1975

A Dialogical Evaluation of a Series of Eight Sermons Preached in the Benton Harbor Church of Seventh-day Adventists From April 6 to June 1, 1974

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Andrews University

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Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A DIALOGICAL EVALUATION OF A SERIES OF EIGHT SERMONS PREACHED IN THE BENTON HARBOR CHURCH OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS FROM APRIL 6 TO JUNE 1, 1974

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

by
Carl Raymond Holmes

May 1975

Approved
"Preaching is an activity of the whole Church, and there is an urgent need for a fresh understanding of its nature by those who listen, as well as those who speak."

David H. G. Read,
Sent From God, p. 12.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

After twenty-two years of formal education it has been impressed upon me that an educated person is really the sum total of the influences made upon him by many people. It is to the people who have been involved with me in this study that I owe my appreciation. The members of my doctoral committee who have guided me so gently through the Doctor of Ministry program have earned my deep respect and gratitude.

Dr. Thomas Elincoe was influential in helping me steer the precarious course between the dangers of neo-orthodoxy on the one hand, and a theology of preaching unrelated to the human situation on the other. He represents a stable rock of conservative Adventism who at the same time is deeply concerned with the communication of the Biblical message in the context of contemporary human problems and need. In my judgment he personifies the task of theology which is to understand and articulate the meaning of Biblical revelation so that it might be communicated to man in preaching.

Dr. Robert Moon, Jr., has given so generously of his much demanded time in the development of research instruments and a valid approach to evaluation. His expertise in getting to the heart of this project and helping to plan a methodology that would implement it was invaluable. Without his assistance I would not have dared to begin.

Dr. Louis Wenden, who as Project Director carried the primary load of guidance and criticism, has not only been faithful in this capacity but has been my friend as well. He went the extra mile. His
extremely careful reading of my work, and the critical questions his
reading evoked, have contributed largely to whatever value and validity
this study may have. He deserves my appreciation for the many hours we
spent talking about the project and talking into the project.

Dr. Arnold Kurtz, while he did not serve in my doctoral committee,
got me started in this direction during the course on expository preach­
ing I took from him in 1972. If for no other reason, he deserves my
undying gratitude for listening faithfully to my preaching week after
week as a member of my parish. The fact that he continues to do so is
encouraging indeed.

My appreciation is also extended to the Michigan Conference of
Seventh-day Adventists without whose generous sponsorship this work could
never have been undertaken.

It has been a source of great personal pleasure to be associated
with the members of the first class of Doctor of Ministry candidates at
Andrews University. I have enjoyed immensely their wit, penetrating
insight, suggestions, and friendship.

Most importantly of all my appreciation belongs to the members of
my parish in Benton Harbor, and most especially to those who so faithfully
and capably served as members of the treatment and control groups.
Special thanks go to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Starkey, and to Mrs. Richard
Lange who typed the final draft.
INTRODUCTION

It is the element of mystery that makes life exciting. The same is true of preaching. For twenty years I have been a student of preaching, and a preacher. That study continues for there is an element of mystery in the unbelievably effective means of communication between God and man called preaching. One studies principles of speech, homiletical method, the preaching of Jesus and Paul and Spurgeon and Moody and Luther and Wesley; one agonizes over a Biblical text with all the historical, dogmatic, linguistic tools he is capable of using, cares and feels for his people, then goes to the pulpit with fear and trembling for when all is said and done preaching is a mystery. And he would have it no other way.

The thrill is always there. The climactic moment of the preacher's week has arrived. The incisive moment. The responsible moment. The moment for which he lives and breathes. The moment which gives the preacher's life its meaning and coherence. For he doesn't become a preacher when he enters the pulpit. He is a preacher all the time. Because he is a preacher all the time everything he does every day is a part of that irresistible fact. That is why he cannot resist the urge to continue studying preaching. It is part of the upward call in Christ Jesus. That is why after twenty years of preaching, and studying preaching, I am still preaching and studying preaching. This Doctor of Ministry project was undertaken because it is a part of continuing to learn how to preach.
Project Design

From April 6 to June 1, 1974, a series of eight sermons were preached to the Benton Harbor, Michigan congregation of Seventh-day Adventists under the theme FAITH TO FACE THE FUTURE. Homiletical preparation was based on the method suggested by Lloyd M. Perry in his book Biblical Sermon Guide, and harmonized with methods consistent with my own theology of preaching. The series was preceded by two training sessions in listening skills for the Treatment Group designated throughout this report as Group A.

Thesis

That in order to communicate the Christian Gospel as it is presented in the letter to the Ephesians in such a way that personal insight and spiritual growth takes place in the listeners, the sermon must reflect the preacher's interest in the individual as well as his concern for doctrine. The sermon must be person-centered rather than doctrine-centered. In other words, the language of the sermon must be directed toward the person in the pew instead of toward an objective doctrine which needs explanation. The emphasis is on the use of doctrine rather than on the explanation of doctrine, and the focus is on the individual.

Task

The preaching of a series of eight sermons based on the letter to the Ephesians designed to stimulate and encourage faith in facing the future, critiqued by a treatment group, designated A, and a control group, designated B, as to content, impact, and effect.

Objectives

1- More precise understanding of the relationship between
homiletical theory and actual practice.

2- Insight into homiletical style and method that will expose weaknesses as well as affirm strengths.

3- Testing of the validity of my own theology of preaching.

4- Growth in understanding and practicing that which is homiletically valid.

5- Testing of the validity of current homiletical theory concerning preaching as a dialogical event.

6- An awareness on the part of the listener of individual responsibility for, and participation in, the preaching event.

7- The development of keener listening perception on the part of the members of the congregation who participated in Treatment Group A.

8- On the basis of the results of the study to make recommendations concerning the need for, and the implementation of, a program of training in listening skills that would contribute toward spiritual growth in the lives of congregational members.

Method

Methodology was two-fold: theoretical and empirical. Research was done in selected works on homiletics and the theology of preaching which form the basis for the chapter on my theology of preaching. Research was also done in selected literature concerning the development of listening skills, which served as the basis for the chapter on listening. Material from this research formed the theory used in the training sessions for Treatment Group A.

Empirical research was done by means of instruments in the form of questionnaires. After each of the sermons in the series Group A and B filled out the questionnaires. Following the fifth and the eighth sermon
Group A met with the project director for dialogue which was taped and heard later by the preacher.

Group B served as the control group in that they received no prior training in listening skills.

Questions Examined

1- Is my preaching practice consistent with my theology of preaching?

2- Does training in listening skills increase ability to retain and recall sermonic data thus contributing, hopefully, to Christian growth and attitudinal change?

Limitations of Project

The limitations of the project were inherent in the concept and philosophy of the Doctor of Ministry program at Andrews University. Basic is the belief that a dialogue must be maintained between theories of ministry and the professional practice of ministry. Thus the Doctor of Ministry program makes it possible for the student to integrate biblical, theological, and social studies into the pastoral ministry and to increase skills in the practice of ministry. In this case, the preaching office of the ministry. Fundamentally, the goal of the Doctor of Ministry program is not the production of this Project Report but the increased development of ministerial skills in the man who is to minister.

Therefore, the project was limited on the theoretical as well as on the practical side in an attempt to achieve the desired balance and results as indicated in the philosophy of the program.

Assumptions

The work on this project was begun with certain basic assumptions in mind:
1. That learning how to preach well is an on-going process.

2. That such learning is a responsibility inherent in God's call to preach His Word.

3. That the letter to the Ephesians contains a vital message as members of the Church face the immediate future.

4. That the interpretation of the Biblical texts developed and applied in the eight sermons is valid.

5. That the method and means of acquiring information and feedback from the empirical research are valid.

6. That the conclusions arrived at on the basis of both literary and empirical research are subject to criticism.

Definition

Throughout the study the term "the Word" is used frequently. In my homiletical thought "Word" is an inclusive term and embodies the dynamic of the creative Word incarnate in the living Word Jesus Christ and transmitted by the Holy Spirit through the written Word to the Church and the world by means of the spoken Word.

Biblical Quotations

All Biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

First and Third Person in Reporting

Chapters One and Two of this Project Report are written in the first person, as though it were being written for the lay readers.

Because it was difficult to report on the project description and the data received during the implementation of the project in the first person, chapters three and four are written in the more objective third person.
The first person is reverted to again in the section of the fifth chapter which deals with conclusions relating to personal development and insight on the part of the student.
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CHAPTER I

MY THEOLOGY OF PREACHING

This first chapter will attempt to answer the questions: Who am I? Who are you? Where are we? What are we doing? Under consideration will be my own self-image as a preacher, the people to whom I preach as I see them, the context of worship in which preaching takes place, and preaching as a shared experience.

Who Am I?

Person

First of all I am a person created by God in the image of God. I recognize my origin in Him. Secondly, I am a redeemed person because I have responded in faith to the Gospel message concerning Jesus the Son of God and Saviour of mankind. Thirdly, I am a Christian living in the world among many people who do not believe in God nor accept His will for life on this planet. With them I share the problems and the struggles of life. Fourthly, I am a part of the family of God, the Church of God. When in faith I responded to Christ's saving call, He took me into a new kind of fellowship and relationship with Himself and His people. With them I seek to serve Him in the world and await His return. Fifthly, I am a minister of the Gospel set apart by the Lord and His Church for a special task in the context of His Church as it lives in His world. Part of that task is preaching.

What I am as a person I am because of what God has done for me in Christ, and does in me by the Holy Spirit. I am one who is on the
way. All that I have has been given me by God. I have nothing that does not belong to Him.\(^1\) As Paul says:

\[
\text{I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.} \quad ^2
\]

I cannot speak about what I am as a person apart from the ministry, apart from preaching. I could have done that before I responded to God's call to preach, but no more. I am not simply a man who preaches, I am a preacher. Preaching is a part of my whole existence as a person.\(^3\) The task of preaching has also been given by God. I stand in awe of that task and am deeply interested in it, as well as highly motivated toward the search for the best preaching I am capable of producing.\(^4\)

In terms of weekly ministerial activities, preaching is the center, the pivot, around which all else turns.\(^5\) It is the task of preaching that gives meaning to all else I do during each week.

The blessedness of my life comes in doing the will of God. His will for me as a person is that I spend my life in His service as a preacher. In the words of H. H. Farmer: "This is a blessedness which

\(^1\) "... the preacher can adopt no attitude other than that of a man whom everything is given." Karl Barth, The Preaching of the Gospel (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 17.

\(^2\) Galatians 2:20


no evil can defeat and no joy can corrupt."¹

As a person who is a preacher I live out of the conscious belief and assurance that God is wise. I do not understand why He picked me to preach, but I trust His wisdom. Somewhere there must be some good reason for it, and good in it. It is because I trust His wisdom that I am able to fulfill my calling. The same apostle Paul, that great preacher, who said, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!"² also said, "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!"³

Because I am struggling, as a person who is a preacher, with the humanness of my existence, there is a tension in my life. It involves the perturbation and the peace which are both part of my experience in being called by God to be a Christian and to be a preacher. There is great peace in knowing that I am earnestly seeking to be in God's will, yet I am perturbed by the fact that my obedience is imperfect. There is great peace and satisfaction in the preaching task, but I am disturbed by the fact that my performance does not measure up to my expectations. Thus preaching, for me, is a "strange activity"⁴ that fascinates me to no end, and whose ultimate, whose perfection, whose completion, eludes me in such a tempting, tantalizing manner that I must press on. It is, you see, part of the nature of the faith itself. As I live; as I live to preach, I am increasingly aware that I live in an "invisible environment" and an "nurtured by companionship with the unseen."⁵ Power comes

¹Ibid., p. 49.
²I Corinthians 9:16
³Romans 11:33
⁴Ibid., p. 7.
from this kind of thing! That's why Paul could say to Timothy, in reference to his defense recorded in Acts 22-23: "But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength to proclaim the word fully, that all the Gentiles might hear it." \(^1\)

**Authority**

What right do I have to address men and women? What right to preach? I must have a satisfactory answer or I have no business in the pulpit! It matters little whether the world accepts my role as authentic, but I must know whereof I speak and from whence my authority comes.

The call to the ministry involves four elements:\(^2\) (1) The call to be Christian, to which I have alluded above. (2) The secret call, or inner persuasion, by which a man becomes conscious that God has indeed selected him to preach. (3) The providential call that involves qualifications and talents. (4) The ecclesiastical call, that is to say the invitation of the Church to a man.

Authority is involved in all of these elements. It is not the same kind of authority that stands behind the barber or the plumber. A barber learns to cut hair because people need to have their hair cut. A plumber learns the skills of the plumbing trade because people need pipes and sinks and faucets in their homes. The barber's and plumber's authority comes from their qualifications based on training. The preacher's authority is based on the fact that God imparts a sacred compulsion to preach a message that originates outside and independent

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\(^1\) II Timothy 4:17

of the preacher.

Karl Heim speaks of such an authority, and says:

If I am to act with responsibility, therefore, I must have an authority to refer to on this side of the already-become, an authority which stands along with me in the "space" of the "becoming" and, in the moment of deciding, supports and maintains my will, giving it the final lift which clinches my decision. If I have this support, which my will needs in order to make a responsible decision, then I express this by saying, not only, "I wish to do this," but "I ought to do this," "I have the right to do this," nay "I must do it" . . . It is an expression of the fact that, in my actions, I am freed from the feeling of caprice.

Speaking of the secret call, or inner persuasion, Heim continues:

This sense of a sacred compulsion is quite different from a necessity of nature; its necessity is that of an inner destiny, the consciousness that my act is completely voluntary, and yet laid upon me by a sovereign power. Only when I possess this certainty can I hold out against every rebuff—even in spite of failure or disillusion. I enjoy an inward independence . . .

I cannot issue to myself my own mandate. A mandate I conferred on myself would be no real mandate at all. For I should then be in a position to rescind it at will. It would not bind me unconditionally. By the way of autonomy, then, by my legislating for myself, I can never get the sanction that I need . . .

To get my warrant I must refer myself to an authority which is not identical with myself, but abides "beyond" me. It is only such an authority that can, as the word goes, "authorize" me—that is, give me the right to take the step that I do . . . The authority I require must therefore be a non-objectifiably Ego—that is to say, a "Thou" or a "We" which stands above me and whose right to command me I recognize . . .

An authority which I myself authorize is for me no authority. A command which I lay on myself can never be unconditionally binding.

The apostle Paul caught the wonder of the sacred compulsion when he wrote:

1 Karl Heim, God Transcendant (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 197-200.
But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?

Preachers are sent! Compelled!

Paul did not decide to become a minister of the Gospel by weighing that profession against others and then choosing the one for which he felt best suited, or that appeared to be most satisfying. He said that he was "made" a minister, that he was "called to be" an apostle, that he was "set apart" for the Gospel. He could do nothing else. He had no other choice. He became, as someone has put it, a man in secret bonds.

Concerning the ministry he had been given Paul's convictions are profound and stirring. He was convinced that he served God in the ministry of His Son, that he is under obligation to men so that they might hear truth, that it was a task to be faced with eagerness, that the Gospel he preached is the power of God for salvation, that through the preaching of the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, that he should be regarded as a servant of Christ, and that because he preaches not by his own will he recognizes that he has been entrusted with a mission. The contemporary "apostle" carries within his breast

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1 Romans 10:14
2 Romans 1:9
3 Romans 1:14
4 Romans 1:15
5 Romans 1:16
6 Romans 1:17
7 I Corinthians 4:1
8 I Corinthians 9:17
the same convictions that dynamized the life of Paul.

It is in the continuity of this ministry that I share. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who has called me, appointed me to this ministry, and gives me authority by being with me.\(^1\) In my preaching I am bound to the Word of God, and as soon as they hear it it is also binding on others. Confidence in the preaching office is due to the fact that the Lord promises to work with me and confirm the message.\(^2\) It is the presence of the risen Christ that makes my witness to Him effective. It is He who invites, encourages, and preserves all who hear His word. When I preach the Gospel message Jesus Christ Himself is acting, I am simply being used. As a Seventh-day Adventist minister I am conscious of the fact that when I preach I am not trying to put words into the mouth of a dead Jesus, rather the living and ascended Lord as High Priest before His Father's throne is using me to preach His message in this vital hour!

I am very conscious also of the fact that "the very content of the sermon does not come from the world with all its questions and problems, but from the living God into this world."\(^3\) The message I preach is derived not from my own mind, but from the revealed Word of God. It is my conviction that Christ gives to every Bible text its interpretation and makes it a contemporary witness.\(^4\) I preach because I have been called by God to do so. I preach in Jesus name and by His authority. I do not believe that my word becomes His Word, but that His Word becomes

\(^1\)Matthew 28:19-20

\(^2\)Mark 16:20


mine. Obedience as a part of my personal confession of faith is required here. In other words, having heard the Word of God myself I must respond in faith and proclaim it. Because of my weakness and sin, human incapacity and finiteness, and because preaching is a human activity too, there is a promise attached to preaching, the very presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My call to preach does not come only by means of inner persuasion, but is also the invitation of the Church. The Church, too, is founded on a call and has a task to do. Because I am a part of the Church, the Body of Christ, my preaching is an expression of the whole Church's obedience to her Lord. The continuity of the preaching office depends on the place of the Christian Church in history. The Church today does the same things it did during New Testament days: speaking, confessing, praising, reporting. It has set me apart to be its voice, together with other believers, in today's world. It is in the Church, and as part of its ministry in the world, that I share in the continuity of the Messianic ministry of Jesus (I Peter 2:9).

The first thing that should be said about the Church is that it has come, just like its Lord, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of God. We need to remember that God had a sovereign purpose in mind when He called the Church into being. It must ever remain the conviction of the Church that it has received a direct, divine commission from God.

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1 I Thessalonians 2:13
3 Sittler, Anguish, p. 12.
to proclaim the Gospel. The Church must seek to be faithful to the fact that it is the instrument God has chosen to use in the prosecution of His divine purpose.\(^1\)

Preaching is that act of the Church by which what she believes is openly declared, freshly declared in the contemporary context of her life.\(^2\) The Church preaches because "in this world of chaos and confusion the church is inescapably involved, inextricably entwined, inevitably implicated."\(^3\) The Church is a part of the ongoing event to which it points in its proclamation, the activity of God in the world. The Church preaches not just because something happened on a cross in the past, nor because it desires to freshen the memory of something that is receding from man's memory, but because that event points toward a culminating event in time, the return of Christ. The incarnation of God in Christ will find its ultimate expression in the midst of the apocalyptic events of the final hours of history in terms of judgment, justice, and vindication. Thus in its proclamatory function the Church speaks with a prophetic voice, speaking for God, as the Church and the world moves inexorably toward the climactic event.

The Church, and its individual members, must be ready at any moment to speak the Word it receives from God. This is in relation to the fact that the Church is not only called, but sent. In the words of Dietrich Ritschl: "The church does not have a mission, but the church is a mission."\(^4\) Her mission is not only to declare what God has done and is

\(^1\) Farmer, Servant, p. 11.
\(^2\) Sittler, Anguish, p. 7.
\(^3\) Pearson, The Preacher, p. 73.
\(^4\) Ritschl, A Theology, p. 66.
doing, but also to announce what is to come thus bearing witness to the eschatological dimension of her mission.\(^1\)

Because the Church's preaching is rooted in the past yet focused on the future it has an itinerant nature. It never stops. From the calling of the original twelve disciples to the calling of contemporary witnesses, preachers, the preaching of the Gospel moves on. In my own preaching experience this means that in the concluding of one sermon I am already reaching out for the next. Furthermore, I move from parish to parish in my ministry, thus illustrating the itinerant nature of preaching. Michel Philibert makes this such a crucial thing when he says: "The preacher's departure presses the hearer to make the decision demanded by the message."\(^2\)

**Ministry**

I see my preaching ministry as basically two fold, that of steward and herald. Steward of the mysteries of God, and herald of the Good News.

The word "steward" describes all who have been called to preach the Word of God.\(^3\) This stewardship has been given to the preacher by God for the sake of the congregation.\(^4\) To be steward is to be trustee of something which belongs to another, in this case the Word of God, the message of revelation. That message has been supplied. It is called

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\(^1\)Barth, *Preaching*, pp. 10-11. Barth makes a distinction between ankündigung, to announce, and verkündigung, to describe.


\(^3\)I Corinthians 4:1

\(^4\)Ephesians 3:1-3
"seed in Luke 8:11. The faithful steward will care for the seed."¹ Furthermore, he will faithfully share the message with God's people.² Thus the good steward is responsible to God, to the message, and to the congregation. He will study in order that he might know the content of the message he has been given, and he will seek to share it in ever fresh and vital ways rather than burden and bother his people with insipid monotony.³

A good steward will also be a good herald. The word "herald" describes one who declares good news.⁴ He has been told what good news he is to declare, and he faithfully does so. The herald is unique in that God actually makes His appeal through him.⁵ Stott says that:

the herald seems in the New Testament to possess more direct authority and to represent his master more closely. . . . as the herald issues his proclamation, the voice of the king is heard.⁶

Of the herald Dietrich Ritschl has this to say:

His message is urgent; it cannot even be taught, for it must be cried out. It is cried out in the authority of Christ the coming King. The call of the herald is the call for decision (Hebrews 4:7). . . . He must say what his King wants him to say. The words of a herald are not an explication of his own theology or a confession of his own experience and Christian life.⁷

In the speaking out of the given message both the speaker and

¹I Timothy 1:11; II Timothy 1:12-14
²I Peter 4:10
⁴Isaiah 41:27
⁵II Corinthians 5:20
⁶Stott, Portrait, p. 35.
⁷Ritschl, A Theology, p. 61.
those who hear come under the authority and the claims of the Word of God. The divine author of the message, and the message itself, command the herald. In fact, it can be said that the herald becomes a part of the message itself in the sense that he personally shares in its acceptance or rejection, in its glory and in its shame. If the message is persecuted, so is the herald. If the message is despised, so is the herald. If the message is successful and received with gratitude and praise, so is the herald.\(^1\)

Implied in the metaphor of the herald is the expectation of response on the part of the hearers. The hearer is under obligation to make the decision demanded by the message.

I am a person created in the image of God, redeemed by His Son Jesus Christ, called by Him to minister and preach the Gospel in His name and by His authority. Called also by the Church I share in the historic continuity of the ministry of Christ through His Church to His world. In the fulfillment of the ministry I am both steward of the mysteries of God and herald of the Good News.

Who Are You?

Many years ago when my worship experience was pew-oriented rather than pulpit-oriented, I heard a person exclaim after a sermon: "Who does he think we are anyway?" I don't really know what was meant by the question, but I remember it. However, I do believe it is an important question for any preacher to consider.

Have you ever wondered what goes through the preacher's mind during the silent, lonely, hours of sermon preparation? Do you conceive of him as dwelling in past history alone, though it may be Bible history?

\(^1\)Matthew 24:9; John 15:20; II Timothy 3:12
Of course whirring in his mind as he tackles a Biblical text for preaching are all of those tools he was trained to use: language, secular history, theology and doctrine, principles of sermon preparation and preaching, literature, and current events. But, if he is a good preacher, a concerned preacher, you are there too. In his imagination you are sitting before him, leaning over his shoulder, silent yet ever-present. You are the unseen participant in the preparation of the sermon. Sometimes his thought will focus on a particular member of his congregation, or a specific acquaintance. But you are there for he must always remember that when he preaches it will be to living, breathing, people. So how he sees you and what he thinks about you is very important.

When I am engrossed in the process of preparing a sermon my thoughts invariably, and frequently, go to members of my congregation. In anticipation of the actual preaching of the sermon I am already communing with God and with you. When I preach it is in the context of worship. For me worship means communion. Communion with God and with my congregation, and with you as a person too. I am not interested in just passing along to you some religious information, but that in the passing of the information we can be lead to experience genuine communion.¹

I have a specific message to preach, a message that has been revealed in Scripture and given me to proclaim, but I must seek to bridge the gap of history from the past of the Biblical events to your time, your life. That's the hard part! It's not so hard, given the proper tools and training, to explain to you what happened thousands of years ago. But to help you understand what those events mean for you today is not so easy. In order for me to do that I must try and under-

stand you and the time in which you live. In this sense I must put myself at your disposal and spend some time with you either in personal conversation or as the silent guest in my study.

To be honest with you I must admit that I need some help in this from you and also from good books such as the one I referred to above. And you must allow me the freedom to make some mistakes in my interpretation of your life situation, for you, after all, are a changeable person and one of many. What is correct for one may not be for another and there are so many lives to touch on Sabbath morning. Please remember, too, that while I am (or am trying to be) all that I said I was in previous pages, I am also a human being and that, if I may borrow some words from Dr. Tournier, even though I might be in the midst of a gloomy period myself I must preach the given message hopefully unaffected by my own ups and downs.¹ That's not so easy either!

To summarize what I've said so far, I believe that if I expect you to listen to what I have to say I must make it as clear as I can that the Gospel I preach is relevant to the problems of life you face. I don't want to manipulate you or control you, rather I want to communicate with you as unique persons. Therefore, when I prepare to preach I must ask questions like: "How can I get inside these complex minds?" and "How can the vital heart of the Christian message be conveyed to them where they are?"² Answers to these questions depend upon what I know about the world we both must live in, its prevailing ideology, your needs called forth by the world and its ideology, and the things that you bring along when you come to hear me preach.

¹Ibid., p. 37.

²Abbey, Contemporary Mind, p. 7.
There are certain things that can be known about the world in which you and I live. It is a technological world. Technology is believed to serve the striving of mankind toward a perfect future, even toward the perfection of the social order. We might even say that technology has had a "religious" goal. Whereas the ancient Israelites were led by God by means of a pillar of fire and a cloud, today's wanderers are guided by the black smoke of the blast furnace. We live in a world where most people are not convinced about the divinity of creation, but of production. Who worship not at the Temple door, but at the factory gate.

We live in a world wherein technological competition has separated individuals from each other and the consequence is an immense loneliness. This is because people have been forced by technology to become subject to the machine. And in our public schools students are not learning so much how to be human, but how to be useful. Our world has attached all human progress to technology and when things go wrong, as with the recent energy crisis, it doesn't quite know what to do.

Strangely enough our world has found credence for its technological religion in the Biblical conception of man created as fellow worker with God. For our world to share in God's dominion over the earth, often means to exploit it and tear it to pieces in the process.

Our world is an anxious world because in spite of its affluence technology is severing the connection between individuals and nature.

One writer says:
In many respects, modern man is like a wild animal spending its life in a zoo; like the animal, he is fed abundantly and protected from inclemencies but deprived of the natural stimuli essential for many functions of his body and mind. Man is alienated, not only from other men, not only from nature, but more importantly from the deepest layers of his fundamental self.¹

Our world is not motivated by the value of mankind or human personality, or the value of truth. It is motivated by the value of power, economics, technology.

Our world is doing all it can to dehumanize us, to get us to the point where we no longer can conceive of ourselves as sons of God.² Individuals are taught to be aggressive and to suppress the voice of conscience in the name of the god of materialism. We are taught to hide our moral weaknesses and to cover up and deny the struggle that goes on within; which is a struggle, as Dr. Tournier says, between a right intuition and a wrong idea.³

What I am saying is that our world is basically pagan and that it influences us with its ideas and goals. It think that you are able to see that the great idealistic and humanistic hopes of this age are vanishing in the acrid smoke of the giant steel mills. The lingering sound of such hopes are swallowed up in the crash of the punch press, and the expectation of their fulfillment ferociously sucked into the mechanical bowels of the computer. The legacy? Mindless noise.

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Some Thought Patterns of Our World

The world we live in adopted certain ways of thinking that has its effect on almost every aspect of life. This thinking influences you too. That's why I must try to understand it and its influence as I prepare to preach to you.

One writer has characterized life today as "an anxious existence between the times."¹ You recognize this anxiety, I'm sure, in many of your friends and perhaps even within yourself. Your world is still wrestling with the basic and crucial questions of life and death. In spite of the fact that people are pre-occupied with the means of production, they are still searching for answer to the questions concerning origin, destiny, evil, and death. To these concerns technology gives no answer, it is frustratingly mute. Even though this is so, that this searching for answers is going on, the struggle takes place so often beneath the surface for few of your friends will talk openly about these things. Their fears, doubts, questions, are repressed but they haunt nevertheless. And they are doing a lot of thinking. The tremendous increase in the sale of books on philosophy and the mystery religions, as well as the occult, are evidence enough.

It is very important for me as your preacher to know how the world in which both you and I live thinks, and what makes it think that way, because, as one writer puts it:

Accuracy in discovering and stating the point of conflict between the Gospel and the cherished assumptions of the contemporary mind is crucial in giving effective focus to the ideas from which sermons come.²

² Abbey, Contemporary Mind, p. 68.
One way in which our world thinks is termed "secular." It means that historic and traditional religious answers to crucial questions are rejected.¹ Instead, answers are sought in the fields of technology, science, political philosophy, psychology, sociology, and human relationships.

Another prevailing pattern of thought is called "nihilism." This simply means that all of the historical past is meaningless and the future is hopeless. It means that there are no values or truths that have always been in existence to shape and guide man's life and relationships. One must create his own values. He does not find his personal identity in relationship with other persons in society, in a common origin, but from within himself.² In the nihilistic way of thinking, the world, and the individual, have been separated from any relationship to God.

In the secular way of thinking meaning is found in production, in activity, in things, in humanity. In the nihilistic way of thinking there is no meaning in anything. The nihilist is not even interested in the optimistic secular interpretation of the world. He isn't much interested in anything.

Our world has closed its eyes and mind to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Mankind has become incomprehensible to itself; no longer understands itself and is confused.³ It has stripped itself of that invisible dimension of reality where norms and laws of ethics which


³Tournier, Whole Person, p. 36.
distinguish good from evil are to be found. This is the consequence of losing the conception of God as the creator and sustainer of the world and of life.

When God is not in the picture fear takes His place, and people begin to move in the direction of the magic and the superstitious. A heyday for the occult! So in spite of his this-worldly, objective, secular, nihilistic, thought patterns, the man of this world has a disturbing need to connect with the "other" world. In the process he is attracted to some of the most weird philosophies and "religions."

Many are caught up in the search for a non-rational religious experience that will make some sense out of life. Looking for a reality beyond and outside of themselves as well as within themselves, many experiment with drugs, trances, seances, etc.

Another way of thinking is called "existentialism." This is a bit more sophisticated, a bit more philosophical and even theological in nature. It means that reality and meaning is to be found in one's own experience rather than in an objective truth that comes from outside of oneself and to which one must be related. This way of thinking has had a profound effect on Christian theology and on preaching.

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1 Thielicke, Nihilism, p. 61.


3 As far as preaching goes, the influence of existentialism has led many to the conclusion that the preacher can no longer appeal to man's reason and conscience. Appeal must instead be made to his feelings, his instincts. The consequence is manipulation rather than communication. This represents the difference between the techniques of the propagandist and the message of the Christian preacher. Furthermore, the individual existential experience, carrying along with it its own kind of "truth" and "norms" is not subject to criticism or correction on the basis of an objective, revealed norming truth. In addition it is not even open to communication. One existentialist is not interested in the content of
Modern skepticism has found its way into Christian thinking too. When you no longer conceive of one thing as being true and its opposite as false, one thing good and its opposite evil, there can be no sense made of the details of one's life. The door is open wide for secularism, nihilism, superstition, and existentialism.

The skeptics in the field of Christian theology today have virtually given up hope of finding a unified body of knowledge. This was not true of the Reformation thinkers like Luther and Calvin. Current Christian thinking is referred to as the "new theology." It has no real content because it doesn't recognize a revealed body of truth, the Bible, and the norms it contains. It proclaims a faith that is non-rational because in order to think rationally one must do so on the basis of certain established facts. A person can bear witness to this "faith" but he cannot discuss it with anyone because no common agreement exists as to the authority which would judge the experience and either validate or invalidate it.¹

In actuality, the only thing that Biblical Christianity and the "new theology" share is a common language, but with very different meanings.

¹ One contemporary theologian, putting this into the context of preaching, says: "... in certain respects preaching has become more difficult today because the situation in which Christian proclamation has to make itself understood has become more problematical. ... the traditional metaphysical understanding of reality is being replaced by the historical understanding of reality." Gerhard Ebeling, Theology and Proclamation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 15.
Francis Schaeffer frames the Christian answer when he says:

The Christian answer begins by saying that man is a moral creature made in the image of the creator; that there is a law in the universe which, if broken, means that man is culpable. In this view, man is morally significant both as far as God is concerned and as far as his fellow men are concerned. The modern non-Christian answer denies the legitimacy of moral absolutes, refuses to pass any kind of moral comment on man's actions and thus reduces cruel and non-cruel deeds to the same level. With this answer not only is the concept of sin reduced to less than the biblical concept but MAN is reduced to less than the biblical concept of guilty man.¹

**How the Preacher May See Your Needs**

When you come to the worship service, and I am faced with the task of communication in preaching, I know that you come with certain needs. Some I think I am aware of and will try to share them here. Others I may not be aware of at all. But they can all be met by the Word of God. My knowledge of your needs is based on my knowledge of the Word of God, of the world and its ideology, human psychology, my acquaintance with you as a person, and the fact that I have the same needs.

Because it is impossible for you to escape your human destiny that involves responsibility, conscience, judgment, and death, your first and basic need is to know who you are. There will continue to be a tension in every person's life until he is able to find the answer to the question concerning who he is. Because this is my need too, I know this as I face you from the pulpit. This knowledge has its effect on almost everything I say in preaching so that one of my aims is to make it crystal clear that you are a unique person created in the image of God; that you are a significant person, and that your significant-ness comes from the fact that you are able to choose to love God or to reject Him. I know too that you will find the answer concerning your self when you

have found God; because you cannot know who you are until and unless you know who He is.

