Revelation meetings. This will be attained by the survey of focus groups from two separate locations, Holland and Cadillac, Michigan.
Informed Consent Form

STUDY TITLE: ‘Persuasive Appeals for Decision: Preaching the Distinctive Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs in the Michigan Conference.’ This is a research project to be conducted separately in two locations, one study in Holland, MI and the other study in Cadillac, MI conducted in part at those two Seventh-day Adventist Churches.

THE INVESTIGATOR/RESEARCHER: Daniel Towar who is a MI Conference evangelist and a student in the Doctor of Ministry program at the Andrews University Seminary, Berrien Springs, MI 49104

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR: Dr. Ron Du Preez; Th.D., D.Min.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this project is to develop persuasive appeals for decision in the Discover Revelation evangelistic series. This research will compare the preaching of these appeals with a prophetic preaching style in contrast to appeals preached without the prophetic preaching style. A qualitative evaluation to test the effectiveness of the training will be done with focus groups following these meetings.

INCLUSION CRITERIA: I understand that in order for me to participate in this study I will voluntarily attend as much of the Discover Revelation seminar as I am able and agree to attend a focus group discussion on research questions during the last week of the meetings. The Holland seminar dates are from July 7-August 23, 2014. Cadillac seminar dates are from September 19-November 8, 2014. I understand to participate in this study I must be an adult 18 and above.

RISKS: This study would be considered as minimal (no greater than the normal activities of life) risk. I understand that there are no physical or emotional risks to participate in this study. There will not be any physically invasive procedures of any kind (e.g. drawing blood, etc.) during the entirety of this project.

BENEFITS/RESULTS: I understand that I may not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study. I understand that the results may benefit evangelism research. I understand that the information collected during this study will be included in a doctoral project dissertation, and may be presented or published in professional meetings or journals.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I may discontinue my participation in this study at any time without any pressure, embarrassment, penalty, loss, or negative impact on me. I also understand that there is no monetary compensation in return for my participation. A gift book will be given to all participants.

CONFIDENTIALITY: I understand that all information and survey results will be kept confidential. The investigator will not track results by name. Only the researcher will have access to my individual data. At no time will my data be identified individually in any type of publication or presentation. No names will be connected with focus groups and no connection made to the responses. Please note: Due to focus group participation, there is a lack of confidentiality due to the group situation. The information and data received by the researcher will be kept confidential without the use of personal names. Due to this it is requested that all focus group discussion be confidential outside of the focus group. The focus group will include an audio recording to ensure accuracy of data received. No names will be identified with any information received.

Participants may waive the right of confidentiality. This may occur, for example, when a subject specifically requests to be quoted. All Information will be kept in a password locked computer for three years with no personal names included in the data.

REQUEST FOR MORE INFORMATION: The study has been explained to me, and I have had an opportunity to ask questions. If any other questions should arise during this study I understand that I can contact: Daniel Towar at 517-242-0369 or his email towar@andrews.edu or his research supervisor, Ron Du Preez 503-877-0791 or his email ron.dupreez@gmail.com. A contact address for both of these individuals is: Andrews University Seminary, Andrews
University, Berrien Springs, MI 49104.

I have explained the purpose of this research, all procedures, and possible risks and benefits to the best of my ability to ________________________________.

__________________________________________________________________________
Investigator Signature Date

I confirm that ________________________________ has explained to me, the purpose of the research, the study procedures that I will undergo, and the possible risks and/or discomforts. I understand completely the benefits that this may have for me. I have read and understand this consent form and have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction. Therefore, I agree to give my consent to participate as a subject in this research project.

__________________________________________________________________________
Participant Signature Date

__________________________________________________________________________
Witness Signature Date

Optional: Due to the focus group situation I recognize a lack of confidentiality due to the group situation. Therefore, I choose to waive my right of confidentiality.

__________________________________________________________________________
Participants Signature Date

__________________________________________________________________________
Witness Signature Date
Focus Group Survey questions concerning the giving of persuasive appeals in the
Discover Revelation series of prophecy lectures.

Please note: The answers you provide will remain confidential. There are no ‘right’
or ‘wrong’ answers to the following questions. The researcher is interested in your personal opinions as he seeks to improve giving appeals that lead to affirmative responses in the Discover Revelation series. Your participation is voluntary and most appreciated. Please give your personal opinion knowing that it is deeply appreciated and will prove of great importance to the research being conducted. At no time will your answers be identified as coming from you so you can be free to express yourself. This will be of the best benefit to the research. Thank-you!

The Intent and Importance of the Gospel Appeal
The Goal is to communicate biblical truths in the context of the Gospel and relate it to the needs of the people.
So we are to beseech people to be reconciled to God. The purpose of the preacher is to help sinners accept Christ as their Savior.

Prophetic preaching style addresses current issues of morality and social issues.
Prophetic preaching style challenges popular cultural norms that prevent God’s salvation and justice from being accepted into one’s personal life.

1. Were the appeals clearly introduced by way of explaining what it is that the speaker expected you to do, such as responding by raising hand, standing to express agreement, checking appropriate squares on a ‘decision’ card or coming forward to the front in acceptance of the appeal made by the speaker?

2. How clear were the two types of appeals used in the presentation(s) to you – the prophetic preaching style and non-prophetic preaching style? And which one did you find more persuasive?

3. Did those appeals that the presenter noted as ‘prophetic preaching style’ appeals address the current issues that are prevalent in the media or culture?

4. How do you think the prophetic preaching style appeals shared biblical truth that challenges cultural practices and issues of morality?

5. Were appeals that did not include the above mentioned ‘prophetic preaching’ emphasis more or less persuasive in your opinion? Why would this be true or why would this not be true?

6. Did the appeal express sympathetic or empathetic concern to where you may find yourself presently and to the needs you have personally?
REFERENCE LIST


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Young, R. (n.d.) *Young’s analytical concordance to the Bible.* McLean, VA: MacDonald.

VITA
Name: Daniel Paul Towar  
Date of Birth: February 29, 1952  
Place of Birth: Lansing, Michigan  
Married: June 16, 1974 to Patsy Jean Sheets  
Children: Heidi Jean (February 9, 1977) and Melanie Christine (August 28, 1978)

Education:  
2011-2015  DMin in Preaching, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI  
1974-1978  Master of Divinity, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI  
1970-1974  Bachelor of Arts, Theology, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI

Ordination  
1980  Ordained to the Seventh-day Adventist Gospel Ministry, Wisconsin Conference

Experience:  
2000-2015  Evangelist, Michigan Conference  
1995-2000  Senior Pastor of Lansing and Holt Seventh-day Adventist Churches, Michigan  
1990-1995  Senior Pastor of Holly and Linden Seventh-day Adventist Churches, Michigan  
1986-1990  Pastor of Newark and Lancaster Seventh-day Adventist Churches, Ohio  
1978-1981  Pastor of Gillett, Lena, Oconto, and Pound Seventh-day Adventist Churches, Wisconsin  
1976  Ministerial Intern, Janesville, Wisconsin; Wisconsin Conference