In spite of the current temptations to secularism, nihilism, and existentialism, and the fact that many people are regulating their conduct according to them, still, in the judgment of Dr. Tournier, deep within, the individual preserves an ideal and a conception of life which he owes to Christianity; the idea of a divine law, qualms of conscience when he violates it, fear of punishment, the need for pardon, grace, and reconciliation with God and man, the yearning for a complete renewal of his being, and at the same time for personal fulfillment and fellowship with others.¹

Because I believe in the Biblical interpretation of man and history, it is my conviction that your need is for forgiveness because your basic problem, and mine, is guilt. I see the real world as a moral world. Consequently, our real problem is sin.² This also determines what I say to you when I preach. It is my concern to so publicly portray Jesus Christ as crucified that you will surrender to His forgiveness and lordship.³ I believe that deep down inside every person there lingers the certainty that faith in Christ is the supreme value of life.

In my preaching of the Gospel I am willing to take the risk that you will turn from it. That's the frightening part! Like my heavenly Father, at whose call I preach, I too desire that you might find forgiveness and salvation. I know that some people will turn away from what God offers in Christ because they do not want to bow down before Him. It

¹Tournier, Whole Person, p. 22.


³Galatians 3:1
makes me sad to think of it, but I know too that when a person rejects
the Gospel I preach he will be miserable.

What you need, therefore, is to make a radical choice in favor of
God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ. The nature of this choice is
described by H. H. Farmer who writes:

What is required is a final, almost naked, act of faith which
cuts through, and makes superfluous and irrelevant, the
arguments of philosophers which can never do more than make
God a probable hypothesis, an act of faith which knows in a
supreme crisis that a man must either rest in God or go
finally out into the night.¹

The temptation of existentialism is the rejection of historical
guides and their restraints. It is also the rejection of the idea that
mankind's dilemma has a moral cause. The world is not seen as moral,
simply as human and psychological. Anxiety and insecurity has been the
consequence. No unified life of society is possible. Your need at this
point is to know that there is an absolute authority that is unchangeable
and that does govern man's life. It is the Law of God.

Furthermore, release from subservience to the world, which the
secularistic view imposes upon you, can only come when you discover that
the absolute will of God is what must be allowed to govern your behaviour.

Therefore, since you have need of an absolute authority I must
clearly proclaim the Law and will of God which is that authority. The
message I am called to proclaim to you comes from above not from the
world. It comes from God and is addressed to human need.

You come to hear preaching with a deep need to find meaning to
your existence. You are caught up in the feeling of futility shared by so
many today. The poignant question on the lips of your contemporaries is:
"Is it possible to find meaning in life?" Lest this sound too academic

¹Farmer, Servant, p. 107.
let me say that I am aware that often when you come to worship you are very worried about a loved one, a friend, a situation in your personal life, your job. And it may be of some help to you to realize that I, the preacher, come to the same worship hour with many of the same things on my mind. In the midst of that then you and I both must hear the Word of God which alone can help make it all make sense.

Would you not agree with me that what is needed is a sense of the eternal, the knowledge that there is another dimension to existence? H.H. Farmer calls it the third dimension, the "backcloth of the stage." So in my preaching I must be careful to share this eternal dimension so that you can plant your roots of existence in the fact that God has existed from eternity, and so that you can look forward to the future with hope. I must present the call of God, which comes through preaching, to choose His Kingdom before all else.

You also have a need for companionship, for comfort, for the sense of security that comes with being a part of a body. You feel you are all alone with a sense of insecurity and inferiority. Alone with the decisions to be made in the face of temptation, alone in facing your responsibilities, alone in death. You need the Church, the body of Christ. So in my preaching I must be concerned to show you what a wonderful gift the Christian Church itself is to you. In it you will find all of the spiritual gifts and fruits of the Spirit exercised in your behalf. And I must try to help you take your place in the fellowship of the Church and to share in its ministry to others.

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1 Ibid., p. 97.

2 Matthew 6:33

3 Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:11-16
Underlying the temptation to nihilism is the feeling of bafflement that comes when you see "that a future that should have been so lovely turns out so bleak."¹ You need roots, but you also need a positive sense of the future. One writer has expressed it so well in saying:

As a time-bound being he (man) also cannot help but live his life toward the future—a time containing all the possibilities of pain and promise. A future without a profound basis in hope immeasurably diminishes human existence to mere prudent calculations, and excludes the zest of creative adventure without which a man does not fulfill himself.²

And so you need faith in facing the future, a faith that will give you confidence because you know that the future you face has a continuity with the past.³

On the basis of what I have said so far I have formed some convictions relative to your needs in regard to preaching itself. You may not agree completely with my listing, you may even think of some better ones, but these are significant to me.

You need to have the Gospel message preached in such a way that it is understood rather than changed.⁴ I think that you want to hear messages that the situation in which you live demands.⁵ I don't think you need sermons designed only to bring individual comfort, but that pierce to the marrow of your being and confront you with the need to choose.⁶ You need to hear sermons that reveal the fact that the preacher

¹Novak, Nothingness, p. 10.
³The theme of the eight sermons used in this study and on the basis of which the empirical research was done.
⁴Schaeffer, The God Who, p. 133.
⁵Forsyth, Positive Preaching, p. 159.
⁶Abbey, Contemporary Mind, p. 145.
has given time to think about and study the attitudes and meanings that you already have in your mind.\(^1\) Because of this you want to hear sermons that develop subjects which are sharply narrowed and defined.\(^2\) You need and want specific sermons. You need and want to have your preacher speak about the tragic in your life in such a way that you see it in the perspective of the cross.\(^3\) Lastly, you need to hear sermons that make a claim on your will and summon you to make an answer.\(^4\)

It is my belief that the kind of preaching you need, and want, is the kind described by H. H. Farmer:

One thing is clear—our preaching has got to be strongly doctrinal, not in the manner of the theological lecture, but in such a wise that doctrine and life are seen to be inseparably bound up together. It has got to teach the Christian interpretation of life in all its fullness. Yet it has to do this without any loss of that concreteness, that thrusting relevance, that direct I-thou relationship, of which we have spoken so much.\(^5\)

In addition to the above, when you come to worship, you bring all of your relationships with family, friends, neighbors, community, and even with the preacher himself.\(^6\) All of these have direct bearing on the way you hear what is being said on any given occasion.

You also bring your expectations. If you don't expect much that is exactly what you will receive. If you expect much you will receive much.

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 15.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 70.
\(^4\)Farmer, Servant, p. 44.
\(^5\)Ibid., p. 105.
But more important for our purposes you bring your meanings with you to Church. As your preacher I am very much aware that you are searching for meaning, asking crucial questions, and involved in life and death struggles. I must be equally aware that you bring certain meanings to the worship hour as I am of the fact that I must try and bring meaning to you in the sermon.¹ I must always keep in mind that "the laity are the ones in whom the meaning of the gospel and the meanings of the world meet."²

What happens in this encounter between meanings has great significance for preaching. There are times when the meanings you bring can help in understanding the Gospel message. There are other times when the meanings of the Gospel need to confront your meanings with the need for change and redirection. If when your meanings are thus related to the traditional sources of meaning and they are confronted with an antithesis, the encounter becomes a point of conflict. It is my hope that when you come to worship with your meanings, you do so reflectively so that change can take place if that is required by the meaning of the Gospel.

You also bring your understanding, and use of, language. The spoken word is at the center of all human relationships, and there does exist a relationship between the preacher in the pulpit and the person in the pew. Farmer points out that in that relationship the use of words embodies "will, claim, and shared meaning."³

²Ibid., p. 37
³Farmer, Servant, p. 32-33.
In the use of language both the hearer and the One who speaks in and through the sermon, exercise will. The two wills may be in harmony, or they may be in conflict.

Speech also exercises a claiming power. When we speak we claim an answer, a response. This is especially true of God in His address to us. His Word constitutes a claim on our lives. The Word of God preached is a superior means of communication because it can unite wills in shared meaning.

The reason why the language you bring to worship, and which the preacher uses in the sermon, are so important is because God insists on saving people in a personal way. There is nothing more personal than addressing another in human language and speech. In the use of speech will confronts will in claim and shared meaning.

What I have been trying to say Gerhard Ebeling puts so nicely in reference to the listener, and says:

Thus he is not a tabula rasa, but an extremely complex context into which the statement is uttered. And this effect is of course multiplied in the case not of an individual listener but of the numerous listeners to a sermon.¹

Thus in preparation for preaching I must study the Bible as well as the human and social implications of your, and my, relationships with people. This understanding will help me make a partner out of you in my preaching, and help me to preach in such a way that you will understand. It will help me to remember that speaking, preaching, and listening are personal shared activities.

In summary, you are a person sorely tempted by the secularism, nihilism, and existentialism of the age. You live in a largely pagan

technological world. And when you come to hear me preach you bring with you all the needs of your existence as well as the meanings you have found in that context. You also bring your understanding of language, your usage of language. In short, you are an intelligent, searching, complex, human being with whom I, as God's chosen mouthpiece, must communicate matters related to your eternal welfare and satisfaction in life.

Where Are We?

The preaching which you hear takes place in context. It is not an isolated phenomenon. Worship takes place in the context of your life situation which we have discussed in the previous section. Preaching takes place in the context of worship. Because this is so you need to understand as best you can the nature of worship, and the relationship between worship and preaching.

The Nature of Worship

When I look at my congregation I do so from the perspective of faith and from the point of view of what God is trying to do in their midst through the ministry of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. I look at the worship of my congregation in the same way. I believe that God acted in Christ on behalf of the members of my congregation, and that He is present and active in the congregation by means of the Word of God. This is my basic assumption when we meet together in worship.

I like Kenneth G. Phifer's definition of worship as: "... the celebration of our relationship to God in Christ and a renewal of its

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1 The context of evangelism, in which preaching also takes place, is omitted here because the eight study sermons were preached only in the context of worship.
meaning for all of life."¹ It seems to me that this definition very effectively relates what God has done in the past with what He is doing in the present and which is dramatized and portrayed in worship. Worship for Seventh-day Adventists is set in the context of Revelation 14, and should express the awe and adoration of Revelation 4-5. This worship turns toward heaven where it has open access to the Father because of what Christ did on the cross and is doing now in the heavenly sanctuary.

Worship is fundamentally God's communion with you and me.² We need to remember initially that when God meets with us it is on His terms rather than on ours. He reveals Himself to us in His Word. He speaks to us through His Word. And He has something specific to say.

Worship is also our response to God when He confronts us by His Word in terms of creation, redemption, and judgment. This means the offering of our very selves to Him.³

Because faith in actuality is warfare against everything that is opposed to Jesus Christ, worship also has a militant character in that it is the "battleground where the works of the devil are destroyed."⁴

It is only people of faith who do battle with the forces of evil, and it is only people of faith who engage in worship.

The fundamental purpose of worship is to glorify the God who acts and who speaks and meets with us in the light of His prophetic Word. It


is that Word which shall be the basis by which we are judged. Thus worship is also a moment of judgment.

The invitation, the call, to meet with Him in worship is given by God Himself, and is based on the promise that He will be there. The presence of Christ is associated with common prayer, with preaching, and with the Lord's Supper. This promise concerning the presence of God when His people gather for worship is the basis for that worship. For what other reason should we gather together in worship than that God Himself comes to meet with us?

God reveals Himself and gives Himself to us in Jesus Christ and is present in Christian worship. In worship there is action on the part of God and on the part of the worshippers. As He has acted in Christ so He also acts in worship and He gives, by means of His Word, that which is the essence of the Gospel, namely, the declaration and announcement of His forgiving grace.

Because this gift of grace is offered on the basis of the written Word of God that written Word plays an important role in the worship service. A carefully chosen Biblical passage, or two, is read either in addition to the sermon text or as the sermon text itself. Because the worship service of God's people is a part of the ongoing history of salvation the written Word demands a verbal proclamation and interpretation. This is so because in the preaching of the Word of God is to be

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1 John 12:48
2 Matthew 4:10
3 Matthew 18:20
4 Matthew 18:19-20; 28:18-20
5 Ritschl, A Theology, p. 89.
found the presence of the Lord. Preaching is more than meditation on the Word of God, it is in itself the Word of God.\textsuperscript{1} The ancient witness found in the Scriptures demands a new witness, a contemporary witness. The timeless truths of the written Word need to be contemporized by preacher and people acting in concert in worship as witnesses to a living truth and a living Lord. Thus worship is not mere reflection, but is present activity on the part of God and His people.

In the words of Raymond Abba: "Worship consists of both wort and antwort—God's Word and man's response."\textsuperscript{2} So there is more to worship than speaking, preaching the sermon. There is also the response to the sermon on the part of the congregation. There is the listening to, and the hearing of, the sermon. This is a very important aspect of worship which we will discuss at length in the next section as well as in chapter two. However, it is necessary for us to keep in mind at this juncture that it is God's action which should occupy the center of our attention in worship. Our action is that of response rather than of initiation.

Therefore, when we think about worship "the starting point for thought must be the action of the Word."\textsuperscript{3} Our worship is a part of the process whereby the Word of God gets from the mind of God to our minds. From the mind of God His Word has come through creation, prophets, written accounts of the Old Testament, the ministry of Jesus, the ministry of men like Paul the apostle, the written accounts of the New Testament, through the witness of the Holy Spirit as He ministers in the Church in the world, and to the human spirit. That Word is further transmitted by one human

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Luke 10:16}
\footnote{Abba, \textit{Principles}, p. 56.}
\footnote{Paul Waitman Hoon, \textit{The Integrity of Worship} (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 131.}
\end{footnotes}
spirit to another. A major occasion for such transmission is worship in which context the sermon, the spoken proclamation and declaration, serves as a channel of communication between God and man.

Thus worship can be called an event, a happening, in which the greatest that could ever happen happens: God speaks to His people! Worship is not like something we come to as one comes to a carnival in which all the activities have begun before one arrives. Worship is something done. We don't "come" to worship, we worship. In worship there is action, movement, as well as interaction, and reaction.

The worship of the Church is meant to be a fresh experience. There should be a certain spontaneity about it. It should have a genuine reality all of its own and should not appear contrived, rehearsed, as though we were somehow getting ready to meet with God. Roy Pearson says:

> Worship is the actual engagement. God speaks and man listens. Man speaks and God hears . . . The hand of eternity grasps the hand of time. There is activity. There is movement. An event is taking place that can never be repeated precisely, and in the composition of the event are beings and a Being, who confront each other, communicate with each other, and oppose or aid each other.¹

Similarly, Gerhard Delling says that the Service of worship creates "an engagement, which also applies to the preaching, to Him who forms its centre, its contents."² The worshipping Church is in touch with God, and He with it. Its worship is a part of the action of God that shall not end until the return of our Lord. This is so because the Word of God makes itself known by action.³ In order for worship to be complete there is an action that complements God's action, the action

¹Pearson, The Preacher, p. 133.
³Hoon, Integrity, p. 129.
of the responding worshippers. Our response is called forth by the action of the Word of God in communication. As we act in response God hears us, and we hear one another as well.¹

Just what constitutes our action as we respond in worship to what God is doing and saying? Karl Barth defines it quite clearly when he says:

In the Church to act means to hear, i.e., to hear the Word of God, and through the Word of God revelation and faith. It may be objected that this is too small a task and not active enough. But in the whole world there exists no more intense, strenuous or animated action than that which consists in hearing the Word of God.²

In terms of the worship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church the focus is on the action of the ascended and glorified Saviour who now as High Priest ministers in the heavenly court before the throne of God and the great tribunal. It is His mediation that concerns us. It is through Him that we offer our worship and prayers, and it is through Him that the heavenly Father gives His grace and mercy. Because He is acting now we draw near in confidence and offer our sacrifice of praise.³ What the Lord our High Priest is doing is for us of supreme importance as we gather for worship and enter by faith into the heavenly sanctuary. This also makes what He says to the Church in a critical hour of such grave importance.

The book of Revelation is the last message, the last communication to the Church by means of the written witness by the ascended Lord. There is a strong emphasis on communication, God speaking and people

¹Ibid., p. 130.


³Hebrews 10:22; 13:15
hearing and responding, in the book. John the revelator himself is one who has heard a specific message from the Lord. Of himself in response to the divine communication he says:

I John am he who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." John heard what was said, he responded in an attitude of awe and worship, was classified by the heavenly messenger as a fellow servant with all the angelic host. The angel was sent to John with a testimony, a message, for the Church. It is a message of invitation to all who will hear the truth of it, an invitation from Jesus Himself and which is to be issued in turn by all who have heard the truth for the end times. The Churches are hidden by the ascended Christ to hear a vital message. The communication of that message implies preaching, preaching that takes place in the context of the final segment of time, the time of judgment.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is involved in the final events designed to secure a universal verdict in favor of all the saints. In that context the message comes forth from the heavenly sanctuary for all men to make their calling and election sure. This has grave implications for preaching. It portrays the urgency that should permeate the life of the

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1 Revelation 5:13; 7:4; 9:16; 16:5
2 Revelation 22:8-9
3 Revelation 22:16
4 Revelation 22:17
6 Revelation 14:7
7 2 Peter 1:10
the spokesmen of God who are alive at this hour and have been charged with
the great task of preaching the whole Word of God. It means that they
must know the Lord, know the truth (doctrines), and know the hearers who
sit before them. They must also know the hour in historical time in
which they have been called to preach.

It means also that they must recognize the crucial nature of
preaching, that if preaching is the Word of God then the critical message
must be preached and if they don't do it who will? It means that the
message must not only be believed and understood but communicated with
clarity, must deal with the critical issues as there is no time for
peripheral matters.

Thus there is an immediacy to the worship of Seventh-day Adventists
for the One who announces His presence among the congregation as the
Word of God is preached, is the One who will soon return literally.
Worship then cannot be simply a matter of reflection on past events but
is the gathering of God's people where the living Christ speaks to His
people in a critical hour preparing them both for His imminent return
and for their mission in the world. Their mission in the world is that
of a people who have heard the closing hour Gospel and who respond by
inviting all the world to worship God the creator, saying "Come!"¹

All that has gone before, all that God has done in the past,
the message concerning Jesus Christ that originated before the world was
made and will culminate in His return, and the actual life of the congre-
gation, come together in the service of worship.

It is an awesome thing when one thinks about it, but as your
preacher I stand between Christ as He seeks to minister to you through

¹Revelation 22:17
the Word, and you the worshipper. That is to say, in worship the Word of God moves also through the preacher on its way to your mind, your spirit. Don't misunderstand please! I don't conceive of my role as that of a priest in the sense that you can only come to God through me, or He to you only through me. What I have just said simply reflects a matter of fact, that God has chosen men to serve as His channels of communication to other men. You too stand in that succession as you communicate truth to others.

Needless to say as the worship hour approaches I must prepare myself for that event, that engagement, both spiritually and intellectually. And so I don't prepare a sermon and then tuck it away in my Bible until the moment of delivery arrives. The preparation of a sermon is only part of my preparation for preaching. It is the preaching itself which is the important thing and not the sermon, and that involves everything that has gone into its preparation. Worship is not effective without preaching. The communication of the Word of God is the supreme act of worship. This takes place as the human servant, the preacher, handles the Word of God, listens to it himself and hears God speak, and shares it in preaching to his congregation. In this sense there is an incarnational aspect to preaching: the divine Word incarnate in human speech. There is no other way for the saving Word to be communicated than through human language written and oral. Still we must remember that "ultimately the true preacher is Christ Himself, and beyond man's human words is the Word."¹

The Relationship of Preaching and Worship

The act of God in Christ has bound God to man forever. Thus it

¹Hoon, *Integrity*, p. 167.
is essential that man understand the meaning of that act for his con-
temporary life. This requires communication, communication that is not
the same as ordinary speech. This communication requires a preacher. As
God's Word says:

But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed?
And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?
And how are they to hear without a preacher?¹

The speech of the preacher differs from ordinary speech by virtue
of its context and its contents. It is fundamentally the proclamation of
God's Word. This proclamation, this communication, is an essential part
of every worship experience. The preacher is a minister of the Word of
God.

Preaching constitutes the thrust of God into the gathering of His
people. It is God's speech which initiates dialogue between God and man.
Preaching makes the Gospel contemporary and fresh. It is preaching which
makes the Gospel always present, always personal. Preaching of God's
Word sharpens the spiritual perception of the worshippers, and it inhibits
the development of ritualism because it is always new. Preaching pro-
vides a unique moment of encounter between God and worshipper. It is
for this reason that Peter Brunner has said: "No worship may be without
the proclamation of the Word."²

According to the same writer it is the union of the divine Word
with the human word that makes preaching sacramental in nature, and which
announces God's presence in worship.³ And Wilhelm Hahn writes:

¹Romans 10:14
²Peter Brunner, Worship in the Name of Jesus (St. Louis, Mo:
³Ibid., p. 154.
The presence of God is made manifest by the "convicting" word of proclamation, which reveals the secrets of the heart, as it is set forth in the service. This makes a man bow in adoration before the presence of God, and confess: He is here, in the midst of the congregation.

Christ's presence in worship is not just a spiritual presence but a real presence in that He speaks through the speech of the preacher. It is by means of the preached Word of God that the ascended Christ comes into the midst of His worshipping people as contemporary. Remember, I said earlier that there is a movement of the Word from God's mind to yours. Preaching keeps us ever mindful of that fact. It is when God speaks and we hear and respond that encounter takes place.

Let me add just another word of clarification. When we worship we are in action, we are doing something, something is happening, going on, and that action requires interpretation. The sermon interprets worshippers action. It is what we say that gives meaning to what we do, and it is what we do in worship that demands interpretive speech. It is the sermon that gives meaning to the various other parts and elements of the worship service. It provides the service of worship with a perspective.

Karl Barth makes an even stronger statement in that in his judgment: "Preaching is 'God's own Word.' That is to say, through the activity of preaching, God himself speaks."

It can thus be said that preaching is a means of grace. That is to say, it is a divinely chosen means whereby the grace of God comes to

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2 See Paul Waitman Hoon's interesting discussion of the relationship of theology and liturgy in Integrity, p. 86ff.

3 Barth, The Preaching, p. 54.
the worshipping congregation in the form of that which all men have in common, human language and speech. It has this in common with those other means of grace which the Church has sometimes called sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In each of these two latter mysteries God has chosen to make the offer of His grace visible in the use of very common substances, necessities of life as it were, bread, wine, and water. One could exist physically on nothing more. Similarly, one could not exist in the human community without the gift of communication by means of language and speech. Even the deaf communicate using the same language as those who are able to hear, while their "speech" consists of hand symbols rather than verbal symbols. Thus God has chosen to make His offer of grace through the medium of human speech.

Preaching differs from ordinary speech in that it is an intrusion, an interjection of another persons serious speech. This raises two important and related questions: Why has God called a man to preach? Why is it important that I hear the preaching of the Word of God? H. H. Farmer answers the question concerning the necessity of preaching and says:

... the necessity of preaching resides in the fact that when God saves a man through Christ He insists on a personal, living encounter with him here and now in the sphere of present personal relationships. Preaching is that divine saving activity in history, which began 2000 years ago in the advent of Christ and in his personal relationships with men and women, and has continued throughout the ages in the sphere of redeemed personal relationships (which is the true Church), now focusing on me, confronting me, as a person indissolubly bound up with other persons at this present time. This focusing on me is not apart from what has gone before, nor can it be, for it is part of the continuous purpose throughout the years which began in Christ; hence preaching is telling me something. But it is not merely telling me something. It is God actively probing me, challenging my will, calling on me for a decision, offering me His

1Farmer, Servant, p. 56.
succour, through the only medium which the nature of His purpose permits Him to use, the medium of a personal relationship.¹

Bread, wine, water, and speech, are not the only elements essential to life. There is also the element of relationship. You and I live in relationship. God communicates with us in those terms. Worship itself is a matter of interpersonal relationships for we do not worship alone. Even in the privacy of one's own prayer closet he is not alone, but is a living part of the living organism called the Church.

Worship constitutes the highest level of human relationship, and it is the sermon that keeps it so. It is the sermon that gives to Christian worship that unique quality of doctrinal objectivity coupled with the hearer's subjective response. It is in the sermon that Will confronts will, Mind confronts mind, Heart speaks to heart, in such a way that the great "I am" motivates the response "Here I am."

The preacher's worship begins in the quiet privacy of his study. There in conjunction with his other ministerial duties, reflecting on the Word of God and the context of his congregation's life, he is engaged in the preparation to preach. It is a disciplined preparation because the context of worship in which the sermon is to be spoken demands it. The preacher's worship does not end with the completion of the sermon notes for he must also worship while he preaches. The act of preaching is itself an act of worship. Worship is not just the setting, the stage with all the props in place, the excuse for, the sermon. Rather, preaching is a part of worship.

Worship and preaching are inseparably related. They have an effect one upon the other. If a minister's congregation has become bored with worship, rather than castigate them he had better take a

¹Ibid., p. 15.
good look at his preaching. Revitalization of the pew often comes by way of the revitalization of the pulpit.

There would be no need or purpose for preaching if there were no worshipping people. Worship gives the sermon its immediate context. The context of worship has a great deal to do with the contents of the sermon. What Seventh-day Adventist minister, meeting with his congregation in worship, would dare to preach a "sermon" on the life style of the honey bee?

Here is a quotation that summarizes nicely what I have been saying above:

... worship makes preaching defensible and preaching makes worship responsible. Without worship, preaching has no warrant. Without preaching, worship loses relevance.1

What Are We Doing?

If, as many writers are saying today, most congregations are unaware of the responsibility they have for the preaching they hear, this question is not as easily answered as the three previous. The formulation of the question should indicate that I consider preaching to be a shared experience. In bringing together my conception of my role as the preacher and my conception of your role in the listening congregation, as these roles touch cooperatively in the actual preaching itself, the shared experience is realized.

In 1956 a book came off the press in America, translated from the German, which struck me solidly where it hurt the most, in my preaching. At the time I was pastor of a six-hundred-member Lutheran congregation. Since the early days of college and seminary training I had been deeply interested in, and concerned about, preaching.

1Pearson, The Preacher, p. 140.
I recall vividly the terrified feeling that possessed me upon concluding what was then called the "senior sermon" at the Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary. Weeks had been spent in its preparation. To the preparation of that climactic message I brought the best of my historical, theological, Biblical, and linguistic knowledge. The congregation consisted of the student body and the faculty! Walking back to my room following the service I shared my feelings of depression with a friend. "Why?" he asked. "Because in a few weeks I shall be the pastor of a congregation with my own pulpit and I have just preached, in one sermon, everything I know about the Christian faith!" Of course, I later discovered that there was much more to say. Since then I have preached many sermons and am as concerned about my preaching now. I left that school with the words of a professor friend ringing in my ears: "As the pulpit goes, so goes the Church."

About half way through my Lutheran ministry I bought The Trouble With the Church by Helmut Thielicke. The book was, and is, courageous and timely. It is an extremely critical book, and while I am not one who enjoys wallowing in criticism, I found myself in sympathy. For a long time I had felt that the foolishness of preaching had become the preaching of foolishness, and that the reason for it was the impact of the "new" theology on the American church scene. There are those who say that America has not yet produced a genuine theology, but that its theologians and preachers gobble up everything that comes from Europe, chew it into indistinguishable mush and spew it about indiscriminately. Many poor laymen have been asking: "What is that stuff anyway?" Thielicke takes a solid whack at that kind of preaching.
The trouble with the Church, he says, is its preaching. He attributes the passing away of preaching to ecclesiastical bureaucracy, and to preaching's routine vocabulary which he calls gobbledegook. He is appalled by the ready substitution of stereotyped mechanical phrases for the personal conviction of the preacher. He speaks of the need for a "spontaneous response to need," of the need to know the needs of the congregation. Then he says, and his words should sound like music to homileticians immersed in the terminology of preaching considered as an event, "Thus as a preacher I am involved in an unending dialogue with those to whom I must deliver my message." The preacher cannot be a soloist and expect to communicate to today's man in the pew. Thielicke says there must be "common engagement in interpreting the Biblical text for preaching, and that this process should involve not only experts and specialists but those who will also be the hearers of the sermon, and, therefore, with 'laymen.'"

As a Seventh-day Adventist minister I have re-read The Trouble

1 That preaching is in trouble is a view shared by professor Joseph Sittler, Anguish, p. 26-27. However, he is not overly concerned in that he sees this development as a good thing. It is virtuous. It is necessary. He feels that the trouble is in the right place and at the right level. It is good that the form of the Church is under fire, good that the role of the preacher is problematical. He sees this as an advance from the day of the uncritical and untroubled assumptions of God's involvement in the Church and in the world. He says: "Of course preaching is in trouble. Whence did we ever manufacture the assumption that it was ever to be in anything but trouble?"


3 Ibid., p. 13.

4 Ibid., p. 21-22.

5 Ibid., p. 22.

6 Ibid., p. 25.
With the Church and although I am not ready to go quite as far as the author suggests, subsequent preaching experience, coupled with increased reading in homiletics and the writing of a Master of Theology thesis on preaching, have brought me around to a new consideration. Although I am not inclined, as Thielicke is, to view a dialogical exchange with laymen as the "healing spring"\(^1\) for all of preaching's problems, I have come to the place where I see preaching as a shared experience. How it is a shared experience I propose to discuss now in terms of congregational responsibility in preaching, a somewhat critical consideration of preaching as event, and then an attempt to form a personal concept of preaching as a shared experience.

Congregational Responsibility

There are three basic elements in preaching: the message, the preacher, and the congregation.\(^2\) I like to put them in that order because it reflects the givenness of the message, the intermediary role of the preacher in the transmission of the Word, and the goal of the Word as the minds and hearts of the hearers in terms of transformation and renewal. The goal of the Word, of preaching, is not only the transference of information from the mind of God to the mind of the hearer but transformation of life and spiritual renewal. The objective Word preached results in subjective response and change when it is heard in faith. This being the case, you, the congregation, play a vital role in the process of communication that takes place in preaching. Your conception of your role in relationship to the preaching of the sermon

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 25.

is crucial in terms of its effect on your life. Your involvement in preaching depends on whether you see yourself merely as a passive receptical of ideas from the preacher, or as an active participant. It represents the difference between viewing preaching as something said by the preacher, or something done by preacher and congregation together.

I would agree with William D. Thompson when he says:

Two convictions emerge from the current research in preaching which I think are worth your attention; one is that laymen share with their minister the responsibility for good preaching; the other is that laymen can be better Christians by learning how to be better listeners.¹

One of the phenomenon that has been part of the historical development and growth of the Christian Church has been the emerging concept of a professional clergy. This is reflected more in some denominations than others, but no denomination has escaped it. One major consequence of this development has been the loss of congregational sense of responsibility for the preaching of God's Word.² It is toward a recovery of this sense of responsibility that current thinking about preaching is moving. It is felt that if there is going to be a revitalization of preaching in the life of the Church there must also be a revival of congregational participation and responsibility that is more active than passive.

Therefore, you need to be aware of the fact that it is not only the preacher who must prepare for preaching, but you as well.³

Martin Luther saw a distinct relationship between preaching and

¹Thompson, Guide, p. 8.
²Ibid., p. 35-36.
hearing and translated Romans 10:17 "Faith comes by preaching." A more accurate translation would be: "Faith comes by hearing the preaching of Christ." At any rate both preaching and hearing are demanded by the message of the Word. The hearing involves much more than a mere cocking of the ear in the direction of the audible voice of the preacher. It involves actively helping the preacher preach the sermon. How can you do this?

First of all you can begin by being aware of the resources you possess and which you bring with you to hear preaching. This has been aluded to in the previous section on "Who Are You?" But you have experiences of life, you have insights into life and experience, you have wisdom and information about life and about the written Word of God. You have attitudes about, and interest in, many things. In addition you have all of the unknown needs of your subconscious being. All of these things color what you hear, and it is out of these things that you hear the preaching of the Word. They can enrich what you hear, but they can also distort what you hear. However, you need to be aware of this abundant resource out of which you listen, and which makes a vital contribution to the dynamic of listening.

In addition you also bring questions concerning life and the Word. You bring the hypotheses that you yourself have formulated in an attempt to make some sense out of life and the Word. You bring also certain positive, or negative, affirmations that you have formulated in the process and that are either challenged by the Word or that challenge it.

Furthermore, you bring your meanings with you as well as your

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1 So kommt der Glaube aus der Predigt.

understanding and use of language. It is by the urgency of your questions, by the excitement produced when the meaning of the Word encounters your meanings, and by your active participation in worship, that you can help "pull the preaching out of the minister."

You see, as your preacher I have a sense of responsibility not only to the preaching text but also to your experiences and meanings. When I stand in the pulpit and preach I am at the same time responding to all that you bring, consciously or unconsciously, to the preaching as well as to what God has been saying to me by means of the sermon text. In that sense we are in dialogue. Thus all of these resources that you possess, and that you bring to preaching, are a part of the action and dynamics of that which is being done.

In a very real sense, then, you are involved with me in the preparation to preach. You should begin your preparation with the conception of yourself as a participant in the preaching that will take place when you worship. Secondly, you should cultivate the habit of living reflectively. That is to say, spend some time each day, or certainly each week, in reflecting on your life in relation to the world around you, to your family and friends, to influences that come your way, and to the Word of God. This is to put yourself in the proper reverent frame of mind and reference for worship. Everyone needs to see his life in perspective and what better way is there to do it than to think reflectively about that life as it relates to these things.

Learn also to think of yourself as my partner in the preaching task rather than one who comes to hear me say something. Come expectantly and in anticipation that you will hear God speak to you.

1 Ibid., p. 91.
Robert Bailey suggests that for both of us, preacher and listener, the preparation for preaching takes place initially on the personal level. We must both consider the need to be authentic, open, and serious. I must not adopt a false and hypocritical preacher's aura or tone when I speak, and you must not adopt a sneaky condescending attitude of "he should be grateful that I am here to hear him." We must be open to each other's human feelings and needs and not try to fool each other or cover up for each other. And we must view the worship hour, and the preaching that is part of its action, as the most serious undertaking of the week.

We must not forget the traditional matters of prayer and Bible study between congregational worship hours. There is no better way to prepare for participation in preaching than to pray for the preacher, the message, and yourself as the hearer. Complementary would be the study of the preaching text if it is made available to you ahead of time.

If in the participation itself you conceive of yourself as engaging in mental conversation with the speaker you will not be able to turn him off so easily. Being in the same room with the preacher, looking him in the eye, aware that you are fundamentally in relationship with him will indicate that you are responding and seeking response from him. This in turn will have its effect on his preaching.

The expression on your face, the way you move in your seat, as well as all the collective movements of the whole congregation, will communicate to the preacher. And if he is a person-centered preacher rather than a doctrine-centered preacher, he will note all of these signals and be guided to a certain degree by them.

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1 Bailey, *Revitalization*, p. 159.
When you nod or shake your head or smile or furrow your brow, you are saying something to the preacher. If your attitude indicates intense concentration, or lack of attention, it says something to the preacher. If you are restless or fall asleep another message gets across. All of these things are, as Reuel Howe points out, "meaningful statements" about your "participation in the act of preaching." ¹

You participate in preaching by listening. Whether the sermon is good or bad is just as dependent on the quality of your listening as it is on the quality of the speaking. For this reason it is most helpful to learn what listening is all about and how to listen well to sermons.

Lastly, you participate in preaching when you carry the sermon into life outside the walls of the church building. What is said and done will not be seen or heard by the world unless you practice the Word publicly. By word and action the preached Word becomes, in a sense, incarnate in the world. The action of preaching thus continues after the action of worship, which formed the context for preaching, has been dismissed for another week.

Preaching as Event

In homiletical circles the word "event" is being widely used today in reference to preaching. In my view whether you as a layman view preaching as an event is relatively unimportant. However, that you see preaching as a shared experience is important. Still it is necessary that we understand what is currently meant by preaching as event, take what good we can from the formulation and apply it to a conception that is meaningful and useful to us.

The question that is being wrestled with today in preaching

¹Howe, Partners, p. 87.
circles is not the question of what the sermon is, but what the sermon does.\(^1\) The concern has shifted from the content of the sermon and how it gets its content, to what happens when the sermon is preached. To be sure this is a valid and important consideration, one that we should be interested in and concerned about. But not at the expense of interest in and concern for content. There is a very real temptation, when one is confused about what one is to say, to shift attention to what happens when one says what he does say. Our concern should be to find a balanced position that takes into account both the source of the sermon's content, and that which happens when the sermon is preached.

We would certainly agree with P. T. Forsyth when he says that preaching is a "real deed," that it has to do with something done, as well as, we would add, something declared.\(^2\)

The eventness of preaching has to do with the announcing, the proclaiming, the telling forth of what has been done by Jesus Christ. The proclaiming itself assures the continuance in time of His work and ministry. Thus we are committed to preaching. God's act in Christ is still going on. Unless the preaching of the Church has lost touch with the source of its message the Christ event has not been shrouded in darkness. The preaching of the Church is a part of the continuation of that event. Because preaching is in touch with that event it has an eventness of its own. Through the event of preaching the Christ-event finds continuance.\(^3\)

The eventness of preaching is further characterized by the fact

\(^1\) Randolph, Renewal, p. VII-VIII.
\(^2\) Forsyth, Positive Preaching, p. 15.
\(^3\) Abbey, Contemporary Mind, p. 37.
that it involves not only content but relationship, action, emotion, and commitment. Preaching as event means encounter, engagement, confrontation, shared meaning and responsibility. Thank goodness we have come to the homiletical crossroads where we can now see that what is revealed in preaching is not theological formulations and propositions about God alone, but by means of these God himself.

"Preaching is God revealing Himself, reaching out to you, calling you to respond—not men talking about God nor any other topic, for that matter." Preaching causes and gives content to the dialogue between God and man, and that dialogue is as necessary to the new life of faith as blood is to the physical body.

Preaching as event has to do with the understanding of the moment of proclamation as an interaction of forces, i.e., the Word of God, the life and personality of the preacher, the things you bring to the preaching, as well as all the variables present in the worship service.

Preaching can no longer be viewed monologically, that is to say, the movement flowing only in one direction. It is not a one man affair, but a shared experience.

There is a distinct difference between preaching exclusively and preaching inclusively. A vital part of the eventness of preaching is that when one preaches to a congregation he does so in a way that includes "their meanings." This means that the preacher will add to his critical-exegetical study of the Scriptures, of the text in its context, his observation as to where the truth thus revealed touches the life of his

1 Howe, Partners, p. 212.
3 Howe, Partners, p. 77.
time and of his people. This is preaching that seeks to minister to contemporary needs; preaching that tries to contemporize the Christ-event.

The above is what I consider to be the most positive and acceptable aspects in a consideration of preaching as event. It has helped us as preachers to realize that the task of preaching has not been finished when the theological and interpretive work with a given Bible text lies formulated and framed in a sermon outline tucked into a Bible waiting for the Sabbath; that the climax of preparation for preaching is the preaching itself which is a real happening, a continuation of the Christ-event as it touches the lives of the worshippers.

A word of criticism and caution needs to be spoken at this point. As a result of the influence of one of this century's most famous theologians, Rudolf Bultman, and his followers, there has been conceived the idea of preaching as a Word-event. This means that the Biblical sermon text together with the preacher's own experience operating in a kind of mutual influence upon each other becomes the essential content of the sermon; becomes, as it were, Word of God. This does away with the givenness of the message we are to proclaim. It is my conviction and belief that what is to be communicated is the objective divine message of the sermon text. I also believe that in preaching the preacher is also witness to personal faith in Christ, but not in such a way that his experience coupled with text becomes Word of God. The preacher's experience may be illustrative, may serve to help explain and illuminate the text, but it does not become part of the Word of God.

1 An insightful summary critique of the new hermeneutics may be found in "An Exhortation to Exhorters" by John Warwick Montgomery in The Ministry, January, 1974.
It seems to me that there is also a danger present in respect to what Reuel Howe calls dialogical preaching. To be sure there is a real dialogue that takes place during the preaching of the sermon, but Howe suggests that the congregation must be drawn into the preaching event in such a way that they actually assist in the preparation of the sermon. Thus the congregation too becomes a part of the interpretive trinity: Biblical text, preacher's experience, and congregation's experience. The danger is that the objective divine truth will be watered down and dissipated by two-thirds. If there is a sense, as Howe suggests, of my preaching being for as opposed to the congregation, then I want to be certain that what we say in our proclamation is in fact Word of God. And I must apply the same critical discipline to myself.

That preaching has been, and is, in trouble we will readily agree. But let us not make the trend of thinking of preaching as this kind of Word-event the panacea for all "bad" preaching in order to get the preacher off the hook. Let us also recognize that this development is perhaps natural in that when confidence in the givenness of the revelation of God found in Scripture has been lost there will be a search for authority elsewhere, if not in the objective Word then in preacher's and congregation's experience.

In the late 1950's a warning note was being sounded by Dietrich Ritschl who himself spoke of preaching as an event which involved the congregations participation. He recognized that preaching and hearing belong together. Who would dare not to in our day? Still he insisted that preaching has priority over the hearing because the call has priority over the response.\(^1\) He would not take the position that a sermon has

\(^1\)Ritschl, *A Theology*, p. 128.
only been truly preached when people listen. I think what he meant by that was understood by a more contemporary writer who has said:

The Gospel's promises and demands are always more than we know or say. Hence its substance does not necessarily lend itself to nor depend upon rational comprehension; nor is its reality to be validated by whether or not it seems on the surface to be relevant to our situation.¹

To Ritschl our first concern must be with the content of the sermon, secondly with the situation of the congregation.² In contrast to William Malcomson,³ Ritschl takes as the starting point for preaching the Word of God in Scripture while recognizing at the same time that it is not something impersonal and unrelated to the life-situation of the people. We preach because the Word of God demands proclamation, not because our analysis of the world does so. Reginald Fuller echoes Ritschl when he writes:

Our chief concern must be, not the people's needs but the Gospel in its fullness. This Gospel may come first to expose their needs as trivial and even false, revealing to them for the first time what they had as yet scarce dreamed of, that they have an ultimate need which is only exposed when they stand naked at the "last day" before the judgment seat of God.⁴

Furthermore, Ritschl would remind us that "The Word which breaks through the sermon cannot conform to the ideas of the people who preach and who hear it."⁵ When all is said and done, when preaching has taken place, perhaps, like the definition of an education as being that which

¹Hoon, Integrity, p. 167.
²Ritschl, A Theology, p. 129.
⁵Ritschl, A Theology, p. 132.
one has left after he has gorgotten all the facts, communication from God
is what one has left after the audible words of the sermon are no longer
heard. When I have finished preaching a sermon I feel like Hoon who has
expressed himself thus:

As servant of the Word, the preacher likewise does not know what
has been done through him, nor does the congregation know. All
that both can do is offer themselves to the mysterious sovereignty
of the Word, and in this sense preaching is inevitably irrelevant.

Remember, the mysterious element in preaching. While it behooves
us to try and understand what happens in preaching so that we might be
better preachers, let's do all we can to preserve the element of mystery.  

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1 Hoon, Integrity, p. 167.

2 Another critic of preaching as "event" has appeared on the scene
in the person of Thor Hall, The Future Shape of Preaching (Philadelphia:
Fortress Press, 1971). In his view the new hermeneutic "has given rise
to a new wave of speculative 'logology,' with a concept of preaching as
'event' that is so tenuously related to actuality as to appear obscure,
if not entirely discarnate." (p. 59-60) He says this because he believes
that the current emphasis on dialogical preaching is too traditional, an
attempt simply to revamp old forms. "If a preacher is so out of touch
with how his people feel about things that he must make special arrange­
ments to have eight or ten members of his congregation meet with him for
an hour or so to explain where they are in relation to a subject he
wishes to deal with, it is a safe bet that his sermon will not show much
significant human involvement or relevance simply because he goes through
that kind of motion. What he needs is a complete baptism in the fires
of contemporary existence. Again, if a man hasn't been able to show that
what he says in the pulpit represents a reflection on our life and
experience in the present from the point of view of the Gospel, and in
such a way that people immediately understand how it involves them and
what sort of consequences it has for their life, it is clear that the
dialogical form or presentation isn't going to rescue his preaching from
homiletical docetism and theological abstraction. What he needs is a
radical discovery that dialogue is a way of understanding the relation­
ship between the Gospel and the world, not just a form of speech." 
(p. 127-128) Hall's definition of preaching is: "Preaching, therefore,
is not essentially a descriptive or reportorial activity; its function is
not simply to pass on information or to perpetuate a tradition. It is
more nearly an exercise in reflection and confession—a faithful man's
attempt to express what the Christian message means to him and what it
may mean to others in the context of the present." (p. 81) However,
for Seventh-Day Adventists preaching can never be mere reflection and
confession either on the part of the preacher alone or the congregation
with him.
Preaching as a Shared Experience

Let me turn now to a consideration of preaching as a shared experience in an attempt to focus what has so far been said on the preaching event itself.

Malcomson has said that there are three basic elements in preaching: congregation, preacher, and message. Because preaching takes place in the context and action of worship, let me rephrase this and say that in my view there are three dynamic elements in the preaching event: (1) The action of the ascended and living Christ who through the written Word, and by means of the Holy Spirit, communicates divine truth. (2) The action of the living preacher as he listens to and hears the Word of God and reshapes it in terms of personality and language so that it comes through him as contemporary. (3) The action of the living worshippers as they listen to and hear the Word of God through the sermon and respond either in rejection or accepting faith to the God who speaks to them in terms of redemption and judgment.

The ascended Christ is the author of the divine message, the content of the communication, and the initiator of the communication as well as the guarantor that it will be communicated in that He has established the means whereby it is to be done: the Written Word, the office of proclamation, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, He is Himself fundamentally the Preacher. Upon sending the seventy out to preach He said: "He who hears you hears me..."\(^1\)

The place of preaching is an intermediary one. In the process of the transmission, movement, of the Word of God from His mind to yours, preaching serves as a kind of bridge. The context of the Biblical text

\(^1\)Luke 10:16
and the context of the preaching itself are two distinct realities. To build a bridge from one to the other so that the traffic of meaning can move freely in either direction is the task of creative preaching. If the bridge is not firmly anchored at both ends, in the revealed Word of God and in the human situation, traffic will cease.

The traffic on this bridge is two-way traffic in that it is in preaching that the meanings of the Gospel and your meanings come into contact. If the traffic flows only from God's side the Word becomes a dead letter. If it flows only from your side then life becomes the source of revelation and all meaning is found only in the present.

Preaching is that bridge. Part of the preacher's task is to keep that bridge anchored at both ends and the traffic moving freely in both directions. Thus in the whole process of the transmission of the Word from God to you the preacher stands in an alterocentric position. If we stretch our metaphor so that it applies to the preacher as well, we can say that, like the preaching itself, he too is like a bridge placed in between. As he listens to, and hears, the Word of God he contemporizes it in terms of human speech. That is to say, he makes it different without changing it into something else than what it is in fact: Word of God. Thus, liturgically speaking, the place from which the Word is preached stands between the place where it is read and the pew where it is heard.

Your unique part in the preaching event is in gathering together your doubts and questions and meanings and move toward God as He moves toward you in His self-communication. In the confrontation between the Gospel's meanings and yours, in faith you will allow His meanings to confront yours in redemption and judgment. You will listen to Him either in rejection or in believing, accepting, faith.

In preaching my role is to speak, yours to listen. In the
experience of preaching that which we share in common is listening to the Word of God. I listen to that Word as it comes to me in the handling of the Biblical text as a part of preparation for preaching. You listen to that Word as it comes to you in the sermon. So as preacher and as congregation together we worship God in preaching and eagerly listen to His Word.

My understanding of the nature of preaching comes between an objective propositional view and a subjective existential and event oriented view. In objective propositional preaching there is the calling of minds to a common, normative, objective and propositional revelation of the character and will of God. In subjective existential and event oriented preaching there is the pooling or sharing of subjective responses to a proposed revelation of the character and will of God, tempered by the sum of the life experience of the speaker and listener. In either of these views the bridge, which I consider preaching to be, is anchored at only one end.

Let me illustrate my view by the two following schema:
God communicates His Word (heavy line) from His mind through Scripture, then through the preacher to the listening worshipper.

The human preacher listens to that Word (light line) and shares it with the listeners.

Beginning with Scripture there is a two-way traffic in the confrontation of meanings.

The worshipper, hearing the Word of God in Scripture and sermon makes his response to God (broken line).
When preaching is anchored in the Revelation of God and in the human life situation, confrontation between God's meanings and those of the listener are possible. The result is change and/or transformation on the part of the listener.
Therefore, for me, preaching is a shared experience in which
the given Word of God moves from the mind of God through the preacher
as he listens and hears that Word in the sermon text and contemporizes
it in human speech, to the mind of the worshipper as he listens and
hears that given Word contemporized in the sermon and which confronts
him in terms of redemption and judgment.
CHAPTER II

LEARNING TO LISTEN

Having concluded that both preacher and worshipper are engaged in listening to the Word of God, and that the principal dialogical action of the worshipper in the pew is that of listening to the Word of God in the sermon, it is mandatory that we consider the matter of listening and what can be done to improve listening ability. The Word of God is not only to be spoken, but heard as well. Preaching, believing, and hearing, are combined and interrelated in Romans 10:14-17. It is by learning to listen well that increased perception concerning what is being said, as well as increased participation in the preaching event, is possible.

This chapter is divided into three sections beginning with some general thoughts which will lay the groundwork for a consideration of some factors that hinder good listening, then moving on to factors instrumental in developing good listening habits.

General Thoughts

Why is it important that we learn to listen as we consider preaching from the side of the hearer? It is because preaching is speech, and speech is a medium of communication through the ear.¹ It is communication by means of pure sound in contrast to communication by means of the written page. Speech communication presents, therefore, its own unique problems

for it is far easier to be distracted from hearing than from reading.

There are other sounds and movements that have an effect upon the listener. Furthermore, and perhaps it is the most crucial fact of all, the listener has but one chance to understand what the preacher has said. The encounter of meaning is instantaneous. H. Grady Davis points out that "The listener has only one chance to follow the continuous progress of my thought, and that is to go along with every step I take in moving toward my goal."¹

Another factor which is contributory to understanding, or lack of it, is that the hearer cannot go back over the material as a reader can. If he is to understand the basic idea in the sermon he must rely on his memory to make the connection between the vital parts of the sermon. "Thus my hope to communicate my idea to him is at the mercy of his memory."² If I, the preacher, do my work well, that is to design and construct the sermon in such a way that you can grasp it, and if you do your work well which consists of listening, the design, the idea, of the sermon will find a new birth in your own mind.

If you don't believe that this is an important matter in the success of preaching, just try to preach sometime and see the difference in your preaching when you sense that the people are really listening and responding.

It is both the preacher and the listener together who really "make" a sermon. The preacher needs to bring his best to his task, that

¹Ibid., p. 167.
²Ibid., p. 167.
of preparing a specific sermon, and you must bring your best listening and concentration.¹

It is strange that in an age when the spoken word is so vital in terms of advertising and the spread of ideologies, preaching as an important means of communication has fallen into a barren period. It is considered by many to be irrelevant and even useless. Correlated to this, of course, is the matter of listening to preaching. If preaching is irrelevant so is listening to sermons. But it doesn't take much of a study of history to discover how vital were the roles played by the great orators of the past. The list is long and includes such names as: Cicero, Patrick Henry, Abraham Lincoln, William Jennings Bryan, Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt. Where would the world be today without orators like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul, St. Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Zinzendorf, Jonathan Edwards, D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, Charles Spurgeon, George Whitefield, Fozdick, and Billy Graham? Greatest of all, of course, was Jesus Christ Himself. All of these great speakers had an effect on man and his world. Why? Because they spoke? Because they were listened to! Listening is important. Listening is crucial. Especially today. Because so much is being said about so many things both good and bad, the ability to listen well and to discern the thoughts of the speaker is a crucial matter.

John Drakeford quotes from the ancient orator Seneca who died in A.D. 65, and who cried out: "Listen to me for a day—an hour!—a moment!—

¹Arnold Kurtz, "How To Listen To A Sermon," These Times, December 1973, p. 18.

lest I expire in my terrible wilderness, my lonely silence! O God, is there no one to listen?"  

Yes, what would things be like if there were no listeners only speakers? There would be no need for speaking. Somebody had to say the words "liberty, equality, fraternity," but someone else had to hear them before the French Revolution was possible. Patrick Henry said "Give me liberty or give me death!" and other men heard those words that stirred a desire deep within and the American Revolution gave us a land of independence. In 1940-41 it was words alone, spoken by one man but heard by millions, that kept up England's courage and gave her the determination to survive and emerge a victor. It was the lisping voice of a crotchety old man named Churchill that communicated his own inner stubbornness and determination to the British people. The same voice crackling over the air waves in stilted French rallied the resistance forces of France for battle. There might never have been a finest hour if Churchill had never spoken.  

Some people, sad to say, listen to the wrong voices, such as the bombastic, raving, maniacal voice of Hitler that aroused Germany for world conquest. However, the evidence is clear, when the spoken word is listened to things happen. There is power not only in the spoken word, but also in the listening ear.  

God has endowed man, His creation, with the astounding gift of speaking and hearing. What one does with the gift of hearing is another matter, for one may have acute hearing ability but not listen at all. This is perhaps why there is a recurring theme in the Bible, that of the crucial

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importance of listening if men are to come to know God. Faith comes by hearing, it says. Also: "This is my beloved son, listen to him!"¹ And: "He who is of God hears the words of God."² And: "He who has an ear let him hear."³

In spite of the fact that listening is so crucial, we have serious problems with it. We identify it as a communication problem. There is not so much wrong on the side of speaking, but there is on the side of listening. We hear each other, that is we hear the sound of voices, but we do not really listen to each other. This often happens in a hospital room when members of a family are gathered around the bed of a dying loved one. So few of them really listen to what the dying person is saying and meaning. They are engaged instead in avoiding his meaning by camouflaging it in their own fears and concerns and reluctance to face reality.

The same kind of thing often happens in respect to listening to preaching. Some people scoff at it, others endure it as a bore, and still others listen with reluctance being careful to pick and choose only that which will be least demanding. Many people fain an uninteresting subject as reason for their lack of attention. William Thompson points out that "there is no such thing as an uninteresting subject; there are only uninterested people."⁴

The fact is that if any communication is going to get through, whether it be a sermon or a conversation between two people, it depends

¹Mark 9:7
²John 8:47
³Matthew 11:15
⁴Thompson, Guide, p. 77.
on both the speaker and the listener. Jud Morris says that "the pipeline must be open at both ends." Keeping this pipeline open from the point of view of the listener is the subject of this chapter.

Every person comprehends at different rates and levels. The same appears to be true about listening itself. There are many factors involved. But it is safe to say that none of us listens with maximum value. And many people beg to excuse themselves on the ground of an inability to remember. Like the lady who said to me once that the reason she did not attend worship services was that it was a waste of time in that she didn't remember what was said anyway. Yet a simple exercise in questioning revealed a high level of recall and memory concerning things happening during the worship service as well as other matters in her life. It is rather challenging to remember that around age three we all learned an entire language aurally—that is we learned by hearing alone! We were able to understand a tremendous amount of information and we actually memorized hundreds and even thousands of words. We understood by listening.

There is a difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is the sensory process by which our brains receive the impressions of audible sound. Sound strikes the ear drum and is transformed into an electrical impulse which is transmitted to the brain. Listening, on the other hand, is a complex psychological procedure which includes the understanding and interpretation of that which is transmitted as sound through the ear.

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2 Ibid., p. 3.
Drakeford says: "As sound comes to us we hear; when we apply ourselves to their meaning and significance we listen."¹

Accepting the truth of this we also realize then that listening requires a certain effort on our part. It requires a certain discipline and application of the total self to the interpretation and understanding of the sounds we hear.

Thus there is much more to good communication than the mere hearing of words, of speech. It is all part of the process of communication which involves hearing a message, the internalization of that message, and the action that should follow its reception.²

There are seven steps in the communication process: (1) Transmission, (2) Contact, (3) Feedback, (4) Comprehension, (5) Acceptance, (6) Internalization, and (7) Action.³

Our specific concern here is with step #2, the hearing of that which has been transmitted by human speech in preaching. It is hoped that with a consideration of the basic material contained in this chapter that members of a congregation can be trained to be better sermon listeners, and, therefore, better Christians and witnesses in the world.⁴

It is my conviction and assumption that many of the negative tendencies we all have in listening can be decreased with training. I

¹Ibid., p. 19.


³Ibid., p. 107-108.

⁴On the basis of the study conducted by Robert W. Bailey, Revitalization, p. 148, which revealed that project groups used in that study indicated a lack of precision in perception in listening to sermons when training for listening was absent, it was my anticipation that the same would be revealed in this study when comparing the responses of Treatment Group A and Control Group B.
refer to such tendencies as preoccupation, divided attention, distractions, and anything else that can be a negative influence in listening. It is believed that with proper training a member of a congregation can become a more thoughtful listener and a greater participant in the preaching event as a shared experience. While in terms of preaching as opposed to any other form of human speech, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, speaking takes precedence over hearing as the call takes precedence over the response, still "a listening audience is more than half the secret of any successful speech."¹

If you think sermons are dull and uninteresting, the fault may not lie with the preacher. Perhaps you are the one who needs help instead of getting a new pastor or absenting yourself from worship services. When you begin to take the trouble to learn and practice listening skills, the sermons you hear are more than likely to become exciting and challenging experiences. You will begin to sense that preaching is a shared experience.

However, lest you become discouraged and expect every sermon you hear to be the epitome of the shared experience, let me utter a word of caution. Human communication is a complex matter and so is the communication which takes place in preaching. In preaching the Word of God we are not just dealing with those human factors that mitigate against the hearing of that Word, but also with the fact that our mortal enemy, Satan, is busy trying to pick up the seed which has been sown. Therefore, not every shared experience of preaching will be a 100% success. Do not expect too much of your preacher as the speaker, nor of yourself as the listener. Both of us can, however, expect much from God.

¹ Drakeford, Power, p. 25.
Factors Hindering Good Listening

Having read selected literature on the subject of developing good listening habits, I have attempted in this section to draw forth from the literature certain factors which serve to hinder good listening and to label them for the sake of understanding.

Rate of Thought

There is a great difference in the rate of speaking and the rate of thinking. We usually speak at the rate of about 125 words a minute, while we think four times faster. Applied to preaching, and listening to preaching, this means that while the minister is preaching at the rate of 125 words per minute the hearer is tempted to race on ahead in thought at a much faster rate. The consequence is that the listener loses contact with the speaker and will have a hard time getting back to the speaker's train of thought. In other words, the greater rate of thinking allows the hearer's mind to wander.

A statement or word uttered by the speaker can very easily trigger a train of thought in the mind of the hearer that will prevent him from listening closely and effectively.¹ This has been referred to as tangent following, in which the listener permits his mind to travel down a new trail of thought, toy with a new idea generated by the speaker's statement or use of a word. It is thus possible to spend valuable time, which should be spent in listening to what the speaker is saying, mentally opposing irrelevant ideas which have been triggered in the subconscious mind while only half-hearing the speaker.²

¹Morris, Art, p. 50.
Inability to Assimilate a Multiplicity of Messages

D. E. Broadbent, an eminent researcher in the field of communication, has conducted a number of selective listening experiments which have revealed some significant conclusions. He points out that the rate at which information is arriving to the listener is important in that a multiplicity of messages cannot be adequately assimilated simultaneously. The more messages one is receiving from different sources the more difficult it is to assimilate information contained in those messages. Broadbent points out that if a listener is receiving two different messages at the same time the less information they contain the better, for he is then better able to deal with them. If the two messages contain much information the listener has difficulty assimilating and sorting out.

He also indicates that when information is discarded by the listener it is not done at random. In other words it appears to be a selected discarding, the listener choosing the material he will assimilate—filtering it out from all the rest. Broadbent's conclusion is that if some material presented is irrelevant it is better if it came from another place than the relevant material, or be spoken louder or softer, or to be visual rather than auditory.

His conclusions have significant implications for listening to preaching. There are those who are saying today that the traditional form of preaching is outmoded and that new and innovative forms are required which employ visual aids as well as the spoken word. If Broadbent's experiments have validity it would seem that the best listening is possible only when information is coming from one source, one place.

in the sanctuary. Distractions can thus be reduced to a minimum. In other words, variety in forms of proclamation should not be used together but separately. Certainly not simultaneously as the multi-media enthusiasts urge.

The implication is also present in Broadbent's conclusions that dialogue preaching, or dramatic preaching in which a number of persons are involved, is not the most effective way of conveying information.

**Filtering**

Broadbent's experiments revealed the fact that it is impossible to handle more than what he terms a critical amount of information at a given time. Thus the listener will filter the information that strikes his ear, especially if that information is coming from a number of sources. This filtering will utilize energy and time that should be used for the processing of information.

It would seem that this has implications for preaching which are also of significance. The Lord was aware of man's abilities and inabilities and was, therefore, meeting his communication needs when he established preaching as one man speaking and others listening. Preaching is different from talking in this respect: it is not conversation, the give and take verbally between two or more people. It would seem also that the traditional development of the pulpit was an aid toward communication. The practical idea of a pulpit was, not only to symbolize the centrality of the Word, but to keep the preacher in one place while he speaks. Distractions are reduced in that the listener is not required to absorb the preacher's body movements against various backgrounds, as well as his ideas and words. The fact is that it is far easier to concentrate if the message is coming from one place.
Most messages contain more than the critical amount of information. This is recognized by most homileticians and preachers who consequently speak about the one central idea or thought in the sermon they wish to convey. They feel that if the listener goes away conscious of that one idea the sermon was a success. In this connection, and with reference to the traditional use of the pulpit for preaching, Broadbent has this to say: "Given that messages contain more than the limiting quantity of information, it will be the words spoken in one voice or from one place which will be understood."

Visual-mindedness

Another factor which hinders good listening is that we tend to be visual-minded rather than aural-minded. That is to say, our minds tend to want to receive pictures instead of words and ideas. This is especially true of children, and one wonders if the same tendency on the part of adults does not indicate a lack of vital maturation. Or perhaps it is a part of human weakness to go the way of least resistance in that it is easier to visualize than to think. Perhaps this is why we are prone to spend so much time daydreaming. Jud Morris deplores the fact that so many of us accept this visual-mindedness as an unchangeable situation, and says: "We are inclined to resign ourselves to the fact that we must see things in order to retain them. We are inclined to neglect the development of our listening ability." 

No doubt the current interest in audio-visuals and multi-media communication results from this resignation. Sad to say, the Church has also succumbed to the situation to the point where innovations in preach-

1 Ibid., p. 35.
2 Morris, Art., p. 2.
ing method are being encouraged and practiced in which visual forms are often employed. Are we to be content with an infantile approach to, and understanding of, the communication of the Word of God?

However, visual-mindedness does have something to say concerning the use of imagery in preaching. That is to say, the painting of word pictures. Images evoked by the spoken word allow the listener freedom of creative thought—whereas an imposed image reflects another's thinking. For example the words "A sermon is like a tree" have meaning only in relation to the image they evoke in the listener's mind; it may be the image of a giant oak or a tender birch, a full grown tree hundreds of years old or a sappling that shifts and bends in the slightest breeze.

Let me say a word here about sermon illustrations. In my own preaching I deliberately keep the use of illustrations to a bare minimum, using only those that come either from Scripture or from life and that fit the message. I deplore preaching that confines itself to the telling of stories, or that capitalizes on the use of the dramatic illustration. For what one is most often left with is not a word from the Lord, but the titillating memory of a vivid illustration. It is very easy to get carried away by an unusual illustration or anecdote and in the process forget completely the point being made.

One more point. This tendency toward visual-mindedness is one facet of the desire for a non-rational, non-verbal, communication experience in which one is not required to think through concepts and ideas but simply to put himself at the disposal of visual impressions

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which may or may not have ultimate meaning. This is why this generation has become so enamored by television, it requires little thought. We are living at a time when the overall concern, even in preaching circles, is not with what is being said but with how it is being said.

Self-centeredness

This could very well be termed the retreat into one's own fantasy world. The natural inclination to be self-centered is a great hindrance to good listening. In order to listen well we must actively enter into another person's thinking in an attempt to find understanding of what he means. We are dealing here with basic attitudes about other people.¹

Because we are self-centered we tend to listen on the basis of our own inner feelings and thus are not able to hear what the speaker is really saying.² What this is in actuality is a retreat into individual fantasy worlds even though by outward appearance we might be making a decided effort to give the impression of attention.³

Blackout Areas

This is a term suggested by William D. Thompson. Contemporary colloquialism would term this "turning off" or being "turned off." To be "tuned out" is also applicable. By these terms is meant the deliberate avoidance of that which is disturbing, conflicting, convicting, or disliked because of a claim it makes upon the listener. Words used in the sermon, or ideas themselves, can serve to "turn you off" and you black out what is being said.

¹Thompson, Guide, p. 87.
²Edgar, "Listening," p. 179.
³Thompson, Guide, p. 85.
For example, assuming that on a given Sabbath your minister preaches a sermon on stewardship, on the giving of tithes and offerings to the Lord's work, which has not been announced the previous week so that you could not have absented yourself from the worship service. Because you are resistant the moment he begins you "turn off," black out the entire sermon and allow your mind to dwell on more "interesting" and "pertinent" things.

Another example would be the use of quotations from Ellen G. White. Especially those which put a finger on an area of your Christian life that has not yet been fully yielded to the Lord. There are many other examples that could be used, but I think you get the point.

Non-processing of Information

You have heard the age-old expression that what we hear often goes in one ear and out the other. It makes us chuckle but it has an element of truth. What it means is that much of what we hear we do not allow to flow all the way through our beings to the point where it is understood and acted upon. We do not fully process what we hear. All our life-long we train ourselves to ignore certain sounds. This can be either good or bad. A factory worker could not exist in his noisy place of employment if he did not use his psychological mechanism permitting him to ignore sounds. Many parents do this with their children. Children do it with parents. Husbands and wives with each other.

In terms of listening to preaching, many people have developed an acute talent of ignoring everything that happens or is being said the moment the minister starts to preach. Some almost immediately nod off to sleep! They don't want to hear anything the man might say. What they are really trying to avoid is the hearing of God's voice. The consequence
is that information that might be vital for the individual is not processed.

Use of Silence

We have concluded that the preacher's task is to speak, and the worshipper's task is to listen. This means that he must remain silent and utilize the constructive value of silence in the shared experience of preaching. However, the way in which one uses silence can hinder good listening.\(^1\) By the individual's look or expression he usually communicates to the preacher just how he is using silence. He may be using it defiantly; defying the preacher to say anything worthwhile or significant or useful or even important. Or he may use silence as a means of withdrawal or retreat and sulk with hurt feelings and disappointments. Or it might be the silence of rebuke, a stern scowl and angry eyes telling the preacher exactly what he thinks of him and all he represents, or even that he feels he would be able to do a better job of it.

Poor Listening Habits

There are a number of poor listening habits that we need to be aware of if they are to be overcome.

(1) We are usually too quick to make evaluations and judgments before we have heard the speaker out.

(2) We make non-critical inferences. That is to say, we tend to jump to conclusions, supply our own details, and/or put words in another's mouth.

(3) We make the assumption that others think just like we do, consequently, we don't listen closely for that which may be different.

\(^1\) Drakeford, Power, p. 43-45.
(4) We have the attitude of the closed mind. We know the answer! So we need not listen any further.

(5) We may have developed the habit of not giving full attention to any speaker.

(6) When we think at all our thinking may be wishful. We hear only what we want to hear.

(7) We usually talk too much and love the sound of our own words. Consequently, we are not too interested in anyone else's words or thoughts.

(8) We often lack humility and think we know it all. No one can teach us anything.

(9) We are afraid to listen because the speaker might be right. We are content in our convictions and ideas and do not want them challenged in any way.

**Non-critical Listening**

When we listen to another speaking we should be doing so critically. By that I mean thoughtfully, asking the questions: What is he saying? What does he mean? How does what he says apply to me? Listening critically is complicated by a number of factors.

(1) The listeners preconceived opinion of the speaker.

(2) Your own particular theological position and use of Christian language or terminology.

(3) Your physical, emotional, mental, and/or spiritual state.

(4) The immediate environment which might involve excessive noise or movement, or anything that distracts you from thoughtful listening.

(5) A preconceived idea of what constitutes a "good" sermon.
(6) Your personal likes and dislikes regarding the preacher's mannerisms, use of illustrations, quotations, and the length of the sermon.

(7) A pre-established value system that conditions your perception. Do you hear what the speaker is saying, or do you hear what you think he is saying?

(8) A predisposition regarding the subject being discussed. For many people a sermon on money is always a "bad" sermon.

(9) You may have an attitude of hostility toward speaker or subject, or an attitude of neutrality, or one of partisanship. All of these, and no doubt there would be more, constitute barriers to concentration and to critical listening.

Helps for the Development of Good Listening Habits

Let us turn now to the positive and consider how we might become better listeners to sermons, and, hopefully better Christians as a consequence:

We have ascertained that preaching is a means of communication, part of the communication of God's Word from His mind to yours. We have also indicated that you as listener are a part of preaching as a shared experience. It is not communication on the entertainment or amusement level, but on the level of understanding. This requires effort, concentration, commitment, on the part of both speaker and listener. It also involves thinking, being perceptive, reflective, and requires some degree of analytical ability. It also involves the transfer of ideas, thoughts, and feelings.¹

¹Morris, Art, p. 10-11.
Before we turn to specific things to do that will help in the development of good listening habits, I want to discuss briefly four things we need to be conscious of as we function as listeners.

Creative Use of Silence

We need first of all to be conscious of the fact that silence can be used creatively. Here I am referring to the fact that when the preacher speaks the listener is silent. Hopefully he will be thinking about what is being said. If the listener is to use silence creatively he must exercise a great deal of effort and self-discipline. Any college student will tell you just how crucial this is if he is to get the major part of the material presented in classroom lectures.

Listening Full-time

We need, secondly, to be conscious of the fact that listening is not a part-time activity. It requires vigorous attention. One cannot hope to receive all that God has to offer in a given sermon if he listens attentively only part of the time.

Body Involvement

Thirdly, we must be conscious of the fact that the listening process involves not only the ear but the entire body. Thus there are body attitudes that contribute toward good listening. One cannot listen attentively while reclining in the pew with half-closed eyes. Doodling and frequent glances at your watch indicates that you are not listening. Your body attitude should be relaxed but not lethargic, leaning slightly toward the speaker. What you do with your eyes is also important. The

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1 Drakeford, Power, p. 40.
2 Ibid., p. 39.
darting, furtive glance indicates lack of attention and communicates this to the speaker. The listener's eyes must be steadily focused on the speaker with his thoughts going out toward the speaker also. The combination will reveal itself in a coaxing, interested look and manner that will communicate itself to the speaker and help him to speak well.

Critical Awareness

Fourthly, you need to be conscious of the importance of critical awareness to good listening. This means that you need to know something about the theology of preaching, the preacher's role and task as it relates to God's intention, and your role and task as it relates to the preacher's task and God's intention. You need also to be aware of the relationship between preaching and worship, as well as the relationship of worship and your daily life and experience. This critical awareness is a basic state of mind, a disposition toward preaching as a vital element in your own spiritual well-being and growth. It is a prerequisite to achieving and maintaining high quality both on your part as listener and on the preacher's part as speaker.

Now let us turn to some practical things that one can do to improve listening ability.

Things To Do To Improve Listening Ability

There are a number of very helpful things that one can do to improve listening ability and good habits. There are also any number of lists suggesting such things to do in virtually every book on the subject of listening. It would be redundant to reproduce every list that is available. However, I have chosen what I consider to be the best in the selected literature.
William D. Thompson makes the following eight suggestions for preparing to listen to a sermon.¹

(1) Spend some time reflecting deeply on the total meaning of preaching in terms of your Christian growth.

(2) Determine to discover the relevance of the particular sermon in your life.

(3) Become familiar with Biblical material and ideas through formal and informal Bible study, and if possible with the preaching text itself.

(4) Make a disciplined effort to develop your listening skills.

(5) Remember that communication is a reciprocal activity.

(6) Listening in anticipation of sharing your new insights.

(7) Prepare your body to listen. This involves getting adequate rest and diet together with proper exercise.

(8) Enter fully into the total experience of worship.

The same author suggests the following good listening ingredients.²

(1) Listen for the main idea in the sermon.

(2) Anticipate the speaker's next point. This requires the active use of your creative thought processes.

(3) Identify yourself with the sermon's ideas. In other words consider it preached just to you rather than for someone else.

(4) Review what you have heard. Think about what the sermon has been saying rather than allowing your mind to wander off on a tangent. After the service in a quiet moment at home think about what was said in the sermon and try to recapture the main idea and the progression of thought.

¹Thompson, Guide, p. 56-72.

²Ibid., p. 87-91.
(5) Put these principles to work in every listening situation. The same author suggests that there are three things for the listener to watch for in a sermon, for him to think about.¹

(1) The problem or need with which the sermon was concerned. As you think about this try to word it as a question.

(2) The truth developed in the sermon in answer to the question concerning need. Word it as an assertion.

(3) The response to the truth which the sermon urged you to make. Word it as an invitation.

Arnold Kurtz - Arnold Kurtz suggests that serious sermon listening is related to the activities of the reporter, philosopher, counselee, and executive. He suggests four elements in good sermon listening.²

(1) Listen as a reporter, asking the question: "What is the speaker saying?"

(2) Listen as a philosopher, asking the question: "What is the meaning of what is being said?"

(3) Listen as a counselee, asking the question: "What does this sermon mean to me?"

(4) Listen as an executive, asking the question: "What does the sermon ask me to do?"

John Drakeford - John Drakeford invites the listener to enter into the listening experience in the following ways.³

(1) "Start with a determination to overcome your listening inertia. Like the naval message give yourself a strong and certain 'now hear this.'"

¹Ibid., p. 93.
³Drakeford, Power, p. 22-23.
"Examine the facts as they are presented and try to determine if they are accurate or are just being presented to prove a point or used to bolster a case.

Look for a message beyond the words. The changing tones and fluctuating facial expressions, gestures and bodily movements all carry a message.

The speaker may have something to say that you need to hear. Decide not to let your prejudice block you from appreciating and evaluating the message.

Fight distractions. Refuse to be lured away by your curiosity. Reject the incidentals, interruptions, and any peripheral activity.

Try to anticipate where the speaker is going. Scout on ahead. If he goes on another trail, retrace your steps and rejoin him.

Focus your attention on the theme or main message. See how other material bolsters this basic idea.

Make mental summaries periodically so that you know where you've been and have a launching pad for what follows.

Underline the illustrations and examples. They will become easily remembered reference points.

Ralph G. Nichols - Ralph G. Nichols suggests the following ten guides to good listening.  

1. Find your area of interest. This has to do with the fact that there is something useful and helpful for you in every sermon.

2. Judge the content and not the delivery. A good listener may think the speaker inept, but moves on to consider what he knows.

3. Hold your fire. This means not getting excited too soon by the speaker's point until it has been thoroughly understood. Withhold evaluation until comprehension is complete.

4. Listen for ideas. Learn to distinguish between fact and principle, idea and example, evidence and argument.

(5) Be flexible. This is in reference to taking notes and Nichols recommends that the note-taker be flexible in his methods for not all speeches, sermons, are note-takeable.

(6) Work at listening. Give the speaker full attention and establish and maintain eye contact. Posture and facial expression should indicate to the speaker that the listener judges that the occasion and the speaker's efforts are significant to him. This indicates interest.

(7) Resist distractions. A good listener will quickly adjust to an abnormal situation. Poor listeners are easily influenced by every distraction. It is a matter of concentration.

(8) Exercise your mind. Make a conscious effort to develop an appetite for hearing a variety of difficult and challenging material.

(9) Keep your mind open. If there are certain words or phrases that upset you emotionally, identify them so that they will not distract you every time they are used by a speaker.

(10) Capitalize on thought speed. A poor listener will utilize excess thinking time, as opposed to slower speaking time, by turning his thoughts to something else. He wanders. Use this excess thinking time to reflect on what is being said, what has been said, and in anticipation of what will be said next. This excess time will present the listener with a valuable opportunity to observe the speaker's mannerisms, facial expressions, body language, all of which are part of the communication process.

What have we learned about listening? We have learned that most people do not listen to their full capacity. We have learned that listening is hard work. We have learned that good listening requires discipline and attention if we are to learn to listen well.

In conclusion let me call your attention to three creative
elements which you as a listener must put to work if you are to listen well to any sermon. They are: your apprehension, your memory, and your creative imagination. How you use these as you listen to a sermon will have a great deal to do with that sermon's effect upon your life. If you are not actively engaged in good creative listening a sermon will have little or no effect on your life even though the sermon had intrinsic worth, even though the preacher preached well.

1 Davis, Design, p. 168.
CHAPTER III

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This chapter contains three major divisions: (1) A discussion of the weaknesses of the study, (2) A discussion of the procedures used in the implementation of the study, and (3) A list of general hypotheses.

The chapter will describe those factors which contribute to the weaknesses of the study, the seven steps in procedure followed in implementation, and present the twelve general hypotheses upon which the study is based.

Weaknesses

Five major weaknesses were encountered in the study: (1) The study was done in only one congregation, (2) Ample opportunity was present for an interchange of ideas and information between the Treatment and Control groups, (3) Lack of isolation made it possible for the Treatment and Control groups to be influenced by additional sources, (4) The mortality rate in participation, and (5) the lack of random selection of participants in the Treatment and Control groups.

Because of these weaknesses some of the originally intended comparisons will not be made.

One Congregation

The study involved the membership of the Benton Harbor, Michigan Church of Seventh-day Adventists and no other. There was no attempt to measure the results of the study in that congregation with a similar study.
in another congregation in order to discover if the same sermons would have a similar effect. This greatly limits the certainty which could be placed on the generalization of conclusions to other Seventh-day Adventist congregations.

Interchange of ideas and information

Because of the nature of congregational life it was not possible to isolate the Treatment and Control groups from each other. The sermons were preached over a period of eight weeks and during that time the Treatment and Control group personnel participated in many other activities of the congregation which provided occasion for an interchange of ideas and information related to the study and the sermons. It is recognized, therefore, that uncontrolled variables may have had significant effects on the results.

Other source influences

Due to the fact that it was not possible to isolate the Treatment and Control groups other influences besides those of group interaction may have had an effect on the outcome. In other words it may not have been the eight sermons alone which contributed to a change of attitude on the part of respondents. Other variables such as radio and television sermons, personal Bible study and prayer, Sabbath School lessons and class discussions with other Christians, attendance at worship service in another congregation, etc., may have contributed significantly to the results.

Mortality rate

As will be described later, a certain number of persons were invited to participate in the Treatment and Control groups. As it turned out there was considerable variation in the number of respondents who
consistently participated each week. Many things interfered: weekend trips, vacations, illness, absences from worship. For any number of reasons respondants in the Treatment and Control groups did not all hear every sermon in the series. Continuity, and thus impact, was broken for many respondants.

Lack of Random Selection

The method of determining participants in the Treatment and Control groups by random selection was not built into the project. This was so because there was no intention of applying the results in a general way to all the members of the congregation nor to other Seventh-day Adventist congregations. Interest revolved around the impact and influence of sermons on particular individuals in select groups. Not using random selection of course prohibited the application of general conclusions to other populations outside of the Treatment and Control groups.

In view of the above mentioned weaknesses, data is reported in descriptive form and no attempt was made to test the data for statistical significance between the groups. Originally it was intended to do so and there were expectations concerning what would happen. As the reader examines "hypotheses," or expectations, it should be noted that those expectations with reference to comparisons between groups have not been deleted so that the original intention might be understood.

The intention is to use the results of this study in assisting the preacher in the improvement of his preaching ministry rather than for the purpose of establishing or proving any hypothesis.

Procedure

Study procedures were divided into seven steps: (1) Planning of
basic design, (2) Selection of bibliographical material, (3) Reading and research in homiletics and listening skills, (4) Development of study instruments, (5) Solicitation of participation, (6) Preparation and delivery of sermons, and (7) Providing two opportunities for verbal dialogue.

Planning basic design

The first step required was the creative planning of a basic design for the project and the Project Report. At the outset it was determined that the plan was not to represent an absolute but was subject to changes demanded by the learning process.

Bibliographical material

Because of the great amount of material available in the field of homiletics and in the field of auditory and related research, the selection of bibliographical material was selective rather than exhaustive. The material studied and researched formed the basis for the first two chapters of this Report and also provided the information used in the training sessions for the Treatment group.

Reading and research

The research which formed the material for Chapters One and Two of this Report was based on an examination of the selected literature in the fields of homiletics and listening skills. The intention was to gather information which would contribute to the development of theory to be applied from the points of view of preaching and of listening to preaching.

Instrument development

Ten instruments were designed for this study. Nine were to be used by the Treatment and Control groups, and one by the congregation as a whole.

In view of the fact that this chapter is descriptive, the instruments with their results are included in the following chapter which deals with evaluation.

Instrument #1

The first instrument was designed to survey the entire congregation in order to determine their attitudes toward the preacher and toward preaching. This survey was taken a number of weeks prior to the preaching of the sermon series.¹

Instrument #2

The second instrument was designed to measure attitudinal change on the part of individual respondents participating in the Treatment group (designated as Group A) and in the Control group (designated as Group B). The instrument consisted of four hypothetical situations to which each respondent would react. The situations were open-ended in that no alternatives were presented from which the respondent could choose an appropriate answer. Three of the situations were related to three of the sermons, and the last one to the series as a whole.²

This instrument was used by both Group A and B, once at the beginning of the sermon, and once at the conclusion.

¹ See Appendix B for a copy of this instrument.
² See Appendix C for a copy of this instrument.
Instruments #3 - #10

These eight instruments were designed for use by both Group A and B following the preaching of each sermon in the series. Participants were given copies of the instrument following the worship service. Some remained to fill them out and some took them home to be returned the next week. They were not distributed prior to the worship service as the intention was to test ability to retain and recall.

A total of ten questions were used in the ten instruments. However, only two of the questions were repeated each week. They related directly to the central idea of the sermon preached and to the main points of that sermon. It was deemed unnecessary to repeat some of the questions every week as it was anticipated that the responses to those questions would be the same from week to week.

The questions were designed to ascertain the following: (1) If the preacher was using a vocabulary easy to understand contributing to well-organized thought, (2) If the listener was able to keep full attention on the sermon, (3) If the listener was motivated to examine his ideas and will to see if they were in harmony with God's ideas and will, (4) Whether the listener felt that the preacher was as interested in him as he was in the doctrines of the sermon text, (5) Whether the listener felt the sermon was directed to individuals or to the congregation as a whole, (6) Whether the listener felt he was making response to the message heard, (7) If the listener was able to recall the central idea of the sermon, (8) If the listener was able to recall the main points of the sermon, and (9) To determine the nature of the non-verbal communication coming from the preacher and what image of him was left in the mind of the listener.\(^1\)

\(^1\)See Appendix E for copies of these instruments.
Solicitation of participation

Solicitation of participation included: (1) The involvement of the congregation, (2) The selection of participants in Groups A and B, and (3) The training of Group A in the development of listening skills.

Congregational involvement

In view of the fact that the project was being undertaken as a part of the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree, and in order to offset any feeling on the part of the congregation that they were being used only as the objects of an experiment, it was mandatory to enlist their positive cooperation and involvement.

It is a part of the philosophy of the Doctor of Ministry program at Andrews University that theory of ministry is to be combined with practice of ministry in the learning process. It is also part of the philosophy of the program that learning should take place in the lives of the members of the congregation as well as in that of the minister. The task was to introduce the project so that the congregation would feel free to participate in the realization that spiritual benefit and growth would be theirs as a result.

At the outset it was determined that honesty always represents the most productive way of operating in the tasks of the ministry. Thus it was openly and honestly explained to the members of the Church Board, and to the congregation as a whole, that the project was in fact part of the requirements for their pastor's Doctor of Ministry degree but that it was to be designed in such a way that maximum benefit might accrue to the congregation as well.

After a lengthy description of the project including what the benefits might be both to the congregation and the pastor, approval was
received from the Church Board. Following this approval the intent and plan of the project was carefully presented to the congregation on a number of Sabbaths prior to the actual implementation.

Group selection

The design of the project called for the selection of two groups that would function critically and from which the necessary feedback for evaluation and interpretation could be received. Group A would serve as the Treatment Group in that they would receive training in developing listening skills. Group B would serve as the Control Group in that they received no such training.

Random selection was not used as a method for selecting group participants as the concern was with the overall impact and influence of the sermons on individual members of select groups. There was no interest in an approach that would make possible the application of conclusions to the whole congregation.

Members of Groups A and B were selected by invitation. Letters of invitation were sent to a select number of individuals who it was felt would respond favorably due to a recognized need to get more out of sermons, and who would be most consistent in regular participation.¹

Out of a congregation of 260 members it was felt that an invitation to thirty members for each group would produce an adequate number of participants to make the study feasible. Seventeen individuals responded and participated in Group A, and ten responded and participated in Group B.

Training of Group A

Group A received training in the development of listening skills

¹See Appendix D for copies of the letters of invitation.
on two consecutive Sabbath afternoons prior to the preaching of the first sermon in the series.

The first session consisted of the presentation, in lecture form, of the theology of preaching delineated in the first chapter of this Report. Discussion followed. The major emphasis was placed on preaching as a shared experience in which the members of the congregation are actively involved.

The second session consisted of a presentation of the principles and techniques which are a part of learning to listen well, followed by group activity. A taped sermon was listened to after which participants were asked to write down the central idea and any of the main points which developed that idea. This was followed by a general discussion of the sermon itself, the background which called forth the preaching of that particular sermon, and how God might have used that sermon to address certain needs existing in the congregation to which it was preached as that particular time.

The goal of the training sessions was to sharpen the perceptivity of the participants with respect to the ability to retain and recall the central idea and the subsequent points of any sermon.

Sermons

The material presented here with respect to the sermons used in the study is divided into two parts: (1) The preparation of the sermons, and (2) The description of the sermons.

Preparation

The eight sermons used in the series were prepared on the basis of the homiletical methodology suggested by Lloyd M. Perry. They

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represent examples of the Modification and the Clarification processes of sermon preparation.¹

The sermons were prepared by determining the subject and the theme which is that aspect of the subject being dealt with in the specific sermons. The subject and theme were formulated in a sermonic proposition. This proposition embodied the central idea of the sermon and constitutes the sermon's homiletical center.

The composition of a transitional sentence or rhetorical bridge followed, which served to make the logical transition from what was said in the introduction to what was said in the main body of the sermon. This transitional sentence contains the proposition and includes the implied interrogatives "How," "Why," "When," or "Where," and the interrogative substitute "by," "because," "in which," or "at which." The interrogative substitute is followed in the transitional sentence by a key word which should be a plural noun that characterizes the main points of the sermon. The main points then amplify, explain, and/or prove the proposition which has been presented.

Between the introduction and the body of the sermon there is a sermonic explanation or bridge that puts the sermon into its Biblical context. It is that part of the sermon which helps the listener make the connection between the description of a contemporary need or problem and the Biblical counsel or answer.

The conclusion is a summary of the sermon and attempts to show its relevance to the listener's daily life. It is the conclusion that serves to challenge the listener toward a decision made in the light of the Biblical content of the sermon applied to the life situation.

¹See Appendix F for copies of all eight sermons used for this study.
No attempt was made with respect to a puristic usage of Perry's methodology. It was adapted to this preacher's own style. The major concern was in determining whether or not the use of the sermonic proposition and the development of the main points in relation to the proposition serve to assist in retaining and recalling the central idea and the main points. If this methodology is homiletically valid then it can readily be adopted and adapted by the concerned preacher whose desire is to do everything technically possible in order that the divine Word might be communicated and shared by preacher and listener.

The general theme of the series of sermons was based on Ephesians 1:18 as it is paraphrased in the Living Bible:

I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can see something of the future he (God) has called you to share.

The theme chosen was FAITH TO FACE THE FUTURE. Influential in the development of this theme was the book *Future Shock* by Alvin Toffler.¹ Material from Toffler's book combined with a growing awareness that many church members have been influenced by the contemporary hopeless and nihilistic approach to life, inspired the desire to prepare such a series of messages. The fact that Christians too have begun to face the future with apprehension and fear rather than with faith, hope, and trust in a good outcome presented the need. The Biblical message of Ephesians presented the counsel. The union of need and counsel would produce relevancy.

The opportunity to develop and preach on the theme was presented while this writer served as associate pastor of the Battle Creek Tabernacle of Seventh-day Adventists in 1972. The annual week of prayer

provided the occasion and the stimulus. Again in 1973 the series was preached in Ironwood, Michigan. Reworked, they are the eight sermons used in this study project.

Description

The description of the eight sermons is organized in the following sequence: (1) Numerical identification, (2) Title, (3) Biblical text, (4) Abstract, and (5) Objectives.

**Sermon #1.**

**Title:** "Faith to Face the Future."**

**Text:** Ephesians 1:3-10.

**Abstract.** This sermon introduced the theme of the series. Based on the assumption that many people look fearfully toward the future the sermon begins with the question: "Are you afraid to face the future?" This question is followed by a brief description of some of the things that cause such fear, a description of the tendency toward nostalgia with respect to the "good old days," and a brief portrayal of the Ephesian church as a group of people fearful of the future faced in their time.

The sermonic proposition embodying the central idea of the sermon is that God's care can give faith to face the future because His blessings are eternal. These eternal blessings are clearly revealed in the text. There are four of them:

1- God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (verse 4).

2- God destined us in love to be His sons through Christ (verse 5).

3- God freely bestowed His grace upon us in Christ (verse 6).
4- God makes known the mystery of His will in Christ (verse 9).

Objectives.— This sermon was designed with ten objectives in view:

1- To formulate the central idea of the sermon in a proposition that could easily be recalled by the listener.

2- To preach the text in such a way that the main points could easily be recalled by the listener.

3- To contemporize the ancient Biblical message by a careful use of language that indicates sensitivity to human need and God's concern, and that is also a language of hope.

4- To preach in such a way that the attention of the listeners would be captivated and held.

5- To preach in such a way that the preaching becomes the bridge between God's meanings and the listener's meanings and thus provide the opportunity for a confrontation of wills and ideas.

6- To preach the sermon in such a way that the listeners would sense that the preacher was as interested in them as persons as in the doctrines contained in the text.

7- To preach in such a way that the listener would feel that the sermon was directed to him personally as well as to the congregation as a whole.

8- To preach in such a way that the listeners take advantage of the difference between rate of speech and rate of thought to respond to the message being given.

9- To preach in such a way that the non-verbal communication would elicit a positive rather than a negative attitude toward the preacher himself.

10- To bring about an attitude of faith toward the future in those who hear.

The sermon attempts to meet the first objective by a careful formulation of the central idea as a proposition clearly stated in understandable language.

The sermon attempts to meet the second objective by developing the sermonic proposition so that the main points are clearly drawn from the text.
The sermon attempts to meet the third objective by the judicious use of language which indicates the preacher's sensitivity to human need and that is a language of hope. The following are examples of words chosen to indicate sensitivity: "fear," "threatens," "nostalgia," "astray," "worth," "meaning," "cares," "misery," "trouble," "restoration," "children," "foll," "clean," "craw," "follow." Words and combinations of words that constitute a language of hope are "encouragement," "God's care," "you originated in the mind of God," "He wants us," "He loves us," "He adopts us as His sons," "God forgives sinners," "He shall come again," "God's care for us is eternal," "you can face the future with faith."

The sermon attempts to meet the fourth objective by raising of a question concerning fear of the future and the presentation of the Biblical answer for such fear. It was anticipated that attention would be captured and held by a vivid description of the common fear that the listener could recognize as his problem, and then by an expository approach to the Bible's answer for the solution to the problem.

The sermon attempts to meet the fifth objective by implying a contrast between the listeners tendency to view life from the narrow finite perspective, and God's view of man's existence and history from the much broader infinite perspective. The current issues which cause man to fear such as war, pollution, crime, drug addiction, radical movements, revolution, are seen in the context of the great acts of God in Christ which were divinely designed to portray a glorious future and bring hope to man. This presents the listener with an opportunity for a confrontation of meanings.

The sermon attempts to meet the sixth objective by considering a human problem for which the doctrines of the text presented solution. The sermon seeks to apply the doctrines to human need rather than being them-
selves the point of attention. The preacher's recognition of the fear that pervades contemporary man's life should have caused the listeners to recognize his interest in them, but also that he was equally interested in doctrine in that he sought for the solution in the Biblical doctrines and not elsewhere.

The sermon attempts to meet the seventh objective by the use of what might be termed the inclusive "we" intended to draw the listener into dialogue. Examples are: "we all yearn for," "We are not afterthoughts," "when we fell into sin," "when we accept," "we do not deserve." Samples of more direct address are: "Are you afraid...?," "Doesn't it give you...?," "Sure you do!," "you can face the future with faith." It is the use of such personal pronouns that make the subjective connection between the preacher and the listener that can result in dialogue.

The sermon attempts to meet the eighth objective by presenting relevant contemporary and Biblical material that would motivate thought and self-examination. It is only when the preached Word motivates self-examination that divine Will confronts human will. However, such self-examination must take place in the context of hearing of the great acts of God revealed in the text for only then can the response be made in the direction of redemption.

The meeting of the ninth objective is a subjective matter having to do with the preacher himself and the manner in which he approaches the task of preparing to preach. The concern at this point is with preparing the preacher rather than with preparing the sermon, that he be a man of faith who trusts the written revelation of God, who listens to the text, who is totally committed to his task, and who fulfills that task in a bold and uncompromising manner.

The sermon attempts to meet the last objective by demonstrating
from the text how God's care for His people is eternal, stretching from before the foundation of the world to the fullness of time. It began before the world was made in His decision to choose us as His own. It took shape in His plan as He destined us to be His sons. It was acted out as He bestowed His grace upon us in Christ. And the mystery of it all is to be found in His revelation in that it points us to a marvelously positive future.

Sermon #2.—

Title.— "A Happy Life in an Unhappy World."

Text.— Ephesians 1:11-14.

Abstract.— This sermon deals with unhappiness as one of the great human problems of today. Unhappiness does not make possible a useful and hopeful life. This unhappiness can be seen in individuals of all ages and is revealed most alarmingly in unsatisfactory human relationships.

Unhappiness is directly related to a person's sense of the future, and in our day we live in a time of depressing dread concerning the future. One of our pressing human needs is to find happiness and joy.

Happiness is a state of well-being and satisfaction. Joy is an emotion brought about either by the acquisition or the expectation of good. Thus it is anticipatory joy that makes for happiness. To anticipate the bad never leads to happiness. If the view of the future is negative, skeptical and dark, happiness is not possible. What is needed, therefore, is an enhanced view of the future.

This was also true of the Ephesian congregation that lived in the midst of a community embarked on a religious quest. God had placed them there with a positive message as a group of people who reflected a happy expectation.
The sermonic proposition that embodies the central idea of the sermon is that we can live a happy life in an unhappy world by believing the truths that make it possible. These truths are revealed in the text and there are two of them:

1- That we have been destined and appointed to live for the praise and glory of Christ (verse 12).

2- That we have been sealed by the promised Holy Spirit (verses 13-14).

Objectives.— This sermon was designed with six objectives in view:

1- To formulate the central idea of the sermon in a proposition that could be easily recalled by the listener.

2- To preach the text in such a way that the main points could easily be recalled by the listener.

3- To preach the sermon in such a way that the listeners would sense that the preacher was as interested in them as persons as in the doctrines contained in the text.

4- To preach in such a way that the preaching becomes the bridge between God's meanings and the listener's meanings and thus provide the opportunity for a confrontation of wills and ideas.

5- To preach in such a way that the non-verbal communication would elicit a positive rather than a negative attitude toward the preacher himself.

6- To so preach the text that listeners commit themselves in faith to the two great truths of the passage and which are able to give the believer an enhanced sense of the future.

The sermon attempts to meet the first objective by a careful formulation of the central idea as a proposition clearly stated in understandable language.

The sermon attempts to meet the second objective by developing the sermonic proposition so that the main points are clearly drawn from the text.

The sermon attempts to meet the third objective by considering a human problem for which the doctrines of the text provide solution.
The sermon attempts to meet the fourth objective by revealing a contrast between the exigencies of human life and God's provisions for happiness. An approach to happiness that concentrates on the material is contrasted with an approach that concentrates on the spiritual. The challenge is to view life from the Christian God-perspective. God has acted to provide the Christian with two specific resources designed to enhance the view of the future thus leading to happiness. The contrast provides the opportunity for the confrontation of wills and meanings.

The meeting of the fifth objective is a subjective matter having to do with the preacher himself and the manner in which he approaches the task of preparing to preach. (See the meeting of objectives of Sermon #1.)

The sermon attempts to meet the last objective by demonstrating from the text that God has made provision for man's happiness and that by believing those provisions happiness is possible.

Sermon #3.--
Title.-- "A Certain Hope in an Uncertain Age"
Text.-- Ephesians 1:15-23.
Abstract.-- Based on the assumption that we are living in a most uncertain age, this sermon suggests that one of humanity's great needs is for a certain hope with respect to life and the future. The sermon begins with the thought that the moment the word "hope" is used the reference is to the future. One cannot hope for what is past, nor can he hope for what has come, only for that which is to come.

In contrast to the unbeliever whose hope is in the passing of time, the Christian's hope is in the fulfillment of time. The sermon describes contemporary man as one who has had neither hope nor fear for he believed he had the future in his own hands. Now his self-confidence
has been shattered by historical developments and it is difficult for him to hope.

There follows a brief description of the Ephesian congregation as a group of people who might have been tempted to hopelessness because of the greed, materialism, immorality, spiritualism, and unconcern of those among whom they lived. They needed a message of hope from God and so the apostle Paul wrote this passage in order that they might discover an increased appreciation and thankfulness for what they possessed in Christ.

The central idea of the sermon is formulated in the sermonic proposition which states that we can have a certain hope in an uncertain age by accepting the provisions of God which make it possible.

These provisions of God are clearly revealed in the text and there are three of them:

1- God has called us to hope (verse 18).
2- God has provided a rich inheritance for us (verse 18).
3- It is the greatness of God's power that guarantees the reception of that spiritual inheritance (verses 19-23).

Objectives.— This sermon was designed with seven objectives in view:

1- To formulate the central idea of the sermon in a proposition that could easily be recalled by the listener.
2- To preach the text in such a way that the main points could be easily recalled by the listener.
3- To preach in such a way that the attention of the listeners would be captivated and held.
4- To preach the sermon in such a way as to communicate to the listeners a personal interest in them as well as in the doctrines of the text.
5- To preach in such a way that the preaching becomes the bridge between God's meanings and the listener's meanings and thus provide the opportunity for a confrontation of wills and ideas.
6- To preach in such a way that the listener takes advantage of the difference between rate of speech and rate of thought to respond to the message being given.

7- To bring about in the listeners a faith acceptance of God's great provisions for a hopeful outlook toward the future.

The sermon attempts to meet the first objective by a careful formulation of the central idea as a proposition clearly stated.

The sermon attempts to meet the second objective by developing the proposition so that the main points are clearly drawn from the text.

The sermon attempts to meet the third objective by a careful description of the place hope plays in human life, the hopelessness of contemporary mankind, as well as an expository approach to the Biblical answer for the meeting of that need.

The sermon attempts to meet the fourth objective by considering a human need which can be met by believing the doctrines outlined in the text.

The sermon attempts to meet the fifth objective by the use of contrasts between God's meanings and what might be the listener's meanings. For example the use of the phrase: "In an uncertain and hopeless world God has set a people to stand out in stark contrast, and who will thus serve in turn to draw men to God and give Him glory." Here an opportunity for a confrontation of meanings was presented in the hopes that the listener would wrestle with his tendency to succumb to hopelessness and God's expectations. Or the use of the phrase: "Our faith consists of hope that is based on the activities of our Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary and not upon progress and the self-confidence of men." Here the opportunity was presented for the listener's meanings with respect to his confidence and hope in mankind's abilities, or his lack of such confidence, to be confronted by God's meanings in
that He views things from an all-together different perspective.

A similar encounter is possible at the point in the sermon where the material understanding of the term "rich" is contrasted with the Biblical understanding of the term.

The sermon attempts to meet the sixth objective by presenting relevant contemporary and Biblical material that would motivate thought and self-examination.

The sermon attempts to meet the last objective by demonstrating from the text that because of what Christ has done, and is doing in the heavenly sanctuary, we can have a certain hope in an uncertain age. Furthermore, that by facing the future with faith in what God has provided for us results in an unshakeable and certain hope that gives the kind of stability and courage needed to live in an uncertain age.

Sermon #4—

Title.— "A Purposeful Life in a Purposeless World"

Text.— Ephesians 2:1-10

Abstract.— This sermon begins with the story of a visit the preacher made to a hospitalized stranger who had asked for the services of an Adventist minister. The patient indicated that he detested his unhappy, joyless, attitude toward life, and expressed the feeling that he had no real purpose in life. The message then goes on to suggest that the world is full of this kind of person with little or no sense of purpose. It suggests also that mankind has reached a stage of purposelessness due in part at least to the history of thought from belief in pure reason, to the belief that knowledge comes only through experience, to the concept of evolution which paved the way for Marxism. The consequence has been a rejection of the Christian interpretation of history.

The failure of the development of human thought along these lines
has produced a disillusioned people many of whom are beginning to ask ultimate questions once again. Questions having to do with the meaning and purpose of life.

The sermon then indicates that the Ephesian congregation was no doubt tempted with a feeling of purposelessness as they lived in the midst of an extremely secular city embarked on a race to accumulate wealth and material goods. The orgies and mystical religions flourishing in Ephesus were no doubt a temptation to some of the Christians. God was concerned that His people there remain faithful and be conscious of the purpose for their existence and through the pen of Paul reminds them of their lofty purpose. By means of His Word He would remind us of the same thing.

The sermonic proposition that presents the central idea of the sermon is that a person can live a purposeful life in a purposeless world when he surrenders fully to the acts of God which make such a life possible. These acts are clearly revealed in the text and there are three of them:

1- God has given us new life (verses 1, 4).
2- God has given us a new Master (verses 2-5).
3- God has given us a new purpose (verses 6-10).

Objectives.— This sermon was designed with seven objectives in view:

1- To formulate the central idea of the sermon in a proposition that could easily be recalled by the listener.

2- To preach the text in such a way that the main points are easily recalled by the listener.

3- To preach in such a way that the preaching becomes the bridge between God's meanings and the listener's meanings and thus provide the opportunity for a confrontation of wills and ideas.

4- To preach in such a way that the listeners would feel that the preacher was as interested in them as persons as in the doctrines of the text.

5- To contemporize the ancient Biblical message by the use of
language indicating sensitivity to human need and God's concern, and that is also a language of hope.

6- To preach in such a way that the listeners feel involved in the preaching event as a shared experience.

7- To reawaken in the listener a new appreciation for the acts of God which make a purposeful life possible.

The sermon attempts to meet the first objective by the formulation of the central idea as a proposition clearly stated.

The sermon attempts to meet the second objective by developing the proposition so that the main points are clearly drawn from the text.

The sermon attempts to meet the third objective by contrasting contemporary purposelessness with the acts of God that make a purposeful life possible. The use of the words "lofty position" and "lofty purpose" were meant to provide the opportunity for the listener's conception of life as purposeless to be confronted by God's conception of the believers life as exalted in that by faith he is seated with Christ in the heavenly places and has as his great purpose in life that of bearing witness to the love, mercy, grace, and kindness of God both to the world and to the heavenly hosts.

The sermon attempts to meet the fourth objective by the consideration of a human problem for which the doctrines of the text provide solution. The doctrines are employed in a way that applies them to human rather than in a way that makes them the point of attention. Furthermore, the sermon begins with the recitation of a pastoral visit to a man in the hospital who is troubled by the problem of purposelessness, thus at the outset the listener to the sermon can identify as a person with the issue and the need that is being raised.

The sermon attempts to meet the fifth objective by the judicious use of language which indicates the preacher's sensitivity to human need and that is a language of hope. The following are examples of words
carefully chosen to indicate sensitivity: "pain," "sick," "unhappy," "bitter," "disillusioned," "joyless," "purpose," "reaching out," "shared," "concerned," "food on the table," "love," "fortify," "gave," Phrases that constitute a language of hope are: "God cared for them," "it was His concern," "you can live a purposeful life," "He chose us," "He has done that which He planned and promised," "one is able to sense the love and concern," "we have a kind and loving heavenly Father," "He loves us," "the new has come," "we have been given a lofty position," "we have a God of purpose."

The sermon attempts to meet the sixth objective by the use of questions intended to motivate active thought participation in the preaching of the sermon. It was anticipated that a careful use of questions would stimulate thought dialogue with the listeners.

The sermon attempts to meet the last objective by demonstrating from the text that God has acted in such a way that a purposeful life is possible for all His people.

Sermon #5.—

Title. — "Peace and Unity in a Hostile World"

Text. — Ephesians 2:11-22

Abstract.— The sermon begins by introducing the need for peace and unity in the world, particularly between races. The need is apparent by the hostility, bitterness, and resentment that lurks beneath the surface of contemporary existence. Deep hostility is one of the most serious problems faced by human beings today, and word pictures are drawn depicting daily evidence of such hostility. It is suggested that the human being has become unpredictable and unreliable, neighbors viewing each other as sinister and untrustworthy. This is seen most graphically in the relationship between the white and black races in America.
Hostility is common to both races and is a human problem not a race problem. The sermon puts this problem, and this need for unity and peace, into the Christian perspective.

Hostility had reared its ugly head among the membership of the Ephesian congregation. Gentile converts felt hostile toward Jewish converts, and they felt justified in its expression. It was hindering peace and unity among the people of God. Because the mission of the Church was of primary concern to the Apostle Paul he had to deal with that hostility.

The body of the sermon develops the counsel of the Word of God as it addresses all Christians of the 20th century. The proposition that embodies the central idea of the sermon is that we can experience peace and unity between the races when we accept the acts of God which make these a reality in the Church. His acts are clearly revealed in the text and there are three of them:

1. God has broken down the wall of hostility (verse 14).
2. God has made us all members of the same household (verses 19-22).
3. God has brought us together in the blood of Christ (verse 13).

Objectives.— This sermon was designed with nine objectives in view:

1. To formulate the central idea of the sermon in a proposition that could easily be recalled by the listener.
2. To preach the text in such a way that the main points are easily recalled by the listener.
3. To preach in such a way that the attention of the listener would be captivated and held.
4. To preach in such a way that the preaching becomes the bridge between God’s meanings and the listener’s meanings, thus providing an opportunity for a confrontation of wills and ideas.
5.- To preach in such a way that the listeners would sense that the preacher was equally interested in them as persons as in the doctrines of the text.

6.- To preach in such a way that the listener would feel the sermon was directed to him personally as well as to the whole congregation.

7.- To preach in such a way that the listeners take advantage of the difference between rate of speech and rate of thought to respond to the message being given.

8.- To preach in such a way that the non-verbal communication would elicit a positive rather than negative attitude toward the preacher himself.

9.- To bring about a positive change of attitude in the listeners with respect to the relationship between white and black members of the Church.

The sermon attempts to meet the first objective by the formulation of the central idea as a proposition clearly stated.

The sermon attempts to meet the second objective by developing the proposition so that the main points are clearly drawn from the text.

The sermon attempts to meet the third objective by considering a problem felt to be most relevant to the situation in which the Benton Harbor congregation lives. It was hoped that attention would be captivated and held by taking the position that it was not a race problem but a human problem. Word pictures were used to describe the nature of existing hostility. It was also hoped that attention would be held by the expository approach in discovering how God views the situation as His view is revealed in the preaching text. Furthermore, it was anticipated that attention would be held by indicating that the sermon would not take sides, make no recriminations, place no blame. Use of quotations from the writings of Ellen G. White were carefully used to support the message of the text also as a means of holding attention.

The fourth objective was met by implying that a contradiction exists between the way the listener views race relations, even in the
Church, and the way God views them. The very consideration of the problem provided an opportunity for a confrontation between God's ideas and will and those of the listeners. It was indicated that while the sermon was anchored in the human situation, that it understood the nature of the problems faced in the relationship between the races, it was also anchored in the Word of God which had something specific to say about the situation. The idea or thought that racial hostility and/or prejudice is justified was confronted by the Biblical idea that such hostility and/or prejudice is sin and from God's point of view has no basis for existence in the fellowship of His Church. The "reality" of the human situation came in contact with the "reality" as God sees it. The stark contrast between God's plan for His Church and man's life on earth gave opportunity for a confrontation of meanings.

It might be well to point out here that while preaching is the bridge between the human situation and God's revelation in the written Word, it is God who initiates the confrontation with the purpose of overruling the will and ideas of men with His ideas and will. He expects change in attitude and behaviour. Thus there can be no hesitancy on the part of the preacher to say "thus saith the Lord."

The sermon attempts to meet the fifth objective by considering a human problem for which the doctrines of the text present solution. The sermon's recognition of the human situation indicates personal interest on the part of the preacher, but his refusal to compromise doctrine in order to salve conscience or ease responsibility also indicates the preacher's interest in doctrine. The implication was clear that change was expected on the human side rather than on the side of Biblical doctrine. That in itself constitutes a person-centered approach.
This sermon tries to meet this objective more implicitly than explicitly.

The sermon attempts to meet the sixth objective by the use of the inclusive "we" intended to draw the listener into dialogue, combined with a more direct address "you." In this sermon especially it was the preacher's intention to indicate that he was addressing both individuals as to responsibility regarding the issue, and the congregation as a whole due to the fact that the Benton Harbor congregation, which at the time of the study had only one member of the black race, worshipped in a sanctuary located in a community at least 75% black. Thus they faced a collective responsibility and while the intention was to draw individual listeners into dialogue it was also the intention to dialogue with the whole congregation as a unit of responsibility. For this reason the use of the inclusive "we" is most pronounced in this sermon.

The sermon attempts to meet the seventh objective by presenting relevant contemporary and Biblical material that would motivate thought and self-examination. The sermon was not meant to be entertaining but provocative. A rhetorical question was employed at the point in the sermon where human prejudice and God's will were most likely to confront each other. A question not demanding verbal response as much as internal response. The question: "Did God really say that you were all members of the same household?"

The meeting of the eighth objective is a subjective matter having to do with the preacher himself and the way he approaches his task of preparing to preach. The concern here is with preparing the preacher rather than with preparing the sermon, that he be a man of faith who trusts the written revelation of God, who listens to the text, and who is totally
committed to his task and fulfills that task in a bold and uncompromising manner.

The sermon attempts to meet the last objective by demonstrating from the text that both blacks and whites have in fact been reconciled to God and to one another by the blood of Christ, and that from God's point of view there are no barriers between people who have been redeemed, they are members of His body and thus of the same household.

Sermon #6.—
Title.— "Confidence in the Church in a Critical Age"
Text.— Ephesians 3:7-13
Abstract.— This sermon begins with a description of the critical attitude prevailing in the present age, and which has had an effect on the Church. The pessimism, skepticism, and criticism which is a part of contemporary existence has its effects on the life of the Church and members begin to look critically at their Church and pick it apart from every angle.

The sermon illustrates from the world of religious art how the Church's conception of Christ has undergone change down through the centuries. The troubled and meditative Christ of the 2nd century portrayal became the stern, forbidding, Christ of the 11th century. The 16th century Christ was depicted as weeping and spattered with blood, whereas today's Christ is curley-headed and rosy-cheeked with a benevolent and tolerant smile on His face, the ideal boy-friend.

The past fifteen years has witnessed a deluge of books published critical of the Christian Church and one of the consequences has been the undermining of confidence in the Church as a useful and necessary institution in today's world.

The sermon proceeds to suggest that perhaps the members of the
Ephesian congregation were losing heart and beginning to think that Christ's cause was a failure. Paul was imprisoned at Rome, his work seemed to be at an end. They must have felt weak and impotent surrounded as they were by a world not yet evangelized. Perhaps they questioned the wisdom of God in the establishment of Christian congregations as instruments of evangelism.

The sermon then indicates that the imprisoned Apostle felt differently about it. His feelings are summarized in the sermonic proposition that we can have confidence in the Church in a critical age when we realize and trust its divine purposes. The divine purposes for the Church are clearly revealed in the text and there are three of them:

1- To preach the unsearchable riches of Christ (verse 8).
2- To reveal God's plan for the ages (verse 9).
3- To make known the wisdom of God (verses 10-12).

Objectives. This sermon was designed with five objectives in view:

1- To formulate the central idea of the sermon in a proposition easy to recall by the listener.
2- To preach the text in such a way that the main points are easily recalled by the listener.
3- To preach in such a way that the listeners attention would be captivated and held.
4- To preach in such a way that the listener would feel that the sermon was directed to him personally as well as to the whole congregation.
5- To bring about positive and hopeful attitudes toward the Church and its mission in the world.

The sermon attempts to meet the first objective by the formulation of the central idea in a proposition clearly stated.
The sermon attempts to meet the second objective by developing the proposition so that the main points are clearly drawn from the text.

The sermon attempts to meet the third objective by illustrating from the text that the purpose of the Church goes beyond the salvation of a single individual. The Church is a part of the revelation of God's wisdom to the heavenly hosts in that the faithfulness and victory of the Church constitutes a sermon preached to the angelic congregation. The witness of the Church will have its final effect on the angels in order that they too might realize the great wisdom of God in creating the Church as His instrument of evangelism.

The sermon attempts to meet the fourth objective by the use of the inclusive "we" intended to draw the listener into dialogue, together with direct address in the use of "you." It was the preacher's intention in this sermon to address the congregation as a whole but to do so in such a way that the listener recognized his personal responsibility as an individual member of the Church.

The sermon attempts to meet the fifth objective by demonstrating from the text that the Church has a most positive role to play in the world and that confidence in the Church is dependent upon realizing its purpose and trusting that purpose.

**Sermon #7.**

**Title.** "Strength to Face the Future"

**Text.** Ephesians 3:14-21

**Abstract.** So far the sermons in the series have raised the issue of the need for faith to face the future and have presented the Biblical prescription for acquiring that kind of faith. This sermon constitutes a transition from the more theological portion of Paul's letter to the Ephesians to the more practical portion.
The sermon begins by suggesting that faith is not enough to face the future. Spiritual strength and fortitude is needed also. It continues by discussing Paul's prayer as it is recorded in the text and prayed by him in prison. He prays for the inner strength he knew the believers in Ephesus would need if they were to fulfill God's purposes for the Church in the world. This spiritual strength is essential because the task of the Church is not without risk and hazard. To stand and withstand, great faith, great insight, great conviction would be required. God's Church must be composed of people of hope, of spiritual experience, of firm trust that God will fulfill His Word. The Church may face a formidable task but not one that is impossible or insurmountable.

The sermon suggests that while Paul may have felt powerless and unable to accomplish anything of significant value due to his imprisonment, his act of praying demonstrates his faith in the spiritual realities of which he has been speaking in the letter. Imprisonment gave him the opportunity to demonstrate his faith. In praying he received the strength to carry on his ministry though jailed.

The central idea is presented in a proposition stating that we can receive strength to face the future by adopting Paul's prayer petitions as our own. There are three of them:

1- That Christ may dwell in our hearts (verse 17).
2- That the love of Christ may be fully known by us (verses 17-18).
3- That we may be filled with all the fullness of God (verse 19).

Objectives:— This sermon was designed with three objectives in view:

1- To formulate the central idea of the sermon in a proposition easy to recall by the listener.
To preach the text in such a way that the main points are easily recalled by the listener.

3- To bring about commitment to prayer as the means of receiving spiritual strength.

The sermon attempts to meet the first objective by a careful formulation of the central idea as a proposition clearly stated.

The sermon attempts to meet the second objective by developing the proposition so that the main points are clearly drawn from the text.

The sermon attempts to meet the third objective by demonstrating from the text that strength to face the future comes by way of the indwelling Christ, by way of knowing the love of Christ, and by being filled with all the fullness of God. It further demonstrates from the text that these come by means of prayer so that the virtues and perfection of Christ may be imparted to His people.

Sermon #6.

Title.— "The Worthy Life"

Text.— Ephesians 4:1-10

Abstract.— This sermon is based on a text which begins the practical portion of the Ephesian letter.

The sermon begins by reminding the listeners that three times in the letter Paul refers to his imprisonment. Not for the purpose of soliciting undue sympathy or to diminish the hope and faith of the Ephesian believers, but to remind them that faith can be a victorious element in life though one may be in prison. It was also meant to illustrate that even though Paul's ministry was circumscribed God's truth would still be proclaimed and would triumph by means of the faithful sacrificing Church. His imprisonment should impress his readers with the seriousness of his words. He suffers for the sake of Christ.
The sermon suggests that in view of the grace received in Christ, of the imparted new life, of the union of the members of the Church, of the position of the believer in Christ and the purpose of the Church in the world, in view of the hope they have for the future, believers are called to live a certain kind of life. It is a life that is as lofty in principle and ideal, in ethic and moral, as the doctrines on which it is based. It is not a life in contradiction to the Lord's life. It is a life that is consistent with the believer's lofty position in Christ and the Church's lofty purpose in the world. Because the believer has been given a lofty position and a lofty purpose, he has also been given a lofty life to live.

The calling to that life has been articulated in chapters 1-3 of Ephesians and in the first seven sermons of this series. Sermon #8 considers the nature of the life that is worthy of the call because it is not only the doctrines that have been given, but the very quality of life itself.

The central idea of the sermon is presented in a proposition stating that a study of certain words and statements in the text will help to clarify the nature of the life that is worthy. We are to study:

1- That we are to live with all LOWLINESS and MEEKNESS (verse 2).
2- That we are to live with PATIENCE (verse 2).
3- That we are to live FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE (verse 2).
4- That we are to live EAGER TO MAINTAIN THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE (verse 3).

Objectives.— This sermon was designed with three objectives in view:

1- To formulate the central idea of the sermon in a proposition easy to recall by the listener.
2- To preach the text in such a way that the main points are easily recalled by the listener.

3- To bring about commitment to the kind of life revealed in the text.

The sermon attempts to meet the first objective by the careful formulation of the central idea as a proposition clearly stated.

The sermon attempts to meet the second objective by developing the proposition so that the main points are clearly drawn from the text.

The sermon attempts to meet the third objective by demonstrating from the text that there is a giveness to the kind of life God's people are called upon to live. This given life is as lofty as the doctrines on which it is based, is not a contradiction to the truths believers confess, and is a life of hope. The sermon concludes the series demonstrating that with a happy life, a certain hope, a purposeful life, peace and unity in the Church, with the inner strength that comes from God, and by living a life worthy of the truths upon which it is based, we can have faith to face the future.

Opportunities for dialogue

Two dialogue sessions were planned, one following the fifth sermon and one following the last sermon. The fifth sermon was chosen because it dealt with a problem most relevant to the Benton Harbor congregation, namely, race relations, and a lively discussion was anticipated. The last sermon was chosen because it was hoped that an evaluation of the entire series might be helpful.

The dialogue sessions were held in the junior room of the church plant and were conducted with the group sitting in a circle of chairs. Each session was recorded and transcripts made which can be found in the appendix to this report.
The dialogical discussion leader was Dr. Louis Venden, professor of preaching at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, who served also as Project Director for this study.

General Hypotheses

It should be noted that the term "Hypotheses" is used in a broad sense referring to that which was expected to occur rather than in the narrow sense of a statement to be proved or disproved.

The expectations with respect to the responses of Group A and B to the actual preaching of the sermons are listed below. These expectations hypothesize that:

1- Group A would be more highly motivated to participate regularly in the project than Group B.

2- That Group A would exhibit a greater ability to state the central idea of the sermons in their own words than Group B.

3- That Group A would be better able to recall the main points of the sermons than Group B.

4- That both Group A and B would reveal positive attitudinal change as a result of having heard the sermons, and that the change would be more apparent in Group A.

5- That Group A would reveal greater understanding that responsibility for success of a sermon is shared equally by listener and preacher than Group B.

6- That both Group A and B would feel that sermons were directed equally to individuals and to the whole congregation.

7- That both Group A and B would score highest in feeling that the preacher was equally interested in the listeners as persons and in doctrine, and second highest in feeling he was more interested in listeners than in doctrine.

8- That both Group A and B would not find it difficult to keep full attention on the sermons.

9- That Group A would score higher than Group B in feeling they were making some response during the preaching of the sermons.

10- That Group A would score higher than Group B in feeling that they shared in the preaching of the sermons.
11- That Group A would score higher than Group B in being motivated to examine their ideas and wills to see if they were in harmony with God's ideas and will.

12- That both Group A and B would exhibit a positive rather than a negative attitude toward the preacher based on non-verbal communication factors.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to:

1- Describe the factors which contributed to the weakness of this study:
   a. Study conducted in only one congregation.
   b. Interchange of ideas and information was possible between Treatment and Control groups.
   c. Lack of isolation of Treatment and Control groups made possible additional sources of influence with respect to final results.
   d. Mortality rate in respondent participation.

2- Describe the procedures followed in the implementation of the project:
   a. The planning of the basic project design.
   b. Selection of bibliographical material.
   c. Reading and research in the literature.
   d. Development of study instruments.
   e. Solicitation of congregational and group participation.
   f. Preparation and delivery of the sermons.
   g. Providing the opportunity for two dialogical feedback sessions with Treatment group.

3- Present the twelve hypotheses upon which the study was based.
These hypotheses, expectations, were not intended to be proved or disproved but to state what was expected to occur as a result of having heard the sermons.

The results of the project described in this chapter are presented and evaluated in the following chapter.
CHAPTER IV

PROJECT RESULTS AND EVALUATION

This chapter contains four major divisions: (1) Results and evaluation of Instrument #1, (2) Results and evaluation of Instrument #2, (3) Results and evaluation of Instruments #3 - #10, and (4) Results and evaluation of dialogical feedback sessions.

Instrument #1

The first instrument was designed to survey the entire congregation to ascertain attitudes toward preachers methods and sermons. The report is divided into two categories: (1) Results, and (2) Evaluation.

Results

Statements are numbered according to their position in the instrument and include the numerical response beneath the scale. Respondents were asked to indicate if they STRONGLY AGREE (SA), AGREE (A), were UNCERTAIN (U), DISAGREE (D), or STRONGLY DISAGREE (SD).

Results are grouped according to major and minor categories: (1) Attitude toward preacher's (a) Use of the Bible, (b) Use of quotations from the writings of Ellen G. White, (c) Style, and (d) Non-verbal communication; (2) Attitude toward sermons on the basis of (a) Kinds of sermons preferred, and (b) Use of illustrations in sermons.

Attitude toward preacher's

Use of the Bible.— Two statements in the instrument pertained to this category:
I have hardly ever heard a Seventh-day Adventist minister say something in his sermons that was inconsistent with the Bible.

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I frequently hear statements made by Seventh-day Adventist preachers that I cannot find support for in the Bible.

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Results indicate that 39% of the respondents strongly agree that they had never heard a Seventh-day Adventist minister preach inconsistently with the Bible. Fifty (50) per cent agreed. This represents 89% of the responses.

Thirty-nine (39) per cent indicated strongly that they did not frequently hear statements made by such preachers for which there is no Biblical support, and 36.6% supported them. This represents 75.6% of the responses.

Use of quotations from Ellen G. White.— Five statements pertained to this category:

16- Sermons should quote frequently from Ellen G. White.

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17- Most quotations from Ellen G. White used in sermons are taken out of context to support a pet idea.

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18- Most quotations from Ellen White used in sermons are of a negative rather than a positive character.

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19- Because Ellen White quotes are so frequently misused they should be avoided entirely in sermons.

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20- Quotations from non-Biblical sources should never be used in sermons.

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Results in this category indicate that 47.6% of respondents felt that sermons should quote frequently from Ellen White sources, 25.7% disagreed, and 26.6% were uncertain. Fifty-four and three/tenths (54.3) per cent did not feel that such quotations were taken out of context to support a pet idea; 33.9% were uncertain. Fifty-eight and six/tenths (58.6) per cent did not feel that such quotations are of a negative character and 25% were uncertain. Ninety-three and eight/tenths (93.8) per cent did not feel that Ellen White quotations should be completely avoided in sermons even though quotes are sometimes misused. Eighty-one and seven/tenths (81.7) per cent felt that quotes from non-Biblical sources should be used in sermons.

**Style.** Five statements pertained to this category:

3- I find the mannerisms of some preachers make it difficult for me to concentrate on what they are saying.

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9- I like preachers who tell lots of stories when they preach.

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23- The preacher should speak directly and forcefully.

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25- A preacher should stay in the pulpit while preaching rather than move about the platform.

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26- A preacher should never raise his voice while preaching.

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SA & A & U & D & SD \\
(1) & (2) & (9) & (65) & (28) \\
\end{array}
\]

Results reveal the following percentages: 46.7% of the respondents found the mannerisms of some preachers inhibited their concentration, and 34.5% indicated they were not bothered. Thirty-eight and four/tenths (38.4) percent liked preachers that tell lots of stories in sermons, 35.5% did not appreciate this, 25.9% were uncertain. Eighty-six and six/tenths (86.6) percent felt the preacher should speak directly and forcefully. Fifty-four and eight/tenths (54.8) per cent did not feel the preacher should restrict himself to the pulpit while 21.1% felt he should; 24.3% were uncertain. Eighty-eight and five/tenths (88.5) per cent indicated an appreciation for the preacher who speaks loudly and with emphasis.

Non-verbal communication.— Four statements pertained to this category:

21- The preacher should always be optimistic in his message.

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(13) & (38) & (25) & (26) & (1) \\
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22- The preacher should always be happy in his presentation.

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SA & A & U & D & SD \\
(12) & (39) & (19) & (34) & (0) \\
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24- A minister should never preach on controversial subjects.

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SA & A & U & D & SD \\
(3) & (2) & (12) & (63) & (25) \\
\end{array}
\]

27- The preacher should not expect the listener to give him full attention.

\[
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SA & A & U & D & SD \\
(2) & (7) & (12) & (43) & (40) \\
\end{array}
\]

Results reveal the following: 49.5% felt the preacher should
always be optimistic in his message and 26.2% felt he need not be, while 24% were uncertain. Forty-nine and three/tenths (49.3) per cent felt the preacher should always be happy in his presentation and 32.6% felt he need not be, while 18.2% were uncertain. Eighty-three and eight/tenths (83.8) per cent indicated their belief that the preacher should not avoid controversial subjects. Seventy-nine and eight/tenths (79.8) per cent supported the preacher's expectations that his listeners give him full attention.

Attitudes toward sermons

Kinds of sermons preferred.—— Eight statements pertained to this category:

4—Sermons that focus on the application to life of a single idea from Scripture are more useful than sermons presenting many ideas.

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10—I like sermons that are short and to the point.

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11—Sermons should be no longer than thirty minutes.

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12—Every sermon should be followed by an altar appeal.

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13—A sermon should contain many Bible quotations in order for it to be a Biblical sermon.

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14—We do not hear enough sermons related to current events.

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15- I feel that we hear too much about the second coming of Christ.

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Results reveal the following: 77.5% of the respondents appreciate sermons focusing on the application to life of a single idea from Scripture as opposed to many ideas while 21.6% were uncertain. Fifty-seven and nine/tenths (57.9) per cent preferred sermons dealing with life situations rather than dealing with doctrines, and 21.4% were uncertain. Eighty-nine and three/tenths (89.3) per cent preferred sermons that are short and to the point, and 65.4% felt sermons should be no longer than thirty minutes. Seventy-seven and five/tenths (77.5) per cent did not feel that every sermon should be followed by an altar appeal. Fifty-one and eight/tenths (51.8) per cent were of the opinion that many quotes from the Bible did not make a sermon Biblical, 26.4% felt they did, and 21.6% were uncertain. Fifty (50) per cent felt they did not hear enough sermons related to current events, 30% felt they did, and 20% were uncertain. Eighty-four and nine/tenths (84.9) per cent did not feel they hear too many sermons about the second coming of Christ.

Use of illustrations.— Three statements pertained to this category:

6- I find that illustrations are used too frequently by many preachers.

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7- I find that illustrations are not used frequently enough by most preachers.

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8- Illustrations used in sermons are very helpful to me.

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</table>
Results reveal the following percentages: 79.2% of the respondents did not feel illustrations are used too frequently; 49.5% felt that illustrations are not used enough whereas 38.4% were uncertain. Ninety-one and seven/tenths (91.7) per cent indicated that sermon illustrations were very helpful to them.

**Evaluation**

Based on the results of the instrument, and utilizing the same major and minor categories as above, the following evaluation is possible.

**Attitude toward preacher's**

**Use of the Bible.** — The above data seems to indicate that the Benton Harbor congregation has a very positive and trusting attitude toward Seventh-day Adventist ministers in their use of the Bible in preaching.

**Use of quotations from Ellen G. White.** — The data indicates that the Benton Harbor congregation has a very positive attitude toward the use of Ellen White quotations in sermons, and that they appreciate the positive character of her counsel. They do not feel that such quotes have been misused—to any large degree and have confidence in the Adventist ministers handling of this material. There exists a strong feeling that sermons preached in this church should not hesitate to use Ellen White material, but this attitude extends also to all non-Biblical sources. Thus the congregation is not narrow-minded and is eager to hear information from a wide variety of extra-Biblical sources including the writings of Ellen G. White.

**Style.** — The data seems to indicate that there are more members of the congregation who are affected by non-verbal communication factors
than are not, but the difference is slight. The congregation as a whole appreciates preachers who use illustrations and prefer their use to stories. They appreciate preachers who speak directly and forcefully, are physically active in their presentation, and who speak loudly and with emphasis. Thus it would appear that they prefer an active rather than a passive style of preaching.

Non-verbal communication.— The data appears to indicate that non-verbal communication factors are important to this congregation, that the congregation is very much aware that they carry some of the responsibility for the success of the preaching they hear in that listening is as important as speaking, and that a high level of maturity is present in that they are willing to be confronted with controversial subjects.

Attitude toward sermons

Kinds of sermons preferred.— The data would seem to indicate that the Benton Harbor congregation appreciates being confronted with only one central idea in a sermon, and that focuses on the application of a Biblical idea to a life situation. This would appear to indicate that they are interested in knowing how the Biblical doctrine is related to their actual living experience, and they want to participate in a vital connection between the ancient Biblical Word and contemporary needs. It would seem that this congregation would appreciate preaching as a shared experience in which the preaching itself constitutes the bridge between the two.

It is apparent that this congregation is very much interested in how the doctrines of the Bible relate to current events, especially in light of the second coming of Christ.
Use of illustrations.— The data seems to indicate that the Benton Harbor congregation does not feel that use of illustrations can be overdone. They are a vital element in their appreciation of preaching. On the basis of the above data a general evaluation is possible. It would appear that this congregation is one that appreciates the preaching office, is eager to participate in that office, and would constitute a responsive audience for the preaching of the Word of God. It would seem to be a congregation in whose fellowship the minister would enjoy preaching.

Instrument #2

This instrument was designed to measure attitudinal change on the part of individual respondents participating in Treatment Group A and Control Group B. Participants were asked to respond to four hypothetical open-ended situations. The same instrument was used by both groups prior to and at the conclusion of the sermon series.

This section of the chapter is divided into three categories: (1) Results, (2) Evaluation, and (3) Responsibility for what is received from a sermon.

Results

The consideration of the results of this instrument are divided into three sub-categories: (1) Situations and criteria for interpretation, (2) Method of interpretation of responses, and (3) Reporting of responses.

Situations and criteria

Situation #1.— Situation #1 was composed in relation to sermons #1 - #3 with the expectation that attitudinal change would be measured
as a result of having heard these three sermons. The situation was as follows:

John is a successful young executive aged 35, and is married to a beautiful and talented wife, Jane, aged 32. Both have college degrees, are talented and capable, and are highly respected in the community. They are very successful people, own their own $50,000.00 home in a fashionable suburb and have two children, Tom, aged 12, and Debra, age 8, both of whom are bright and attractive. They are considered by friends as an ideal family who have everything going for them and a bright future ahead.

Tragedy strikes. In a violent car accident John is left totally paralyzed and unable to work. Jane is disfigured and has lapsed into a deep emotional depression from which no one seems able to retrieve her. The children too, suffer the trauma of their parents illnesses and are much worried about their health, their finances, and the future.

You pay a visit to John in the hospital. What would you say to him in counsel?

In the response to this situation, it was determined that the five following criteria would measure a positive and hopeful counsel:

1- Sensitivity exhibited in a sympathetic and understanding approach to the situation.

2- Faith that God is involved redemptively in human circumstances.

3- Hope with respect to the future.

4- Ability to share and apply the facts of faith to the human situation.

5- Choice of language which would accomplish the above.

Situation \#2.-- Situation \#2 was composed in relation to sermon \#5. Because the problem of race relations is acute in Benton Harbor, Michigan it was expected that this sermon would cause attitudinal change that could be measured. The hypothetical situation follows:

Jack Jones and his wife Samantha have recently been seeking for meaning to life. They found it in a mutual conversion experience in which both of them have been radiantly transformed by Jesus Christ. They are looking for a Church home and begin to attend services at First Church. First Church is known for its influence
and prestige in the community and has attracted some of the best and most prominent people to its membership. It can be classified as an upper middle class congregation. The Jones' are black.

Believing themselves to be community minded and free of prejudice, the leaders of First Church kindly, and in Christian love, suggest to Jack and Samantha that while they are certainly most welcome at First Church, perhaps they ought to visit other Churches a bit more before they decide on a Church home. As a matter of fact, they might even find themselves much more at ease and at home in the fellowship of Bethel Church on the north side. Bethel is a predominantly black Church with a black minister.

How do you feel about the counsel given to Jack and Samantha?

If you feel there is a more appropriate counsel to be given, suggest what it might be.

It was determined that the five following criteria would assist in measuring a proper Christian attitude free of prejudice and hostility and that respondents would be:

1- **Disturbed** by the obvious prejudiced counsel.

2- **Sympathetic** to the spiritual and social needs of the black couple.

3- **Willing** to accept them without prejudice as equal members of the household of faith.

4- **Eager** to have them as members.

5- **Committed** to doing all in their power to make the couple feel at home and welcome at First Church.

**Situation #3.---** Situation #3 was composed in relation to sermon #6 which dealt with the need for confidence in the Church. The hypothetical situation composed was:

Advent Church on second street has become the talk of the town. After thirty years of evangelism and growth, to say nothing of achieving the highest respect of the community, it has suddenly become riddled with strife and contention. The dissatisfaction of its members has resulted in traumatic congregational meetings, feelings are raw on the surface, suspicion and distrust have become widespread among the members. The consequence has been a drastic drop in worship attendance with an accompanying dangerous slump in offerings. At least
fifteen families have transferred to other Churches.

The very program and mission of the Church is in jeopardy. Most of the members have been deeply shocked to think that such a thing could happen to them after thirty years of harmonious work and witness. There is a courageous attempt being made to continue to worship and serve.

How would such a situation cause you to feel about the Church and its mission?

What do you think could be done to help the situation?

Five criteria were determined that would assist in measuring attitudinal change. It was anticipated that respondents would reveal:

1- **Sadness** that such a thing could happen.
2- **Repentance** as a member of the Body of Christ.
3- **Reaffirmation** of faith in the institution and mission of the Church.
4- **Commitment** to that mission.
5- **Witness** to a positive and hopeful attitude toward the future worship and work of the Church.

**Situation #4.**— Situation #4 was composed in relation to the series as a whole. It was anticipated that attitudinal change in the direction of increased faith and hope with respect to facing the future would result from having heard the series of sermons. This was to be tested by the following hypothetical situation:

The world we live in is experiencing crisis after crisis. Political crises. Economic crises. Moral crises. Family crises. Giant airliner crashes with hundreds dead. Unemployment is increasing. There is an energy crisis effecting all of us. Crime and drug addiction are on the increase. There is trouble and strife all over the world. People feel uncertain.

All of this is part of our daily experience, as well as personal crises that each individual faces from time to time.

How do you feel about the present world and/or your own life situation?
Again five criteria would assist in measuring attitudinal change. It was anticipated that respondents would reveal:

1- **Awareness** of the trauma of the world situation.

2- **Optimism** about the future in terms of the second coming of Christ.

3- **Cautious** about making predictions.

4- **Dedication** to the kind of life that will best prepare for the future.

5- **Determination** to participate in the mission of the Church in this age.

Method of interpretation

It was mandatory that a method of applying and interpreting the responses be established. A method that would eliminate all possibility of evaluations being made by the interpreter that would prejudice results.

Each instrument was coded so that it could be later identified, but not while the responses were being evaluated, and matched with respect to pre-test and post-test following the application of the above criteria to the responses. In this way the possibility of identifying any instrument as being from the pre-test or post-test or from Group A or B was eliminated.

Criteria formulated for the situations were then applied to each individual response. A scale of value from 1 to 3 was used, 1 being lowest and 3 the highest possible score.

It was possible to match and compare the pre-test and post-test scores of four participants of Group A and five participants of Group B. These nine were the only group members who took both the pre and post test.
Reporting of responses

Group A.— The reader will recall that it was expected that both Group A and B would reveal positive attitudinal change as a result of having heard the sermons, and that the change would be more apparent in Group A. Table #1 depicts the results of applying the criteria to the responses of Group A.

Table #1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondant</th>
<th>Situations</th>
<th>Pre-test Score</th>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A total score of 240 was possible for the four members of Group A on both the pre-test and post-test. The data reveals that 119 was scored on the pre-test by this group, and 166 on the post-test. This represents 49.5% of possible score on the pre-test and 69.1% on the post-test.

Each respondent demonstrated positive attitudinal change as a result of having heard the sermons with the exception of respondent #1, situation #2, and respondent #2, situation #1 who exhibited a negative change. Respondant #2, reveals no change in attitude in relation to situation #3, and respondent #4 reveals no change in attitude in relation to situation #1.

Group B. — Table #2 depicts the results of applying the criteria to the responses of Group B.

A total score of 300 was possible for the five members of Group B on both the pre-test and post-test. The data reveals that 135 was scored on the pre-test and 199 on the post-test. This represents 45% of possible score on the pre-test and 66.3% on the post-test.

Each respondent of Group B demonstrated positive attitudinal change with the exception of respondent #4 who revealed negative change in relation to situation #1 and no change at all in relation to situation #2. Respondant #5 demonstrated no change at all in relation to situations #1 – #2 and #3.

The data indicates that on the whole positive attitudinal change occurred in both Group A and B.

Evaluation

Group A

The data indicates that the greatest attitudinal change on the
Tabulation of Group B Responses to Pre-test and Post-test Measuring Attitudinal Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Situations</th>
<th>Pre-test Score</th>
<th>Post-test Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
part of members of Group A occurred in relation to sermon #5 that dealt with the problem of race relations, and with the series as a whole in terms of a more hopeful outlook toward the future. The data further indicates that the series as a whole had a greater effect than individual sermons.

Group B

The data indicates that the greatest attitudinal change on the part of members of Group B occurred in relation to sermon #6 which dealt with the need for confidence in the Church and commitment to its mission, and least with respect to sermon #5 that dealt with race relations. The overall impact of the entire series of sermons was apparently greater on Group B than Group A.

Responsibility for what is received from a sermon

Instrument #1 and Instrument #2 contained a question designed to discover how the congregation as a whole felt about placing the responsibility for what is received from sermons. The congregational response was to be compared with the responses of Group A and B with respect to the pre-test and post-test. The question posed was:

Some individuals feel that what and how much they obtain from a sermon is solely the responsibility of the preacher. Other individuals feel that what and how much they obtain is entirely dependent upon them. There are also many positions between these extremes.

ON THE FOLLOWING SCALE YOU WILL FIND AT ONE SIDE THE WORDS "ENTIRELY PREDACHER" AND ON THE OTHER SIDE THE WORDS "ENTIRELY YOU."

WHERE DO YOU PLACE THE RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN ENTIRELY PREACHER AND ENTIRELY YOU?

Entirely
Preacher / / / / / /

Entirely
You
This category of the report is divided into two sub-categories: (1) Results, and (2) Evaluation.

Results

Table #3 indicates the results of the question as answered by the whole congregation using Instrument #1. Table #4 indicates the results of the question as answered by Group A and B on both the pre-test and post-test utilizing Instrument #2.

Table #3

Congregation's Opinion About Responsibility for Preaching Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entirely Preacher</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>59</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Entirely Listener</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table #4

Group Opinion About Responsibility for Preaching Success

Group Pre-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entirely Preacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Entirely Listener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group Post-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entirely Preacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Entirely Listener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation

Tabulation of responses indicate that no appreciable change took place with respect to responsibility for what the listener receives from a sermon. Both Group A and B felt that responsibility is shared equally by preacher and listener. In this they reflected the general feeling of the congregation. The only difference between Group A and B took place with respect to the pre-test. The responses indicate a slightly higher percentage of the members of Group A indicating belief in a shared responsibility. However, the difference is so slight as to be insignificant.

It would appear, therefore, that the training sessions with Group A did not serve to affect this opinion. Both groups continued to reflect the opinion already held by the congregation prior to the project.

Instruments #3 - #10

These eight instruments were designed for use by Group A and B following the preaching of each sermon. This section of the report is divided into three categories: (1) The sermons, (2) The listeners, and (3) The preacher.

Sermons

Three questions were designed to acquire data related to the sermons. In this sub-section data is presented as follows: (1) Respondants feelings as to whether the sermons were directed to individuals or to the congregation. (2) Respondants feelings as to whether or not the preaching constituted a bridge between God's revelation and life situations. (3) Respondants feelings concerning the language and organization of the sermons. Each of these is divided thus: (A) Question, (B) Results, and (C) Evaluation.
To individuals or to congregation

**Question.**—The question designed to acquire data regarding respondents feelings as to whether the sermons were directed to individuals or to the congregation was included in the instruments used following the first, fifth, and sixth sermons. The question reads:

Do you feel that today's sermon emphasized a message directed to individuals or to the congregation as a whole?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH AN X

- [ ] Only to individuals.
- [ ] More to individuals than to congregation.
- [ ] Equally to individuals and congregation.
- [ ] More to congregation.
- [ ] Only to whole congregation.

**Results.**—The data is reported in Table #5.

**Table #5**

Data Pertaining to Whether Sermons Were Directed to Individuals or Congregation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th></th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>only to individuals</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>more to individuals than to congregation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>equally to individuals and congregation</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>more to congregation than to individuals</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>only to congregation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation.**—The data indicates that the highest percentage of respondents of both Group A and B felt that the sermons they heard were
directed equally to individuals and congregation. The next highest percentage felt the sermons were directed more to individuals than to the congregation. There was no appreciable difference between the responses of Group A and B.

Preaching as bridge

Question.— The question designed to acquire data related to respondents' feelings as to whether or not the preaching of the sermons constituted a bridge between God's revelation and life situations was included in the instruments used following the first five sermons. The question reads:

During the preaching of today's sermon, did you feel as though the preacher was more interested in you as a person, or more interested in the doctrines contained in the sermon?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH AN X

____ More interested in doctrines.

____ Equally interested in me and in doctrines.

____ More interested in me.

Results.— The data is reported in Table #6.

Table #6

Data Related to Preaching as a Bridge Between God's Revelation and Life Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>More interested in doctrines</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equally interested in listener and doctrines</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More interested in listeners</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation. — The theology of preaching found in chapter one of this project report predicates that in order to communicate the Gospel to contemporary man the language of the sermon must be directed toward the listener in the pew rather than toward an objective doctrine. Doctrine is a tool of communication. Important also is the manner in which the preacher projects himself as a Christian man who is concerned about the life situations of those to whom he speaks. Furthermore, the definition of preaching which concludes the first chapter indicates that preaching must be as concerned about the given doctrines as it is about the listeners and their life situations.

The data reveals that both Group A and B scored highest in feeling that the preaching of the sermons expressed equal interest, on the part of the preacher, in listeners and in doctrines. A higher percentage of respondents from Group A than from Group B indicated their feeling that greater interest was shown in listeners than doctrines. This may reflect a closer relationship between the preacher and the members of the Treatment group in that they worked together in the training sessions.

Language and Organization

Question. — The question designed to acquire data related to whether or not the respondents found the language of the sermons easy to understand and the thoughts organized in a natural sequence was included in the instruments used following the first and fourth sermons. The question reads:

The language used in a sermon, and the manner in which it is used, can both help or hinder an individual in understanding the message of the sermon.

BY CIRCLING THE NUMBER TO THE LEFT OF THE STATEMENT. INDICATE THE STATEMENT THAT BEST DESCRIBES HOW THE LANGUAGE AND ORGANIZATION OF TODAY'S SERMON AFFECTED YOU.
1. I found the vocabulary easy to understand and the thoughts organized in a natural sequence.

2. I understood the vocabulary for the most part, but there were some words that I did not understand.

3. I found that much of the vocabulary used is not commonly used in everyday speech. This made it more difficult for me to understand the message.

4. None of the above statements accurately represents my feelings.

Results.— The data is reported in Table #7.

**Table #7**

Data Related to Vocabulary and Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th></th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Found the vocabulary easy to understand and the thoughts organized in a natural sequence.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understood the vocabulary for the most part, but some words were not understood.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found that much of the vocabulary used is not commonly used in everyday speech. This made it more difficult to understand the message.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above statements accurately represents my feelings.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation.— Both Group A and B were of the opinion, overwhelmingly, that the vocabulary was easy to understand and the thoughts organized in a natural sequence. The data reflects an appreciation of the preacher's selection and usage of language, which also indicates the preacher's pew-oriented preaching style.

Listeners

Seven questions were designed to acquire data related to the
listeners. In this sub-section data is presented as follows: (1) Group Motivation, (2) Ability to state the central idea of the sermons, (3) Ability to recall the main points of the sermons, (4) Listener attention, (5) Listener response, (6) Preaching as a shared experience, and (7) Self-examination. Each of these is divided thus: (A) Question, (B) Results, and (C) Evaluation.

Group motivation

**Question.**—No question was designed to measure group motivation. The data was acquired simply by counting the total number of instruments filled out by members of Group A and B. Thirty members of the congregation were invited to participate in each of these groups. Seventeen participated in Group A and ten in Group B.

**Results.**—Out of 136 opportunities for the members of Group A to use the instruments 113 of them were returned completed. Out of 80 opportunities for the members of Group B to use the instruments 59 were returned completed.

**Evaluation.**—Group A being that group which received training in the development of listening skills, it would appear that such training results in a higher degree of motivation.

Ability to state central idea

**Question.**—The statement designed to acquire data related to the listeners ability to state the central idea of a sermon in his own words was used in all the instruments #3 - #10. The statement reads:

State in your own words what you feel to be the most important idea presented in today's sermon.

**Results.**—The interpretation of the responses required the
development of criteria by which the responses could be judged. Two criteria were applied.

1- Does the response indicate awareness of the central idea of the sermon as formulated by the preacher?

2- Does the response indicate the hearing of an important central idea which has no reference to the preacher's formulation but is significantly related to the general subject of the sermon in terms of a met need or relevant thought?

The second criteria was required by the theology of preaching articulated in chapter one of this report. Because Christ speaks when the given Gospel is preached, and a confrontation takes place between His meanings and those of the listener, the message which is heard cannot be pre-determined by a homiletical method. That is to say, the fact that a proposition is formulated and developed by means of main points does not necessarily mean that if the listener is not able to recall either the central idea thus formulated, or the main points, that Christ has not spoken or that the listener has heard nothing of importance. What this says is that while a particular homiletical method can be useful, and while each preacher's style is a part of his homiletical method, the hearing of Christ is not dependent upon any homiletical method. Other dynamic factors are a part of preparation for preaching beside the specific sermon itself. There is also the preparation of the preacher and of the listener as Christ draws them both into His ministry. Thus while this study is interested in a certain degree of scientific accuracy, it is also cognizant of the ministry of the Holy Spirit which applies the Word of God to the needs of individual listeners in a sovereign manner. What we are interested in is that the listener receive the message from God intended just for him as he participates in the experience of preaching the Gospel.
Application of criteria #2 to the respondents answers should reflect this basic theological understanding. The data received from the application of the above two criteria to the responses is reported in Table #8.

Once again each instrument was coded so that it could be later identified as being from Group A or B, but not while the responses were being evaluated.

Table #8

Data Related to Ability to Recall Central Idea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sermon</th>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criteria #1</td>
<td>Criteria #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation.— Based on the data it is possible to evaluate the responses as follows. It would appear that Group A, the Treatment Group, revealed a greater ability than Group B, the Control Group, to recall and state the central idea as formulated by the preacher. It would appear also that the data supports the theology of preaching which undergirds this project in that the hearing of an important central idea is not predetermined by a homiletical method, that Christ is heard in a sovereign
manner often apart from the preacher's formulated proposition. The ministry exercised in the preaching office is Christ's ministry and He uses the sermon preached as a means of confronting the listener at the point of need which He determines.

We must hasten to say, however, that this does not negate homiletical method nor suggest that method is not important. From the point of view of human communication one must seek for clarity of thought and systematic presentation of ideas because the goal of speech is understanding on the part of the listener. To preach is not to speak nonsense and every preacher must develop a homiletical method which satisfies him and can be used by Christ as He communicates through preaching. Simplicity and directness are two fundamental principles of good homiletical method which every preacher needs to keep in mind. The Apostle Paul was acutely aware of these principles and said that he did not come preaching above the level of comprehension of his listeners in order that the wisdom of God, which in truth is higher than man's wisdom, might be imparted and heard.¹ This is reflected in more recent counsel: "The influence of your teaching would be tenfold greater if you were careful of your words."²

It would appear also that the ability of Group A to recall the sermonic proposition as the central idea was a great deal less than their ability to recall the main points of the sermon (compare data from Table #8 with that of Table #9).

¹ Corinthians 1:17; 2:8.
Ability to recall main points

**Question.**— The reader's attention is directed to Appendix D for examples of the method of acquiring data related to listeners ability to recall main points. The same method was used in each instrument. The introductory statement read:

Sermons speak to different individuals in different ways. We are interested to know what you heard as you listened to today's sermon. Following are sets of ideas.

**READ EACH SET CAREFULLY AND CIRCLE ONE LETTER IN EACH SET BESIDE THE STATEMENT YOU BEST FEEL REPRESENTS AN IDEA PRESENTED IN TODAY'S SERMON.**

The above statement was followed by a number of sets, the number determined by the number of main points in the sermon. Each set contained four ideas one of which was the main point as expressed by the preacher.

**Results.**— Data is reported in Table #9.

**Evaluation.**— The data indicates that Group A scored higher than Group B in ability to recall the main points. However, this trend was not revealed until the third sermon in the series. This would seem to indicate that accuracy in recall was also dependent upon practice as Group A did not drop lower than Group B during the rest of the project.

Based on these results it seems likely that training in developing listening skills did have a positive effect on the ability of Group A to retain and recall the main points of the sermons.

However, in view of the fact that the total percentages reveal only a 4% difference between Group A and B it is possible to also conclude that the training was not extensive or intensive enough. It is also possible that Group B was improving as a result of participating in the project and interacting with members of Group A.
Table #9
PERCENTAGE OF ACCURACY IN ABILITY TO RECALL MAIN POINTS OF SERMONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sermon No.</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number Responding</th>
<th>Total Responses Possible</th>
<th>Number of Accurate Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Total Group Responses</th>
<th>Total Group Accurate Responses</th>
<th>Total Group %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>73.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Listener attention

**Question.**—The question designed to accumulate data with reference to the listeners ability to keep full attention on the sermons was used in instruments following the first, third, and fifth sermons. The question read:

During the preaching of today's sermon, how difficult did you find it to keep your full attention on the message?

**INDICATE YOUR ANSWER BY MARKING AN X AT THE APPROPRIATE POINT ON THE SCALE BELOW.**

Very Difficult / / / / / / / / / / Not Difficult

**Results.**—Data is reported in Table #10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>1 3 5 13 19</td>
<td>1 4 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation.**—The data reveals that it was not difficult for the listeners to keep full attention on the sermons. The difference in the responses is to be found in that there is a wider spread on the scale with respect to the responses of Group A. This may indicate that because they had received training in developing listening skills there was an attempt at greater concentration which in turn made them more sensitive to distracting factors. It may also indicate that Group B was not as aware as Group A of distracting factors in that their attention had not been sharpened by training which called specific attention to such factors.
Listener response

Question.— The question designed to accumulate data with reference to the listeners feeling as to whether or not he was responding in some fashion during the preaching was included in the instruments used following the first, third, and fifth sermons. The question reads:

During the preaching of today's sermon, did you feel that you were making some kind of response to the message you were hearing from God?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH AN X

_____ Yes
_____ Uncertain
_____ No

Results.— Data is reported in Table #11.

Table #11

Data Related to Listener Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation.— Data reveals that 82.9% of the members of Group A answered yes, and 81.8% of Group B. This would indicate that the training of Group A had no effect on the listeners response to the message heard from God, and that active response can be expected when the called preacher preaches the given Gospel in and through which Christ speaks.
There was no attempt at ascertaining the degree of response, or the nature of the response, both elements upon which training in listening skills may very well have a decided effect.

More positively, however, it can be assumed that the high percentage of "yes" answers indicates an involvement in the preaching experience that is quite significant as far as these particular respondents are concerned.

Preaching as a shared experience

Question.— The question designed to acquire data as to whether or not the listener felt as though he was consciously sharing in the preaching experience was used in the instrument following the fourth sermon. The question reads:

Some individuals feel that preaching is an experience that preacher and listener share together. Others do not. Did you feel as though you were sharing in the preaching of today's sermon?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH AN X

_____ Yes
_____ No
_____ Uncertain

Results.— Data is reported in Table #12.

Evaluation.— Data reveals that members of both Group A and B felt they were sharing in the preaching of the sermon. As with the data related to listener response during the preaching of the sermons, the data in Table #12 reflects a prevailing attitude on the part of the Benton Harbor congregation (see pages 142-144). Apparently this feeling is so pronounced in the congregation as a whole that training in listening skills made no appreciable difference.
Table #12
Data Related to Listeners
Feeling of Sharing in Preaching

| Did you feel as though you were sharing in the preaching of today's sermon? |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                            | GROUP A         | GROUP B         |
|                            | YES             | NO              | UNCERTAIN       |
|                            | 9               | 0               | 2               |

Self-examination

Question.— The question designed to acquire data related to whether or not the listener was motivated to examine his ideas and will to see if they were in harmony with God's, was used in the instruments following the first five sermons. The question read:

During the preaching of today's sermon were you motivated to examine your ideas and will to see if they were in harmony with God's ideas and will for you?

INDICATE YOUR ANSWER BY MARKING AN X AT THE APPROPRIATE POINT ON THE SCALE BELOW.

Very Much____/____/____/____/____/ Not At All

Results.— Results are reported in Table #13.

Table #13
Data Related to Self-Examination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERY MUCH</th>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>NOT AT ALL</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation.— The data indicates that both Group A and B were highly motivated toward self-examination during the preaching of the sermons. It would appear, therefore, that training in listening skills had little or no effect at this point. The responses indicate a consistency with the data recorded in Tables #3, #4, #11, and #12. It is evidently a characteristic of the Benton Harbor congregation, reflected in the responses of Group A and B that they feel very much a part of the preaching experience which no doubt plays a large part in the motivation to self-examination.

The data in Table #13 also indicates a definite confrontation between God's meanings and those of the listener, thus it is possible to conclude that these sermons did in fact serve as the bridge which made such a confrontation possible.

Preacher

One question was designed to acquire data related to the preacher. In this sub-section data is presented as follows: (1) Non-verbal communication factors. This data is reported according to: (A) Question, (B) Results, and (C) Evaluation.

Non-verbal communication factors

Question.— The question designed for the accumulation of data with respect to listeners' attitude toward the preacher based on non-verbal communication factors was used in instruments following the first, second, and fifth sermons. The question reads:

Taking into consideration the preacher's tone of voice, hand and body gestures, and facial expressions, mark an X on the scales below at the point which best indicates the principle feelings he conveyed to you during the preaching of today's sermon.
This statement was followed by nine scales which are reflected in Table #14 which follows.

Results. — Results are reported in Table #14.

Table #14

Data Related to Non-verbal Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>2</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sincere</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>25</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flippant</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
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<table>
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<th></th>
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<th>21</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>2</th>
<th></th>
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<th>B</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<table>
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<th></th>
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<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>28</th>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unconcerned</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bold</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>16</th>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<table>
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<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>29</th>
<th>1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belief</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>25</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hopeless</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation. — It was felt from the start of this project that a significant factor in communicating to any individual was how the speaker comes across as a person to those who are listening. Even though Christ
speaks when the Gospel is preached, that communication does come by means of the human instrument who has been chosen by the Lord, and used by Him in the transmission of His Word. Thus the human factor is very important in the communication process. The three elements of the preaching experience are all equally significant: the sermon, the preacher, and the listener. So, how what is said is being said is as important as what is being said.

The data indicate that both Group A and B reveal positive attitudes toward the preacher in this project. It can be assumed that what the respondents heard was influenced to a certain degree by what they saw. What was communicated to them by the preacher about the preacher?

Respondents indicated that they heard and saw a somewhat somber individual who was sincere, serious about his task, concerned about what he was doing, and who approached it with strength as opposed to weakness. They revealed that in their judgment he spoke with boldness and authority, and that his demeanor and mannerisms reflected belief and hope.

Results and Evaluation of Dialogical Feedback Sessions

Two dialogical discussions were held with the members of Group A. The report is divided into two categories: (1) Dialogue following sermon #5, and (2) Dialogue following sermon #8.

Dialogue following sermon #5

It was determined that this dialogue session should concentrate on two areas, the worship service itself and the sermon preached that day. A reading of the transcript of this session will indicate that it was difficult to get the group to talk about the worship service
itself. Participants seemed to want to talk about the sermon. This may have been due to the fact that it concerned race relations which is a relevant subject for the Benton Harbor congregation.

An important part of the dialogue session was asking the participants to relate the most significant thing about the morning's worship service that would stay with the listener longest and perhaps be most influential. For one individual it was a thought the sermon generated. For another it was a question related to the contradiction that seems to exist between the Gospel we preach and the fact that there are separate black and white congregations within the same denominational organization. One person wished the sermon had dealt with an issue related to a past memory.

There was a feeling on the part of at least two of the participants that there was something deeper in the sermon than the matter of two races getting along together. This thought was phrased by one person: "God created all men equal and as Christians we have no right other than to treat all men as equals." This participant was able to put the issue into the context of his own personal relationship with God, and for him it was more than a human relations problem. This was reflected in a little different way by another individual who felt that the central idea of the sermon was that "when we get closer to Christ we should come closer to our brothers in many ways, no matter whether it's class or color or anything." Another indicated the thought that to separate from anyone is to separate from Christ.

It was quite apparent that the major thing they were taking home with them that day was related to the sermon. An electric moment is

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1 See Appendix G for the transcript of this dialogue session.
apparent in the transcript when a participant indicates that the thought that harboring racial prejudice was sinning had penetrated his mind.

As far as the sermons themselves were concerned participants thought they were "definitely better," "much better organized," "more on the layman's level," "we're listening better."

As far as the preaching of the sermons was concerned participants made the following remarks:

"he puts his whole life into it."

"since we've done this (participated in the treatment group) I think he's more organized, like you say, but I think also in the way that he gives them—gestures and things and the tone of his voice—he just seems more and more sincere, more into it."

"he's more confident that he's working with the people and not just preaching to them. It's a cooperation. I think he's getting something in return for what he's giving."

One person felt that the preacher had improved on the use of voice inflections. Another appreciated a certain conciseness in delivery.

Critical comments were few and subtle but related to the desire on the part of one participant for the preacher to be a bit more enthusiastic in his delivery, and a reference to some feeling that the preacher did not smile enough perhaps reflecting a wish that he had a more exuberant demeanor.

The dialogue transcript indicates that the participants had been very much involved in the preaching experience on this occasion, and had been stimulated to think and undertake some self-examination. They revealed very definite views as to how they felt the preaching came across, and also that participating in the project had some conscious effect on their attitude toward preaching and their listening ability.
Dialogue following sermon #8

The transcript of this dialogue session reveals a decided consciousness on the part of participants that the listener is an active participant in the preaching event. The feeling is expressed that preaching is a cooperative endeavor for which the listener carries a considerable responsibility. Following are representative quotations:

"If there is anything that's coming out of this series it's the fact that there's more on my part now than there is on the minister's part."

"we . . . should give him the same kind of attention we would expect ourselves if we were in that position."

"we can work together."

"It takes some effort to get something out of a sermon, I can say that."

"I was really involved in it."

The transcript indicates that the recognition exists on the part of the members of Group A that good listening is a task, a task worth doing well. Members felt that many variables have their effect on the hearing of the Word of God, in this case various distractions from heat and humidity to restless children and the listener's own tendency to let his mind wander.

There was appreciation expressed with respect to the preacher pausing in his delivery and calling the congregation's attention to the fact that they were not paying very close attention. This interlude apparently was effective in jarring a number of individuals back to the

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1 See Appendix H for the transcript of this dialogue session.
task at hand, namely, listening to the sermon and thus sharing in the preaching of it. Some comments were:

"... at the end he woke everybody up. Then it got good."

"... not only did he change the situation to a certain extent—he made us realize again that he's a human being and that we ... should give him the same kind of attention we would expect."

"I appreciate it."

"No, it wasn't a personal thing, you know, not putting us down or putting him ahead personally, but it was the Lord's Word."

"But once he spoke out and alerted us and got me back on the track, then I was able to understand what he was saying and tie it up quick and then I got into it better."

"I don't think I heard two words he said before that."

One individual expressed insight into the preacher's interest in the listeners as persons by saying, in reference to his pause in delivery:

"I think also it gave us the feeling that he was really interested that we heard what he had to say, too, you know. ... So, he had interest in the congregation, you know. He's not up there preaching a sermon because he feels its his duty but he's really interested."

The transcript indicates an awareness that other important things were going on in the worship service in addition to the preaching of the sermon: the organists activities, the baptism and the children's attention being attracted by it, the prayer before the sermon. All meaningful parts of the service that left impressions and no doubt contributed to communication.

The transcript indicates also that confrontation between God's meanings and listener's meanings did occur and was expressed thus:

"I myself have a hard time loving people who aren't really too lovable, you know."
"I think I've got a guilty conscience out of the whole series."

(This person was referring to the fact that he had not been putting every effort into the listening task in the past.)

"... it hit me, the competition idea that you don't have to compete with human beings."

Criticisms were more pronounced during this dialogue session. One person indicated that difficulty was experienced in understanding and applying what was said, some confusion as to meaning was felt. Another expressed boredom feeling that the preacher was too slow in getting into the message. Another said trouble was experienced in getting hold of the message and making it fit together, without really saying why.

One person expressed appreciation for the preacher's "coming straight out with the facts ... ."

Once again, as in the first dialogue session, participants indicated definite involvement in the preaching experience, and also that self-examination had been motivated indicating that a confrontation had taken place. Very definite views were expressed as to how they felt the preaching came across and that participating in the project was having a definite effect on their attitudes toward preaching as a shared experience in which the development of their listening ability was important.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to report and evaluate the results of Instruments #1, #2, and #3 - #10, as well as report and evaluate the dialogical feedback sessions following sermons #5 and #8.

Instrument #1 indicated that the Benton Harbor congregation
appreciates the preaching office, eagerly participates in that office, and would appear to be a responsive audience for the preaching of the Word of God.

The results of Instrument #2 indicated what appeared to be positive attitudinal changes occurring in both Group A and B during the period in which the eight sermons were preached.

With respect to Instruments #3 - #10 respondents indicated the sermons they heard were directed equally to individuals and to congregation, that the preacher was equally interested in doctrines and in listeners, that the vocabulary of the sermons was easy to understand and the thoughts organized in a natural sequence, that the hearing of an important central idea while certainly related to homiletical method is not predetermined by any homiletical method, that training in developing listening skills had a positive effect on the ability of listeners to retain and recall the main points of the sermons, that it was not difficult for the listeners to keep their attention on the sermons, that active response can be expected when the Gospel is preached, that participants felt they were sharing in the preaching of the sermons, that there was high motivation toward self-examination during the preaching of the sermons, and that participants held a positive attitude toward the preacher himself in terms of non-verbal communication factors.

The two dialogue sessions revealed that participants felt very much involved in the preaching experience and that a confrontation had taken place between Christ and listener.

Material in this chapter supplies the information on the basis of which conclusions and recommendations are offered in the following chapter.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As its title makes apparent, this chapter contains three major divisions: (1) A summary of the theoretical base foundational to this study and of the procedures used in its implementation, (2) The conclusions implied by the results of the study, and (3) Recommendations with respect to preaching as a specialized aspect of professional ministry.

Summary

If learning is to take place at all in the specialized discipline involved in the Doctor of Ministry study program, it must take place in the interaction of theory and practice. Ideally knowledge will grow both with respect to theory of ministry and practice of ministry as they impinge one upon the other. In the case of this study project it was anticipated that knowledge would be acquired both in theory of preaching and practice of preaching as a part of ministry.

Theology of preaching as a part of ministry

This study project was begun on the assumption that the preaching office is not an outdated and no longer relevant means of communication between God and man. The foundational view is that "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ."¹ There was no need to attempt to prove this as it is fundamentally a matter of faith, a matter of commitment.

¹Romans 10:17
Because God communicates with man in a personal way the preaching office has been established. The authority of that office is to be found in the Person of Christ who is both the subject of the preaching and the One who communicates through the preaching.

Christ communicates to persons through preaching. Persons who bring to the encounter all of their needs and their meanings, or understandings, of life and their interpretation of life. If they are to hear Him they must learn that such listening requires disciplined effort and specific application.

In this communication process between Christ and the listener the activity, or event, of preaching becomes the bridge across which His meanings and the listeners meanings move toward each other in confrontation. The goal of this transaction of communication is transformation, change in the beliefs and life-style of the listener. If this goal is to be reached the bridge of preaching must be firmly anchored at both ends: in the given revelation of God found in His written Word, and in the actual life situations of the listeners. If preaching is to be relevant, important, useful, and dynamic; if it is above all to be faithful, then it must be thus anchored.

This is why the preacher must be a called man, a man selected by Christ and set apart by Him for a specific work which the Holy Spirit shall make him qualified to do. This work requires surrender of life. It requires submission in faith to a given message which alone is to be proclaimed. The given message preached in the context of a given life situation assures that the preaching will be the bridge between Christ and the listener.

Still, in this unique transaction of communication the listener is not passive but active. He enters into active dialogue with the Lord
who speaks when the message is preached. In this sense he shares in the preaching experience. He is not preached at. He is recognized as a participant in preaching rather than the object of preaching. Because this is so, it is not only the preacher's homiletical perception which needs to be sharpened, but the listener's listening perception. It was anticipated that this study project would do both.

Practice of Preaching as a Part of Ministry

This study project was not conceived to be only an academic exercise. The project and its implementation were thought of as a part of the practice of professional ministry. The members of the Benton Harbor Church of Seventh-day Adventists, and the specific individuals who participated in the Treatment and Control groups, were not seen as elements in an experiment but as persons for whom this project could be a form of ministry. In other words the project was thought of as a pastoral activity.

Because this was so the project was not imposed on the congregation. Their approval and cooperation was solicited by means of presentations to the Church Board and to the congregation as a whole. Carefully sharing a belief that spiritual benefit would accrue to pastor and people alike, their assistance and participation were won.

Invitations were sent to sixty members of the congregation to participate in the Treatment and Control groups, and the Treatment group received training in the development of listening skills.

A survey was taken of the congregation to determine pre-project attitudes about preachers and preaching, and both the Treatment and Control groups filled out questionnaires following each of the eight sermons preached during the project. Data accumulated formed the basis for the
evaluations found in Chapter IV of this Report, and also for the conclusions and recommendations which follow in this Chapter.

The eight sermons were preached during the spring of 1974 and their preparation followed the homiletical method suggested by Lloyd M. Perry.

Conclusions

Four major things happened as the preaching project was implemented. First, important information concerning the congregations feelings about preaching and preachers was received. Second, it was discovered that preaching does play a significant part in contributing to listener attitudinal change. Third, it was learned that while training in listening skills improves listener ability to recall the central idea of a sermon as formulated by the preacher, homiletical method does not predetermine the important central idea the listener may hear. Fourth, the interaction which took place between preaching theory and preaching practice stimulated a new look at preaching theory and a new stance with respect to preaching practice.

Therefore, this part of the chapter is divided into four sections: (1) Conclusions pertaining to the current preaching ministry in the Benton Harbor, Michigan Church of Seventh-day Adventists, (2) Conclusions pertaining to listener attitudinal change, (3) Conclusions pertaining to listener ability to recall the central idea of a sermon, and (4) Personal reflective conclusions.

Current Preaching Ministry

With respect to the current preaching ministry in the Benton Harbor Church of Seventh-day Adventists, the data generated by Instrument #1 provided important information contributory to a more effective
preaching ministry in that congregation. Some of the information received is supportive of the theology of preaching articulated in Chapter I.

The confident attitude of the congregation toward its ordained minister's use of the Bible and Ellen G. White materials, together with its very nature attitude toward the use of extra-Biblical sources in preaching, serves to give the preacher confidence as he approaches his task. He is preaching to a congregation that trusts the called minister in its midst and that is eager to be taught. No doubt this indicates that the congregation has been well served by its previous ministers and that in these men the congregation has recognized their call to be Christian, their inner call to the ministry, their providential call involving qualifications and talents, and the ecclesiastical call of the Church to the ministry expressed in ordination. The present pastor shares, therefore, in the continuity of the divinely and professionally called ministry of Christ in this congregation. Confidence in the ministerial office no doubt arises out of the fact that a called man, a man who has surrendered his life to a given message, preaches what he has been given to preach as presented in the Bible, the Word of God. Thus his authority is recognized as having come from Christ, and as being faithfully exercised.

The fact that the congregation prefers an active rather than a passive style of preaching opens the doors to experimentation and innovation. In consequence the preacher will feel less inhibited and more free in the pulpit. He is free to experiment with new forms of proclamation. Forms that are dialogical in nature, in which there is a deliberate and planned attempt to draw the members of the congregation into the preaching in an experience of sharing. This dialogical preaching is
of the kind that makes possible meaningful interaction between listener and preacher, and provides the opportunity for a meaningful confrontation between Christ and the listener in that the preaching serves as the bridge connecting the revelation of God in the Word with the contemporary life situation of the listener and, thus a confrontation of will and shared meaning becomes possible.

In view of the fact that non-verbal communication factors appear to be very important to this congregation, the preacher will take this into account in his preparation for preaching. That is to say, he will engage in an internal dialogue with himself and with the Spirit of God as a part of his preparation for preaching so that his demeanor will reflect the substance of the message he preaches verbally.

The theology of preaching basic to this project indicated preaching to be a shared experience in which the living Lord, the living preacher, and the living listener are involved. In view of the fact that Chapter I of this Report was prepared some time prior to the use of Instrument #1 by the congregation, the revelation that much of their feelings about preaching were in harmony with the views expressed in that chapter was a source of great pleasure to this student. It was also a surprise! It was not anticipated, for example, that the congregation as a whole would be conscious of responsibility for the success of preaching. The fact that the congregation readily accepts their share of responsibility for the success of preaching indicates the existence of a sense of partnership which should be exploited in order to make the most of the preaching experience for both preacher and listener. The preacher must use this sense of shared responsibility in his ministry of the Word so that maximum spiritual benefit will accrue in the lives of the members. He must capitalize on this sense of responsibility so that members of the
congregation might receive the Word of God in preaching more profoundly and transformingly.

There need be no hesitation as to the range of topics chosen for preaching to this congregation. It is not just the old familiar topics that are welcomed, but also those which might be considered controversial. It is evident that this congregation is willing to have its thoughts and understandings, its meanings, confronted by challenge. Once again the responses of the congregation have supported what has been said in Chapter I relative to the fact that what the listener needs is sermons designed not only to bring individual comfort but that pierce to the marrow of being and confront the listener with the need to choose.

The preacher whose theology of preaching undergirds his proclamation to this congregation recognizes, (Chapter I, the section entitled "Who Are You?"), that the listener needs subjects sharply narrowed and defined. This need has been confirmed by the congregation itself in that it has indicated in its response to Instrument #1, that it prefers to wrestle with one idea at a time. *Apriori* the preacher felt that the congregation needs to hear sermons that the situation in which they are living demands. The congregation proved this insight sound in that they have indicated preference for sermons that focus on the application of doctrine to life situations. As far as the theology of preaching is concerned this means that the congregation is aware, perhaps only intuitively, however, that in order for real communication and confrontation to take place there must be a bridging between the Word of God in the Bible and the contemporary life situation of the listeners. As far as the practice of preaching is concerned this means that the preacher in this congregation must not only be familiar with the Biblical material on which the sermon is based, but he must also be familiar with the contemporary
scene in which the sermon is proclaimed. The congregation is evidently not interested in doctrine for doctrine's sake, but for the sake of finding meaning to their existence. One might add that this is fundamentally the purpose of the Biblical doctrines. They do not stand isolated as interesting intellectual and philosophical phenomena, but have been revealed as accurate and authoritative principles by which an individual can accurately and with confidence interpret life in general and his own existence specifically.

Because the congregation possesses the above point of view the preacher can more eagerly approach his task of preaching in that he knows his people are anticipating, and desirous of, any attempt to relate the ancient Word to their modern situation of need.

Of particular interest to this congregation is the relationship between current events and the second Advent of Christ. Because this is so the preacher must view the prophetic doctrines of the Bible as theological tools for the interpretation of contemporary existence. He must not become so enamored by the fine points of the doctrines that he neglects to make relevant applications. It is far better to err on the side of attempting to make applications of broad general doctrines, than on the side of non-application of fine points. Ellen G. White remarks:

"Time is frequently lost in explaining points which are really unimportant, and which would be taken for granted without producing proofs. But the vital points should be made as plain and forcible as language and proof can make them."

Because the use of illustrations in preaching is a vital element in this congregation's appreciation of preaching, the preacher will be careful to cultivate their use more frequently. Apparently the con-

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gregation's appreciation of the use of good illustrations is more pronounced than its appreciation of preachers that tell lots of stories in their sermons. They are interested in illustrations that drive home a point or that dramatically portray a vital truth so that it can be remembered and recalled. This was pointed out quite vividly by one male member of the congregation who said that he could not remember specific sermons, or even the doctrines they contained, but that he remembered clearly relevant illustrations drawn from life and experience. There is no doubt that for him the memory of a vivid illustration was instrumental in his hearing, retaining, and applying the Word of God. While it remains easy to get carried away by an unusual illustration or anecdote and in the process forget the point that is being made, it is clear that an apt illustration can serve to illuminate the point and drive it home in the heart. In other words, the point being made in the sermon must be inherent in the illustration or the illustration in the point. If an illustration serves to assist in the remembering of a truth then it is valuable and must be used.

Because of the importance placed on the proper use of illustrations by this congregation, its pastor will use them but be careful to see that they are drawn either from the Bible or from life. He will, furthermore, seek to cultivate the use of creative imagination in order to compose illustrations in the form of the modern parable.

The accumulated data, together with the actual experience of preaching in the Benton Harbor congregation, indicates preaching there to be an enjoyable task. A task that can be faced with positively keen anticipation.
Attitudinal Change

The implementation of the project in the Benton Harbor congregation indicated two things as far as the participants in the Treatment and Control groups were concerned. First, training in the development of listening skills did appear to have some effect on sharpening of listener perception. Participants that received training in the development of listening skills revealed a slightly higher degree of perception than those who did not receive such training. The difference being only 4% it is not possible to draw any strong conclusion, however, the fact that there was a difference may indicate the training does have an effect on listener perception. The small percentage may also indicate that more extensive and intensive training is required in order to significantly sharpen listener perception.

As far as the Control group was concerned, the small difference in perceptive ability may indicate that participation in the project itself contributed to their performance. Interaction between the two groups, the knowledge that they were involved in an experimental project, and the increased interest and concentration generated, may have contributed to a Control group performance almost equal to that of the Treatment group.

It is possible to conclude that active participation in the project either as members of the Treatment or Control groups did make some contribution toward participants becoming keener listeners. There is, therefore, something to be said about drawing listeners into the preaching process. There is a valid dialogical element to be considered in the preaching experience. Preaching is a shared experience and when it is

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1 See Table #9 on page 154.
conceived to be such by both preacher and listener keener perception can be an outcome. It stands to reason that when perception is increased so also would ability to retain and recall. Furthermore, it would seem that the desire to apply what has been heard, and learned, would also be heightened thus contributing to growth and change in attitude and behaviour. The assumption can be made, therefore, that individuals drawn into the preaching process should be better listeners to sermons in the future and hopefully, better Christians.

The second significant thing the accumulated data\(^1\) indicates is that during the preaching of the series of eight sermons positive attitudinal change was experienced on the part of participants in both the Treatment and Control group. The data revealed that the Treatment group experienced a 20\% positive change in attitude toward important situations to which the sermons were applied. Data also revealed that the Control group experienced a 21\% positive change in attitude toward the same important situations. The reader will recall that it was expected that both the Treatment and Control groups would experience positive attitudinal change during the preaching of the sermons, and that the change would be more pronounced among members of the Treatment group. The data indicates that both groups in fact did experience positive change in attitude, but that there was little difference between the two groups.

The expectation that positive attitudinal change would occur in both groups was based on the assumption, the conviction, that when the given Gospel is preached by a called man, Jesus speaks and confrontation takes place leading to change. In other words, the conviction that when the Gospel is preached something happens is foundational to the expectation. This is a matter of faith in the power of the divine Word of God.

\(^1\)See Tables #1 and #2, pages 139 and 141.
as well as the validity and relevance of the preaching office.

It was a surprise, however, that no difference in percentage of attitudinal change between the two groups was indicated. It was assumed that training in the development of listening skills would contribute largely to a pronounced difference in attitudinal change between the two groups. On the surface it would appear that a rather strange contradiction exists in that training did increase listener perception with reference to ability to recall the main points of the sermons, but that training appeared to make no appreciable difference on attitudinal change. If in fact a contradiction does exist it would lead to the challenge either of the method of training or the conclusions based on the data or both. But perhaps another factor is involved. We need to bear in mind that while training in the development of listening skills does indeed improve the listeners concentration and auditory response, it has little or no apparent affect on the will. Auditory response is made to technical aspects of a sermon, whereas the response of the listeners will is made to the One who addresses him in preaching, the Lord Jesus Christ. Even then there is no assurance that the listener, while he may have heard clearly the central idea and the main points of the sermon, and while he may have indeed heard Christ speak, will respond positively to the Christ who spoke to him and thus experience a change in attitude. What we are reckoning with here is the freedom of the listener's will to accept or reject what the Lord has said to him in the sermon he has heard. He may recall quite accurately the major technical facts of the sermon, but may have rejected in toto the truth those facts were meant to apply.

Evidently participants in the Treatment and Control group not only heard the technical facts presented in the sermons, but they heard the Lord as well and responded to Him in a positive fashion. It is a
thrill to realize once again that He is sovereign and can be heard equally well by those who have not received training in listening skills as those who have. It is apparent that the hearing of Christ is not dependent upon, nor pre-determined by, the ability of the listener to recall technical facts of sermons. On the other hand those who experienced positive attitudinal change were the same participants who increased in ability to recall technical facts and there may very well be a significant relationship here. This could only be tested by preaching the same series in another congregation without any prior training sessions for anyone and by pre- and post-testing the congregation for attitudinal change. If under these conditions percentage of attitudinal change was low, indications would be clear that training in listening skills does in fact contribute to attitudinal change. If the percentage was high it would indicate that this would not be so.

We want to emphasize strongly, however, that when the Gospel is preached and heard attitudes change for the better. This was one of the most exciting things generated by this project study, that the preaching and hearing of sermons does influence and contribute toward attitudinal change.

Change is a dynamic of the Christian faith. It is inherent in the Revelation of God and in the Gospel message to be proclaimed by His church. In fact it is the purpose of God and the Gospel to change individuals. Not just to present provocative ideas for study and reflection, but to influence the inner life of an individual to the point where he experiences positive change. The Bible says that Christians are to be conformed to the image of Christ.\(^1\) It says, furthermore, that in

\(^1\)Romans 8:29.
beholding the glory of the Lord we are "being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." ¹

Christ is "beheld" when in the preaching of the Gospel he is publicly portrayed as crucified. ² That is to say, when He is truly and accurately represented as He is by means of the preached Word of God. When He is seen, and heard, and believed, change takes place in the lives of individuals. Change in human lives is the goal of the Gospel so as to fit people for a faithful life of witness and service on earth, and for the life of the world to come. Preaching and hearing the Word of God is a vitally important element in bringing about such positive change in attitude and in behaviour.

This does not mean that the preacher will arrogantly abandon all consideration of the technical aspects of preparing and preaching sermons. Preaching in which Christ can be beheld, and heard, must not be slovenly or slipshod or whimsical. It is when the technical aspects of the sermon are professionally done that Christ is seen and heard most clearly so that in the operation of the will an individual might know and understand exactly Who and what it is he either accepts or rejects. So that he will have no excuse. Thus the preacher is duty-bound to be as technically superior as possible.

The same is true on the listening side. Christ can be best heard when listening perception is sharpened. The listener is duty-bound to bring all the listening skills he possesses to bear on the confrontation with Christ he experiences in preaching.

¹ II Corinthians 3:18.
² Galatians 3:1.
Ability to Recall the Central Idea

The reader will remember that it was expected that the Treatment group would exhibit a greater ability to state the central ideas of the sermons in their own words than the Control group. This was based on the assumption that training in the development of listening skills would contribute toward this ability.

The data\(^1\) indicated that this proved to be the case. There were 101 total responses from the Treatment group. Twenty of these indicated ability to state in respondents' own words the central idea of the sermons as formulated by the preacher. Eighty of these revealed that the respondent had heard an important central idea which had no reference to the preacher's formulation but that was significantly related to the general subject of the sermon in terms of a met need or a relevant thought. One response was blank.

Out of 59 total responses from the Control group, none were able to state in their own words the central idea as formulated by the preacher, and 55 indicated that they had heard an important central idea significantly related to the general subject. Four respondents were unable to recall an important central idea.

It is possible to draw two conclusions from the data. (1) That training in the development of listening skills does contribute to ability to restate the central idea of a sermon as formulated by the preacher. This means that the training of a congregation will produce people who are better able to recall and assimilate vital information communicated in preaching. It means that the central idea of a given Biblical text can be better heard, and recalled, if there has been previous training in listening skills. Training results in better listeners.

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\(^1\)See Table #8 on page 151.
(2) The data also seems to indicate that Christ is heard in a sovereign manner often apart from the formulation of a central idea by the preacher. Thus the hearing of an important and meaningful central idea is not predetermined by a homiletical method. Fully 80% of the respondents in the Treatment group heard an important central idea apart from the preacher's formulated proposition! Furthermore, 93.2% of the respondents in the Control group heard a central idea apart from the formulated proposition! This means that while the preacher must be conscientiously concerned about the technical aspects of sermon preparation and preaching in order to "portray" Christ most clearly, the Lord Himself uses preaching sovereignly to address specific needs in the lives of individual persons. Thus the responses are as varied as the persons, but all are significantly related to the general subject of the sermons as well as meet a need or provide a relevant thought. Here we have come face to face with the mysterious element in preaching. In all our concern to make preaching as technically sound as possible, we dare not forget the element of mystery. If preaching is a means of grace, and if Christ operates sovereignly in the preaching experience, then we should not be surprised by such data. We should be overjoyed! For it means that ultimately the success of communication is in His hands. While the human preacher must technically strive to be the best instrument possible, he must always remember that he is only an instrument in the service of His Master.

For this reason it is crucial that the preacher be a man who has surrendered himself in faith not only to the Lord Jesus Christ but to the given message of Scripture. Christ ministers sovereignly through preaching when that preaching is anchored in both the divine revelation and in the life situation of the listeners.
On the listening side it is critical that the worshipper surrender himself to the Lord Jesus Christ and also to the given message of Scripture if it is to be Christ that he hears when the Gospel is preached. Both of them together, preacher and listener, must surrender in faith to the authenticity, the relevance, the authority, of the preaching office as having been ordained and established by the Lord as divinely appointed means of communication.

Personal Reflections

Because theory and practice meet in the man the personal reflections which follow are perhaps the most important conclusions of all. The reader will understand the necessity to return to the use of the first person for I want to share here what has happened in me and to me in the project process.

This section of this chapter is divided into the following sub-sections: (1) New look at preaching theory, (2) New stance in preaching practice, and (3) Heuristic generation.

New look at Preaching Theory

The interaction which took place between preaching theory and preaching practice, as both impinged on one another and on myself as preacher, required a new look and a new stance. With respect to a new look at preaching theory, this sub-section will include (1) an assessment of my theology of preaching, (2) an appreciation for the dialogical element in preaching, (3) a reaction to the homiletical methodology used in the project, (4) an inclusive understanding of preparation for preaching, and (5) an incipient concept of a theology of expression.
Theology of preaching. — The reader will recall that one of the major objectives of this study was that of testing, as far as that was possible, the validity of my own theology of preaching. Every preacher must have a theology of preaching that informs his practice of preaching. But that theology must have validity. If it does not it requires change and adjustment. The assessment which follows is both objective and subjective. Objectively it touches on those theological presuppositions reflected in the project experiment. Subjectively it evaluates on the basis of the accumulated data and on the basis of faith conviction concerning the role of preaching in today's Church and world.

Both my subjective reflection and the objective data from responses to non-verbal communication factors indicate to me that my ontological consciousness of the call to minister is valid. The fact that for me the call to the ministry is a call to be something rather than do something, that I am responding to a sacred compulsion, is reflected in the participants' response in that they see me as a person who is sincere, who speaks with authority and with conviction, and who is able to communicate hope. This authority is not mine but Christ's. It is He who has called me and commanded me. It is He to whom I have responded as steward and as herald. Steward in the sense that I have surrendered my life as a minister to the Word of God as it has been revealed in Scripture. Surrendered to its givenness. Herald in the sense that I have committed my life to the declaration of that given message and none other. With reference to the project the givenness of the message of the Letter to the Ephesians, and which essential truths were heard and recalled by the project participants. The reader will have to judge by a study of the sermons themselves whether in his opinion the

1 See Table #14 on page 160
theological interpretation of the Biblical text is sound and does in fact proclaim the truths found therein. It is my belief that they are sound, and do proclaim revealed truths.

The preaching of the given Gospel is done into a particular context, the context of the contemporary world and the life situations of those who listen. They come to hear preaching with certain needs which I as preacher conceive to be primary: the need for forgiveness, for meaning to existence, for fellowship, for an absolute authority, and for hope. The need for hope is met by demonstrating from the Biblical text what constitutes hope and how it can be experienced. Project responses with respect to attitudinal change reflect renewed experiences of hope. The need for an absolute authority is met by a preaching style, and homiletical method, which clearly points to the Bible, and the God who reveals Himself in the Bible and in His Son, as that authority. Human needs are met by the Word. The need for fellowship is met by person-centered preaching. In this kind of preaching doctrines are not seen as ends in themselves, but as tools of communication. Response data reveal that the preaching done in connection with this study was in fact person-centered, that the preacher revealed an equal interest in both listeners and doctrines.¹ A study of the sermons will readily reveal that they are in fact doctrinal sermons, but the hearing of them as reflected in the responses also indicates their person-centered nature. The fact that attitudes changed during the preaching of the sermons would appear to indicate that the sermons did apply significantly the doctrines of the Bible to the life situations of the hearers.

The need for forgiveness is met by contrasting what is subjectively

¹See Tables #5 and #6 on pages 145 and 146.
believed to be listener attitude with the will of God as portrayed in the Biblical text, and then presenting the Lord Jesus as One who forgives, restores, renews. Thus the preaching is also Christ-centered in that He is the initiator, the subject, the content, and the fundamental communicator in the preaching of the Word of God.

God is the initiator of the confrontation between Himself and individuals, the confrontation that takes place in the context of worship. The transcripts of the two dialogue sessions reveal how much more significant the sermon was to the listeners than worship as a whole. Worship for them meant sermon. Their dialogue responses indicate that there was a confrontation with God that took place in that previous views were challenged and change was evident.

To that confrontation the listener comes with his needs, his meanings or understandings about life and about God, and with his expectations. He also comes with his understanding of, and usage of, language. Evidently there were no major conflicts with respect to the language used in the preaching of the eight sermons. Respondants indicated an appreciation for the language and the organization of the thoughts. ¹ Thus the importance of the technical aspects of sermon preparation and preaching must be kept in mind.

However, the preacher is more than a technician, an interpreter of the Bible. His role is also dialogical in that preaching that communicates to contemporary man is a shared experience. The nature of that dialogical role will be discussed in the following sub-section.

Preaching being a shared experience it is necessary for the congregation to possess a dialogical role conception. The congregation,

¹See Table #7 on page 148.
and group participants, involved in this project study have such a role concept. The data indicated that the congregation as a whole feels that responsibility for preaching success is shared equally by preacher and listener, and both the Treatment and Control groups felt the same way. Both groups felt that they were directly sharing in the preaching itself. Whether the preacher believes preaching to be a shared experience or not must certainly be influenced by the fact that those to whom he preaches feels that it is.

The fact that the congregation does feel preaching to be a shared experience has implications for preparation for preaching and for the preaching/hearing relationship. It means that a part of the congregation's role concept will be the realization that they too have a responsibility to come prepared to listen, to play an active rather than a passive role in listening. It means that they will approach the relationship between preaching and hearing as participants.

The data generated by the project have indicated to me that my theology of preaching is viable. It has been supported by the feelings and opinions of those members of the Benton Harbor church who participated in the project. In particular my contention that in order to communicate the Gospel to contemporary individuals preaching must be person-centered rather than doctrine-centered, and also that preaching forms the bridge between the ancient Biblical text and the contemporary context.

The opportunity which the project presented of conceptualizing my theology of preaching in relation to actual preaching practice has sharpened my ability to reflect on preaching theologically.

\[1\] See Tables #3, #4, and #12 on pages 143 and 158.
Dialogical element.— The reader will recall my criticism of event-oriented preaching in that concern in homiletics has shifted from the content of the sermon to what happens when the sermon is preached. My contention has been that both are important. Something should happen when a sermon is preached, and the responses in this study reveal that it does, but what happens must be put to the test of the Word of God. The happening must arise out of the Word of Truth as it has been applied, heard, believed, and acted upon.

Preaching cannot be viewed monologically, movement flowing in only one direction. It is not a one-man affair. It is a shared experience in which the listeners are actively participating. However, I want to reiterate and make quite clear that I am not in harmony with a preaching dialogy which draws the congregation into the sermon preparation process in such a way that the experience of the congregation becomes an essential part of the content of the sermon. I want to be careful to emphasize the giveness of the Gospel message. It is the text that must be preached and not the experience of preacher and/or congregation.

However, in spite of what I have just said, there may very well be a way that the congregation can be drawn into the sermon preparation process that would not undercut the giveness of the Gospel. Some involvement on the part of the listeners in the process of preparation for preaching would strengthen a person-centered approach to preaching. Dialogue with the congregation over the preaching text would assist the preacher in discovering where the congregation is at over against the text, where the problems of understanding or meaning might be, and where specific applications of the Word might be helpful. In the process the preacher would be trying to listen to the Word in terms of his peoples needs, and to their needs in terms of the Word. As far as the listeners are
concerned inclusion in preparation for preaching might contribute to an increase in listening perception.

But preaching and hearing do belong together and this project has served to impress this fact even more firmly upon my mind. There is an interaction between three dynamic elements. First, there is the action of the living Christ who as High Priest, and through the Written Word and by means of the Holy Spirit, communicates divine truth. Second, there is the action of the living preacher as he listens to and hears the Word of God and reshapes it in terms of personality and language so that it comes through him as contemporary. Third, there is the action of the living worshippers as they listen to and hear the Word of God in, with, and through, the sermon and respond either in rejection or accepting faith to the God who speaks to them in terms of redemption and judgment. This is dialogical activity involving the sovereign Lord, the called preacher, and the needy listener.

The specific point at which I have learned, and hopefully grown, as a result of this project has to do with the fact that I recognize the need for a dialogical concept of ministry. By that I mean that I must be open to my people's views and ideas, not on the defensive. It means that I must listen too. Listen to them. It would seem to me that a dialogical approach to all aspects of ministry would contribute to better preaching communication. Knowing one's members is a part of this and its practical implication is that the pastor should not move from parish to parish too frequently. The minimum length of stay should be about seven years in one parish, maximum from seven to twelve years.

A dialogical concept of ministry is an open invitation for counseling. By that I mean the giving to members the feeling of being able to talk with the pastor and even to question him without his feeling
insecure or threatened. It means that the dialogical pastor will from time to time be confessional in his preaching style, sharing his own experience of Christ as well as personal struggles with life and its meaning. In this way preaching can be brought into real contact with human need and with the life situations of the listeners.

Such a dialogical concept of ministry and of preaching is freedom producing. It frees the preacher from inhibitions with respect to experimentation and innovation. I am no longer fearful of involving listeners in the preaching of the sermon and have done so in a variety of ways as shall be indicated later. Variety is the secret in this inclusion and it serves to assist the preacher to be creative as he plans ways to share the preaching with his people. It also stimulates listener interest and application to the task at hand.

My confidence in the preaching office of the ministry as the most relevant and effective means of communicating the Gospel has been reinforced and increased. The data with respect to attitudinal change indicates that good things do happen when the Gospel is preached and heard. As a consequence I sense a new buoyancy as I approach the preaching task, and I speak with even more confidence that when the given Gospel message is preached by a called man the living Christ speaks and is heard.

The opportunity to hone my conception of preaching as a shared experience has had a definite influence on my ontology of preaching. By way of illustration, I find myself consciously thinking about preaching as a shared experience. It is no longer conceptualized as something I do exclusively by myself before an audience. In practice this has produced a new approach to drawing the listener into the experience with me. In beginning the pulpit prayer I might say, "Will you pray with me as we begin the task of sharing the Word together?" rather than "Let us pray."
Frequently I will use as the pulpit prayer:

Speak Lord in the stillness, while we wait on Thee; Hushed our hearts to listen in expectancy.

Speak O blessed Master, in this quiet hour; Let us see thy face Lord, feel thy touch of power.

—Adapted from Hymn #329
Adventist Church Hymnal

There is a dialogical dimension in preaching. It is functional when the preacher fulfills his distinct role as speaker and the church member his role as listener. The dialogical confrontation between the eternal Word, the living Word which is Jesus Christ, and the listener occurs when the Gospel is being preached and when that preaching is anchored in the Biblical revelation and the contemporary situation.

In terms of the practice of preaching, this project has freed me from some long held pulpit inhibitions. My background in a Lutheran liturgical tradition has prevented me from experimenting with preaching. Freedom to experiment is a welcome derivative from this project. This freedom will be more precisely reflected in the recommendations which follow. I will have to trust my conservative nature to keep experimentation within the bounds of proper ecclesiology.

Homiletical method.—The homiletical method used in the preparation of the eight sermons was fundamentally that of Lloyd M. Perry. The project has reinforced an appreciation for Perry's basic ideas, while at the same time it has reinforced my conviction that divine communication in preaching is not pre-determined by a homiletical method. If it was then our duty would be to discover the most superior method possible, and as quickly as possible, and teach only that method to homiletical students. Furthermore, we would then insist that they use no other. However, that not being the case individuality can still be maintained. Emphasis can, however, be placed on an investigation of various homiletical methods in
order that the student of preaching can find a method or a combination of methods which is most superior for him.

Participants in the Treatment and Control groups became a bit tired of the weekly repetition of method, the formulated proposition followed by a certain number of announced main points. While the method no doubt contributed to the ability of respondents to recall the main points, its repetitive use week after week became stilted and mechanical for me. I was relieved when the preaching portion of the project was completed and I was again free to vary method.

Furthermore, it was difficult for me to approach Perry's method in a puristic fashion, that is to say, be extremely careful to apply it correctly in a technical way. My use of his ideas in the future will be tempered by my own personality and less technical methodology. I do not question at all the homiletical validity of Perry's method, merely the extent to which I can use it without adaptation.

Preparation for preaching.—Applying the theology of preaching conceptualized in Chapter I to the practice of preaching reported in Chapters III and IV has led to the conclusion that preparation for preaching involves much more than the technical preparation of a specific sermon. It involves the internal dialogue that takes place in my own inner life between my will and the will of God, the striving of the Holy Spirit with me, together with a life-reflection dialogue in which my relationships with other persons is important. In addition, it involves a certain confrontation in my Christian consciousness between the Biblical Christian tradition and the context of contemporary life in which I must exist. With the added dimension of the active listener in mind, prepara-
tion for preaching involves also his dialogues and confrontations as
together we live and move toward the worship hour in the specific context
of which we shall share in the experience of preaching.

We are not preparing to prepare sermons, we are preparing to
preach! To be sure, one cannot preach without a sermon, but neither can
a sermon be preached if the preacher is not prepared to preach it. The
preacher is a craftsman, yes, but not only a technician. The important
thing is not the sermon, but the preaching of it. The goal of preparation
is the pulpit not the study, but the route to the pulpit is through the
study. The study cannot be detoured.

A dynamic minister understands his ministry wholistically,
dialogically, as preparation for preaching. What he does during the week
are not isolated incidents unrelated to what he does in the pulpit on the
Sabbath. He cannot view these activities as interesting but irrelevant to
his preaching.

For example, his discussion with his wife at breakfast about how
his baptismal class of 11 year old's lacks that certain degree of
seriousness that is part of personal decisions for Christ, will alert him
to this need when he faces the congregation on the Sabbath.

The hospital call on the long-time faithful member who is
hallucinating due to the cancer fighting drug being administered, will
make him realize how important it is to be clear in his interpretation
and presentation of truth.

The Church Board meeting at which the crisis of the combined
budget was discussed, makes him realize that his preaching must have that
certain element of inspiration to deeper and more full surrender to the
person and Lordship of Christ.
The conversation with the member who holds a deep resentment against another member, makes him realize how badly his people need to be lifted to a higher level of living and even how desperately they yearn for it.

When the preacher goes to his study to work on the sermon, he will know that he dare not be superficial or slovenly. His ministry of the week will draw on his compassion, firm his resolve, drive him to the Word and to prayer, fortify his own faith, lift his sagging spirits, reaffirm his call and ordination, and compell him to his pulpit. The man who walks in secret bondage arrives at that moment in time for which he has lived all week long, for which the week has prepared him. The centrality of preaching in the total tasks of his ministry has once again been affirmed. It is that way with me for I experience preaching to be central to my ministry. Everything I do contributes in some way to the preaching moment.

Even those silent, solemn, often sad and just as often joyful, hours in study are preparation for preaching. When I put all my theological, Biblical, homiletical, knowledge to work and apply them to the construction of a particular sermon, even that is just a part of preparation for preaching. The goal is not a finished sermon tucked into a Bible to await its moment. The goal is the moment of proclamation for a sermon is not finished until it has been preached. Even then it is not quite finished. It must be shared with others by the listeners.

This understanding of ministry as a unified whole all of which contributes to preaching, will serve to make ones preaching person-centered. The target of the message will be the person in the pew. The man with a wholistic concept of ministry, who all week long was conscious
of being involved in the process of preparation for preaching, will not preach "about" something but "to" someone and "with" someone.

Thus the living Christ uses a living man to speak to living men!

I need to say something about the sermon in this context in order that we maintain a balanced view with respect to preparation for preaching. While the goal is the preaching itself, that goal must be united with a well-prepared, well-thought out, prayed-over, sermon because in every confrontation between God and man there is a transmission of information. If we were to conceive of the preaching event as an activity largely unrelated to the ministers work in his study and on his knees, it could be a moment where anything goes and wherein anything could be said.

The sermon itself must be looked upon from the point of view of the responsibility of the preaching moment, and that moment from the point of view of the sermon. Preaching is thus no more an isolated event in the life of the minister than is the planning and preparation of the sermon.

What we need to be concerned about here is the uniting of content with context. The context of the preaching event must be infused, enlivened, energized, informed, with the content of the Word of God preached.

This approach to preaching, to ministry, is not for the lazy individual but for the disciplined and alert minister of the Gospel. Such a view of preaching as central to ministry is in keeping with a wholistic theology. Therefore, one cannot be slovenly in his attitude and approach to preaching, leaving all to the "inspiration" of the moment of proclamation.

The preacher must come to that moment imbued with his call to minister, of which preaching is a vital part. Of which preaching is central. He must come with a passionate concern for the eternal welfare of his people. He must come fully informed as to the content of his
message, well-prepared having used all of the skills his training has sharpened. He must come in the consciousness that he is a spokesman for God with a message from God to God's people. He must come in the conviction that when he preaches the given Gospel Christ will speak and be heard. He must come with eager excitement to the moment for which the Lord and his weeks work have been preparing him.

**Theology of expression.**— What follows are simply some incipient thoughts relative to a theology of expression; thoughts generated by observation of those who have participated in the project and in innovations during subsequent preaching experiences.

The Bible says concerning those who receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, "... you also are witnesses." It also says: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses ... to the end of the earth." We are also counseled by the Word of God to always be prepared to answer for the hope that we have in Christ.

How can a Christian witness if he has not learned to express himself? If opportunities have not been presented him when he can test his thoughts about the Lord, his reflections on his experience with the Lord, in dialogue? Opportunities need to be provided for members of a congregation to share with other members what they have learned and experienced in their relationship with Christ, and what this means to them.

Participation in such witness dialogue helps the individual to clarify what God has been doing for him and in him, to clarify his

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1 John 15:27.
2 Acts 1:8.
3 1 Peter 3:15.
thinking about what God has done in his life and to increase his courage to witness. It also tends to build confidence in his ability to share, to articulate, to bear witness to his religious experience.

A concept of preaching on the part of the lay member of the church in which he participates dialogically can contribute to increased confidence in expression. Especially when such participation involves actual sharing of thoughts and ideas in response to preaching. The actual use of the instruments designed for this study project, the thought and attention required in their use, and perhaps even the conversation with family and friends during or following their use, may very well have contributed to change in attitude. This could also be said of the dialogue sessions following the fifth and last sermon in the series. In the sharing interaction that took place there comes confidence in ability to share, and witness could be strengthened. Finding that thoughts and ideas do not meet with condemnation and suspicion but with appreciation would lead to confidence when opportunities came to share faith with non-Christians.

Participation in panel discussions following the preaching of sermons, being invited by the preacher to help conclude open-ended sermons, such opportunities would, it stands to reason, increase not only listener perception but also ability to express what one believes.

The dialogical action that is part of preaching reaches its climax when the listener offers himself to Christ in loving service and witness. The sermon is, therefore, the forerunner of witness. True dialogical preaching bears fruit in witness for Christ. This is the only conclusion possible when one works within the framework of a theological methodology that has evangelism as one of its major presuppositions.
New Stance in Preaching Practice

A new stance in preaching practice has arisen out of the fact that I am now more free to experiment with innovations. Two such innovations will be mentioned here: (1) The preaching of open-ended sermons, and (2) The use of active dialogue sessions.

Open-ended sermons.— Since the conclusion of this preaching project I have experimented on three occasions with open-ended sermons. By open-ended sermons I mean a sermon for which I had prepared no conclusion. I invited the congregation to conclude the sermons by asking for verbal response. On the first occasion I did not warn them ahead of time but simply stopped at the point where a conclusion would normally have been given and invited a response. Responses were slow in coming and there were but three of them. The first was a solicited response from an ordained pastor who happened to be serving on the platform with me that day. The dynamics of the situation indicated that the response I was calling for needed to be modeled. Fortunately he was able to respond and provide the model. His example served to elicit two more responses from the congregation.

On the second occasion I informed the congregation when I began the sermon that I would invite response at the end. This time five such responses were made. Following the service that day at least two persons said that I brought the sharing session to a close too soon as they were in the process of thinking and formulating a response.

On the third occasion I also informed the congregation at the beginning of the sermon and this time I was careful not to close dialogue too soon. There were at least a dozen very significant responses made, all of them directly related to what had been said in the sermon.
Following this experience two persons told me that they wished it could be done more often and that they appreciated it very much.

During the sharing of responses I felt quite comfortable and at ease and had no fear that I could not handle the situation. The general feeling expressed by members of the congregation was that they appreciated hearing and sharing what God had said to them by means of the preaching experience. It was evident to me that when this kind of thing is done a new dynamic spirit enters into the worship service and the preaching experience, both pastor and people sense the dialogical nature of preaching as a confrontation of meanings.

Dialogue sessions.— Dialogue sessions followed two of the sermons in the series. They have already been reported on and evaluated. However, about eight months after the project was completed I preached a series of sermons on worship. Following the fourth sermon in the series I invited one of the adult Sabbath School classes to respond to the sermon by way of a panel discussion. This was by prior arrangement of course. Participation of the teacher had been solicited and of his class members through him. Members were invited to take chairs around a table that had been placed on the floor beneath the pulpit. About ten minutes were consumed in the discussion. Conversation was readily entered into and the responses indicated that the sermon had been heard, that it had stimulated thought and had challenged them with a new idea which they were able to process.

Most of the members of the class were able to recall and articulate the central idea and the key word, but there were two interesting comments indicating that something else had been heard that was meaningful. One individual felt that the central idea presented was that each person
must be prepared for worship. But I had not made any reference to that in the sermon! Yet she had heard it and applied it to her life experience at that moment.

Another member indicated that she felt what I had been saying was that if people would come to prayer meeting faithfully such a panel would not be necessary as discussion could take place there. She indicated that she had not been as faithful as she felt she should in prayer meeting attendance. But I had said nothing about that in the sermon! Yet she heard it and applied it to her life experience in terms of public confession and resolve. It was quite evident that something significant had happened to those two individuals in that they heard a message related to the general subject of the sermon, which was worship, yet unrelated to the central idea as formulated by the preacher. Needs were met and we can make the assumption that the material was made available by the Holy Spirit leading to change.

In terms of preparation for preaching the discussion that took place provided significant material for the next sermon in the series as specific needs were made apparent that could be met, and/or answered, in the following message.

Heuristic Generation

The value of any educational enterprise is tested not only by what is learned but also by what is creatively generated. Two such spin-offs were generated in the process of implementing and reporting on this project: (1) The writing of an article for publication, and (2) The preparation of an outline for a course entitled Theology of Ministry.

Article for publication.— While reflecting on the negative attitude toward preaching that has prevailed in church circles over the past
two decades in relation to the increase in incidents of young ministers demitting the ministry, the seed thought for an article was sown. The result was the writing of such an article under the title "Called To Be." The article discusses the apostle Paul's ontological consciousness of his calling. It was submitted to the Ministry magazine and appeared in the April 1975 issue under the title "Peddlers or Prophets?"

Theology of Ministry.— If confidence in the validity of the preaching office is lacking among young ministers, and if many young ministers are being tempted to demit, the cause may very well lay in a lack of personal surrender to the ministry as a way of life. This concern has stimulated the preparation of an outline for an academic course entitled Theology of Ministry. Basic to the course is the offering of opportunity for thought and reflection on ministry not as function but as a life absorbing profession. The course considers the ministry from both theological and ontology perspectives.

Recommendations

Recommendations which grew out of this study are five in number and have to do with: (1) A congregational survey, (2) A training program in listening skills, (3) More extensive/intensive training sessions, (4) Further testing of Lloyd Perry's homiletical method, and (5) the specialized professional model for the Doctor of Ministry degree.

Congregational survey

It is recommended that one of the first tasks to be done in a new parish by a newly appointed pastor is the taking of a survey designed to

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1 The official theological organ for Pastors of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
ascertain attitudes toward, and expectations of, preachers and preaching. Valuable information can thus be obtained that will be helpful in setting the tone and direction preaching will take in that congregation. It will reveal strengths and weaknesses, areas where attention is required, and it will protect the minister from expending time and energy on areas where issues have already been resolved. If the congregation has already been trained to accept its responsibility for the success of preaching, then this need not be emphasized. The new pastor can move right on from there.

The first instrument used in this study was adequate to gather information pertinent to the study with reference to congregational attitudes toward preachers and preaching. Additional valuable information could have been acquired if the instrument had been expanded to include the congregations conception of the pastoral role, their evaluation of the worship service as the context for preaching, an evaluation of sermons preached by the pastor in terms of their application to life situations, and more precise evaluation of the congregations participation in preaching as a shared experience.

**Training in Listening Skills**

It is recommended that the minister who is concerned about communicating the Gospel, and in spiritual growth among the members of his congregation, plan a training program in listening skills for the whole congregation. This should be done during the first year he serves as pastor of any congregation. Depending on the size of the congregation it could be divided into a number of groups. Each group would receive training in listening skills. It is conceivable that the entire congregation could receive such training in the course of one year. It is obvious the strength this would add to the effectiveness of the
preaching ministry in any parish. Members would be better prepared to hear the Word of God, and consequently better Christians.

**Extensive/Intensive Training**

It is recommended that training be strengthened extensively and intensively. Two training sessions of two hours each proved to be inadequate in this study. Weakness was apparent in the application of listening theory to listening practice. It is felt that this could be resolved by more extensive training. From four to six sessions should be planned for.

Intensively, training can be strengthened by providing more opportunity for listening practice and the analysis of the results of such practice. In other words, participants should be provided the opportunity to practice the listening theory they have received until listener perception has been sharpened by means of self and group critique. It might be helpful to test the effectiveness of the training by means of before and after responses to sermons.

**Testing Perry's Method**

A careful reading of the sermons found in the appendix by one who is familiar with Perry's homiletical method, will reveal that his method was not used puristically. The method was adapted to my own style. It is, therefore, quite possible that another preacher using Perry's method more accurately would be able to measure a different kind of response from listeners. In other words, a more puristic usage of his method may very well contribute to a greater ability to recall central ideas and main points as they are formulated by the preacher than this project study indicates.

A test of the validity of Perry's method along such lines was not
built in to this project. It is recommended, therefore, that a further study be undertaken by an interested student of preaching in which a comparison would be made between his method and another. Data with respect to the influence homiletical method has on ability to retain and recall, as well as on attitudinal change, would be invaluable to both the teacher and the student of preaching.

Specialized Professional Model

This project and Project Report constitutes a representative example of the specialized professional model for the Doctor of Ministry degree. It has focused its attention on the interaction of theory and practice and its main thrust has been on improving the practice of ministry in a specialized area rather than on the accumulation of new theory for the informing of ministry.

In terms of the theory that underlies practice in this project, the project presented the student with the opportunity to think through and conceptualize what he believed about preaching. The goal of this project has not been this Project Report, but a sharpened ability to practice the preaching ministry on the part of the man who ministers. The goal has not been an academic one but an ontological one in that it has to do with the self-understanding of the man who ministers as preacher in relation to improved practice. This is based on the assumption that a greater self-understanding in terms of call to ministry will eventuate in a more enhanced, perceptive, fulfilling, and incisive preaching ministry.

In my opinion this project model forms the most viable approach to learning that is in harmony with the general philosophy of the Doctor of Ministry program at Andrews University. Experience with this model has resulted in change taking place at the point of interaction between theory
and practice. As a working pastor I believe that the specialized professional model, as opposed to the academic model, in which such interaction between theory and practice is basic is best suited to produce the kind of learning the Doctor of Ministry degree program envisions. The Doctor of Ministry degree does not represent just another academic accomplishment, it represents growth and improvement in the practical ministry of the man who has earned it. The uniqueness of this degree program will be maintained only if enrollees resist all temptations toward a purely academic emphasis.

Therefore, it is recommended that future candidates for the Doctor of Ministry degree at Andrews University consider seriously the adoption of the specialized professional model as opposed to the academic model. This model will provide the greatest and most relevant opportunity for increased competency in the practice of ministry.
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BOOKS


Nichols, Ralph G. *Listening is a Ten Part Skill*. Chicago: Enterprise Publications, no copyright date.


**PERIODICALS**


A PROCESS OF PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF D-MIN PROJECT AND PROJECT REPORT

1. Develop project proposal. Determine: objectives and methodology.

2. Project seminar discussion.

3. Submit formal proposal for project to D-Min Committee.

4. Approval of project by D-Min Committee.

5. Selection of materials and bibliography.

6. Develop basic design of project and Project Report

7. Writing of chapter one "My Theology of Preaching"

8. Writing of chapter two "Learning to listen"

9. Develop instruments for empirical research.

10. Select treatment group "A" and control group "B".

11. Training of treatment group "A".

12. Implementation of project: preaching and dialogue with congregation.

13. Interpretation and evaluation of instruments and writing of final chapters.
BELOW YOU WILL FIND A SERIES OF STATEMENTS CONCERNING PREACHERS AND PREACHING. EACH STATEMENT IS FOLLOWED BY A SCALE MARKED STRONGLY AGREE (SA); AGREE (A); UNCERTAIN (U); DISAGREE (D); STRONGLY DISAGREE (SD).

PLEASE INDICATE HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT EACH OF THE STATEMENTS BY PLACING A CIRCLE AROUND THE APPROPRIATE ANSWER ON THE SCALE.

1. I have hardly ever heard a Seventh-day Adventist Minister say something in his sermons that was inconsistent with the Bible.
   SA   A   U   D   SD

2. I frequently hear statements made by Seventh-day Adventist Preachers that I cannot find support for in the Bible.
   SA   A   U   D   SD

3. I find the mannerisms of some Preachers make it difficult for me to concentrate on what they are saying.
   SA   A   U   D   SD

4. Sermons that focus on the application to life of a single idea from Scripture are more useful than sermons presenting many ideas.
   SA   A   U   D   SD

5. I prefer sermons that deal with doctrines rather than those dealing with life situations.
   SA   A   U   D   SD

6. I find that illustrations are used too frequently by many Preachers.
   SA   A   U   D   SD

7. I find that illustrations are not used frequently enough by most Preachers.
   SA   A   U   D   SD

8. Illustrations used in sermons are very helpful to me.
   SA   A   U   D   SD
9. I like Preachers who tell lots of stories.
   SA A U D SD

10. I like sermons that are short and to the point.
    SA A U D SD

11. Sermons should be no longer than thirty minutes.
    SA A U D SD

12. Every sermon should be followed by an altar appeal.
    SA A U D SD

13. A sermon should contain many Bible quotations in order for it to be a Biblical sermon.
    SA A U D SD

14. We do not hear enough sermons related to current events.
    SA A U D SD

15. I feel that we hear too much about the second advent of Christ.
    SA A U D SD

16. Sermons should quote frequently from the Spirit of Prophecy.
    SA A U D SD

17. Most quotations from Ellen White and used in sermons are taken out of context to support a pet idea.
    SA A U D SD

18. Most of the quotations from Ellen White used in sermons are of a negative rather than a positive character.
    SA A U D SD

19. Because Ellen White quotes are so frequently misused, they should be avoided entirely in sermons.
    SA A U D SD

20. Quotations from non-Biblical sources should never be used in sermons.
    SA A U D SD
21. The Preacher should always be optimistic in his message.
   SA A U D SD

22. The Preacher should always be happy in his presentation.
   SA A U D SD

23. The Preacher should speak directly and forcefully.
   SA A U D SD

24. A Minister should never preach on controversial subjects.
   SA A U D SD

25. A Preacher should stay in the pulpit while preaching rather than move about the platform.
   SA A U D SD

26. A Preacher should never raise his voice while preaching.
   SA A U D SD

27. The Preacher should not expect the Listener to give him full attention.
   SA A U D SD

Some individuals feel that what and how much they obtain from a sermon is solely the responsibility of the Preacher. Other individuals feel that what and how much they obtain is entirely dependant upon them. There are also many positions between these extremes.

ON THE FOLLOWING SCALE, YOU WILL FIND AT ONE SIDE THE WORD "ENTIRELY PREACHER" AND ON THE OTHER SIDE THE WORDS, "ENTIRELY YOU".

WHERE DO YOU PLACE THE RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN ENTIRELY PREACHER AND ENTIRELY YOU? MARK WITH AN X.

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INFORMATION

AGE: _______
SEX: _______

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A CHURCH MEMBER? ___________

GROUP   A   B   (Circle one)

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READ AND THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING SITUATION

John is a successful young executive aged 35, and is married to a beautiful and talented wife, Jane, aged 32. Both have college degrees, are talented and capable, and are highly respected in the community. They are very successful people, own their own $50,000 home in a fashionable suburb and have two children, Tom, aged 12, and Debra, age 8, both of whom are bright and attractive. They are considered by friends as an ideal family who have everything going for them and a bright future ahead.

Tragedy strikes. In a violent car accident, John is left totally paralyzed and unable to work. Jane is disfigured and lapsed into a deep emotional depression from which no one seems able to retrieve her. The children, too, suffer the trauma of their parents illnesses and are much worried about their health, their finances, and their future.

You pay a visit to John in the hospital. What would you say to him in counsel? (Write below.)
Jack Jones and his wife Samantha have recently been seeking for meaning to life. They have found it in a mutual conversion experience in which both of them have been radiantly transformed by Jesus Christ. They are looking for a Church Home and begin to attend services at First Church. First Church is known for its influence and prestige in the community and has attracted some of the best and most prominent people to its membership. It can be classified as an upper-middle class congregation. The Jones' are black.

Believing themselves to be community minded and free of prejudice, the leaders of First Church kindly, and in Christian love, suggest to Jack and Samantha that while they are certainly most welcome at First Church, perhaps they ought to visit other Churches a bit more before they decide on a Church Home. As a matter of fact, they might even find themselves much more at ease and at home in the fellowship of Bethel Church on the North side. Bethel is a predominantly black congregation with a black minister.

How do you feel about the counsel given to Jack and Samantha? (Write below.)

If you feel there is a more appropriate counsel to be given, suggest what it might be. (Write below.)
Advent Church on Second Street has become the talk of the town. After thirty years of evangelism and growth, to say nothing of achieving the highest respect of the community, it has suddenly become riddled with strife and contention. The dissatisfaction of its members has resulted in traumatic congregational meetings, feelings are raw on the surface, suspicion and distrust have become widespread among the members. The consequence has been a drastic drop in worship attendance with an accompanying dangerous slump in offerings. At least 15 families have transferred to other Churches.

The very program and mission of the Church is in jeopardy. Most of the members have been deeply shocked to think that such a thing could happen to them after thirty years of harmonious work and witness. There is a courageous attempt being made to continue to worship and serve.

How would such a situation cause you to feel about the Church and its mission?

What do you think could be done to help the situation?
The world we live in is experiencing crisis after crisis. Political crises. Economic crises. Moral crises. Family crises. Giant airliner crashes with over 300 dead. Unemployment is increasing. There is an energy crisis affecting all of us. Crime and dope addiction is on the increase. There is trouble and strife all over the world. People feel uncertain.

All of this is part of our daily experience. Then there are those personal crises that every individual faces from time to time.

How do you feel about the present world situation and/or your own life situation?
Page Five

Individuals have different ideas concerning the relationship between the Preacher and God's Spirit.

CIRCLE THE NUMBER NEXT TO THE STATEMENT BELOW WHICH YOU FEEL, BEST REPRESENTS THE RELATIONSHIP YOU BELIEVE EXISTS BETWEEN A PREACHER AND GOD'S SPIRIT AND WORD.

1. The Preacher is a student of God's Word and should attempt to present it to the people as accurately and factually as possible.

2. While we do not have prophets in today's Church, God does speak through His Spirit in the message of dedicated Ministers.

3. At times, the Minister is speaking his own words, at other times, he may be influenced by God's Spirit.

4. The extent to which the Lord speaks through a Preacher, is dependant upon the extent that the Minister seeks to use God's Word honestly and looks for guidance from His Spirit.

5. God speaks through dedicated Ministers, but not all Ministers are dedicated.

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Some individuals feel that what and how much they obtain from a Sermon, is solely the responsibility of the Preacher. Other individuals feel that what and how much they obtain, is entirely dependant on the listener.

There are also many positions between these extremes.

ON THE FOLLOWING SCALE, YOU WILL FIND AT ONE SIDE THE WORDS "ENTIRELY PREACHER" AND ON THE OTHER SIDE, THE WORDS, "ENTIRELY LISTENER".

WHERE DO YOU PLACE THE RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN "ENTIRELY PREACHER" AND "ENTIRELY LISTENER"?

ENTIRELY
PREACHER / / / / / ENTIRELY
LISTENER
Dear

As you know, I am in the process of taking special courses at Andrews University leading to the Doctor of Ministry Degree. In the course of my studies, I have become aware of what might be considered a need on the part of the average Church Member, and would like to be of service to our Congregation in trying to meet that need. The need to which I refer, involves the development of increased ability to listen well to the sermons preached by your Minister.

As we have worshipped and worked together this past year, I have been very impressed with the attention the Congregation gives to the preaching of God's Word. Perhaps that is one reason I enjoy preaching here so much!

I have made a special selection of your name because I feel that you are the kind of worshipper who is deeply interested in personal Christian growth, and that you would respond most positively to an opportunity for self-improvement.

On Sabbath April 6, I shall begin to preach a series of eight sermons on the theme "Faith To Face The Future". The last sermon in the series will be preached June 1. What I am inviting you to do is share this preaching experience with me as a member of a critique and evaluative group.

This group will meet for training sessions on developing listening skills for two hours Sabbath afternoons, March 16, and 30. Following this training period, I am asking you to help me become a better preacher by meeting as a group for no more than one hour after each sermon in the series of eight for critique and evaluation. Questionnaires will be prepared for you to use in this evaluation.
Three very important things can be accomplished by your participation:

1. You can be strengthened in your own personal growth by developing an increased sensitivity to what is happening when the Gospel is preached.

2. The preaching itself can be strengthened as I receive benefit from your critique and evaluation.

3. You and I both can increase our understanding of preaching as a shared experience.

Would you please call me either at the Church, (926-8891) or at my home (471-2236) and let me know of your willingness to help me and yourself in what can prove to be a wonderful experience.

Remember the dates!

Training sessions: March 16th, and 30th, from 3 to 5 P.M.

Thank you so much for your willing cooperation and may God continue to richly bless our Congregation.

Sincerely,

C. Raymond Holmes, Pastor

P.S. Your team will be designated Team #A and will meet in the room across from the Sanctuary entrance following the service.
Dear

As you know, I am in the process of taking special courses at Andrews University leading to the Doctor of Ministry Degree. In the course of my studies, I have become aware of what might be considered a need on the part of the average Church Member, and would like to be of service to our Congregation in helping meet that need. The need to which I refer, involves the development of an increased awareness and understanding of preaching as an experience shared by both Preacher and Congregation. That is to say, both Preacher and Listener have a shared responsibility for the success of any sermon.

As we have worked and worshipped together this past year, I have been very impressed with the attention the Congregation gives to the preaching of the Word of God. Perhaps that is one reason why I enjoy preaching here so much!

I have made a special selection of your name because I feel that you are the kind of person who would respond positively to this kind of opportunity.

What I am inviting you to do, is serve as a Member of a critical and evaluative team that would function during the preaching of a series of eight sermons on the theme, "Faith To Face The Future".

The series will be preached by me beginning Sabbath April 6 with the final one on June 1. Your team would meet together for no more than one hour following the Service on those Sabbaths for critique and evaluation. Special questionnaires will be prepared for you to use.
Three things can be accomplished by your participation:

1. You can be strengthened in your own personal growth by developing an increased sensitivity to what is happening when the Gospel is preached.

2. The preaching itself can be strengthened as your Minister receives the benefit of your critique and evaluation.

3. You and I both can increase our understanding of preaching as a shared experience.

Would you please call me either at the Church, (926-8891) or at my home (471-2236) and let me know of your willingness to participate in what can be a wonderful experience.

Remember the dates!

April 6th to June 1, (with the exception of April 13th, as I will be speaking in Detroit on that day.)

Thank you so much for your willing cooperation and may God continue to richly bless our Congregation.

Sincerely yours,

C. Raymond Holmes, Pastor

P.S. Your Team will be designated as Team #B and will meet in the Junior Room following the service.
INFORMATION:

DATE ______________

AGE ______________

SEX ______________

LENGTH OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP ______________

GROUP  A        B (Circle one)

*****************************************************************************

1. State in your own words what you feel to be the most important idea presented in today's sermon.
2. Sermons speak to different individuals in different ways. We are interested to know what you heard as you listened to today's sermon. Following are four sets of ideas.

READ EACH SET CAREFULLY AND CIRCLE ONE LETTER IN EACH SET BESIDE THE STATEMENT YOU BEST FEEL REPRESENTS AN IDEA PRESENTED IN TODAY'S SERMON.

IF IN ONE OF THE SETS YOU SEE TWO ITEMS YOU THINK WERE A PART OF TODAY'S SERMON, CIRCLE THE LETTER BESIDE THE STATEMENT YOU FEEL WAS MOST CENTRAL TO THE OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE SERMON.

Set #1

A. If God chose us to be His sons, there is no possible way that we can know of His decision.

B. An individual is the son of God by his own choice and not by God's choice.

C. God chose us in Christ to be His sons before the foundation of the world.

D. We exist in this world simply by chance.

Set #2

A. God destined us to be His sons through Christ.

B. The fact that we are the sons of God through Christ, indicates a carefully worked out plan.

C. Because of the imperfections of life and of human beings, there is every indication that no such plan exists.

D. Man is only an experiment in a universal laboratory.

Set #3

A. God not only speaks, He acts.

B. Whatever we have in this life, is due to our own efforts.

C. God freely bestowed His grace upon us in Christ.

D. God forgives sinners.
Set #4

A. What meaning there is to life is found in human relationships alone.

B. All that God does, He does in secret.

C. God has made known the mystery of His will in Christ.

D. Revelation is the word which describes the hiddenness of God.

3. The language used in a sermon, and the manner in which it is used, can both help or hinder an individual in understanding the message of the sermon.

BY CIRCLING THE NUMBER TO THE LEFT OF THE STATEMENT, INDICATE THE STATEMENT THAT BEST DESCRIBES HOW THE LANGUAGE USED IN TODAY'S SERMON AFFECTED YOU.

1. I found the vocabulary easy to understand and the thoughts organized in a natural sequence.

2. I understood the vocabulary for the most part, but there were some words that I did not understand.

3. I found that much of the vocabulary used is not commonly used in everyday speech. This made it more difficult for me to understand the message.

4. None of the above statements accurately represents my feelings. The following is an accurate statement of how the vocabulary and manner of presentation affected me. (Write below.)
If you have specific suggestions as to how the vocabulary or organization of the words might assist you in more effectively understanding the sermon, please make these suggestions below.

4. During the preaching of today's sermon, how difficult did you find it to keep your full attention on the message?

INDICATE YOUR ANSWER BY MARKING AN X AT THE APPROPRIATE POINT ON THE SCALE BELOW.

Very / / / / / / / / / Not Difficult

If possible, please explain your answer below.

5. During the preaching of today's sermon, were you motivated to examine your ideas and will to see if they were in harmony with God's ideas and will for you?

INDICATE YOUR ANSWER BY MARKING AN X AT THE APPROPRIATE POINT ON THE SCALE BELOW.

Very / / / / / / / / / Not Much / / / / / / / / At All
6. During the preaching of today's sermon, did you feel as though the preacher was more interested in you as a person, or more interested in the doctrines contained in the sermon?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH A CHECK (✓)

_____ More interested in doctrines.
_____ Equally interested in me and in doctrines.
_____ More interested in me.

7. Do you feel that today's sermon emphasized a message directed to individuals or to the congregation as a whole?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH A CHECK (✓)

_____ Only to individuals.
_____ More to individuals than to Congregation
_____ Equally to individuals and Congregation
_____ More to Congregation
_____ Only to whole Congregation

8. During the preaching of today's sermon, did you feel that you were making some kind of response to the message you were hearing from God?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH A CHECK (✓)

_____ Yes
_____ Uncertain
_____ No
9. Taking into consideration the Preacher's tone of voice, hand and body gestures, and facial expressions, mark an X on the scales below at the point which best indicates the principle feelings he conveyed to you during the preaching to today's sermon.

Happy /________/ _______ Sad
Sincere /________/ _______ Insincere
Flippant /________/ _______ Serious
Authority /________/ _______ No Authority
Unconcerned /________/ _______ Concerned
Bold /________/ _______ Timid
Weak /________/ _______ Strong
Belief /________/ _______ Unbelief
Hopeless /________/ _______ Hopeful
INFORMATION:

DATE ______________

AGE ______________

SEX ____________

LENGTH OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP _________________

GROUP A B (Circle one)

*******************************************************************************

1. State in your own words what you feel to be the most important idea presented in today's sermon.
2. Sermons speak to different individuals in different ways. We are interested to know what you heard as you listened to today's sermon. Following are two sets of ideas.

READ EACH SET CAREFULLY AND CIRCLE ONE LETTER IN EACH SET BESIDE THE STATEMENT YOU FEEL BEST REPRESENTS AN IDEA PRESENTED IN TODAY'S SERMON.

SET #1

a. God made a decision to create us and redeem us.

b. We have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of the glory of Christ.

c. It is the destiny of mankind to live in a troubled world hoping for the best life possible under the circumstances.

d. The future is by a dim prospect for mankind.

SET #2

a. In the ancient near East, rings were used in place of signatures.

b. To be sad and hopeless is inevitable in this world.

c. We have been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

d. Happiness is not dependant upon knowing the truth.

3. During the preaching of today's sermon, did you feel as though the Preacher was more interested in you as a person, or more interested in the doctrines contained in the sermon?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH AN X

_______ More interested in doctrines.

_______ Equally interested in me and in doctrines.

_______ More interested in me.
4. During the preaching of today's sermon, were you motivated to examine your ideas and will to see if they were in harmony with God's ideas and will for you?

INDICATE YOUR ANSWER BY MARKING AN X AT THE APPROPRIATE POINT ON THE SCALE BELOW.

Very Much / / / / / / / / At All

5. Taking into consideration on the Preacher's tone of voice, hand and body gestures, and facial expressions mark an X on the scales below at the point which best indicates the principle feelings he conveyed to you during the preaching of today's sermon.

Hopeless / / / / / / / / / Hopeful
Belief / / / / / / / / / Unbelief
Weak / / / / / / / / / Strong
Bold / / / / / / / / / Timid
Unconcerned / / / / / / / / / Concerned
Authority / / / / / / / / / No Authority
Flippant / / / / / / / / / Serious
Sincere / / / / / / / / / Insincere
Happy / / / / / / / / / Sad
INFORMATION:
DATE ________________
AGE ________________
SEX ________________
LENGTH OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP ________________
GROUP A B (Circle one)

*******************************************************************************

1. State in your own words what you feel to be the most important idea presented in today's sermon.
2. Sermons speak to different individuals in different ways. We are interested to know what you heard as you listened to today's sermon. Following are three sets of ideas.

READ EACH SET CAREFULLY AND CIRCLE ONE LETTER IN EACH SET BESIDE THE STATEMENT YOU FEEL WAS MOST CENTRAL TO THE OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE SERMON.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SET #1</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Life is hopeless.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. God has called us to hope.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Man's extremity is God's opportunity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d. The concept of hope is foreign to contemporary life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SET #2</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Our inheritance must be earned.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. There is not such a thing as an inheritance beyond this life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. God has provided a rich inheritance for us.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d. We are the wealthiest people in the world.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SET #3</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. It is the greatness of God's power that guarantees our reception of our spiritual inheritance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. It is the obedience of God's people that guarantees their reception of the spiritual inheritance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. It is completely nonsensical to speak of a spiritual inheritance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. While faith accepts, hope expects.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. During the preaching of today's sermon, how difficult did you find it to keep your full attention on the message?

INDICATE YOUR ANSWER BY MARKING AN X AT THE APPROPRIATE POINT ON THE SCALE BELOW.

| VERY DIFFICULT / / / / / / | NOT DIFFICULT |
4. During the preaching of today's sermon, did you feel as though the Preacher was more interested in you as a person, or more interested in the doctrines contained in the sermon?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH AN X

_____ More interested in doctrines.

_____ Equally interested in me and in doctrines.

_____ More interested in me.

5. During the preaching of today's sermon, were you motivated to examine your ideas and your will to see if they were in harmony with God's ideas and will for you?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH AN X AT THE APPROPRIATE POINT ON THE SCALE.

VERY NOT
MUCH / / / / / / AT ALL

6. During the preaching of today's sermon, did you feel that you were making some kind of response to the message you were hearing from God?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH AN X

_____ Yes

_____ Uncertain

_____ No

7. What are some facts you have learned from today's sermon? Mention in particular anything "new".

8. Can you suggest a recent incident in your life where this sermon would make a difference? How?
INFORMATION:

DATE ___________
AGE ___________
SEX ___________
LENGTH OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP _______________

GROUP A B (Circle one)

1. State in your own words what you feel to be the most important idea presented in today's sermon.
2. Sermons speak to different individuals in different ways. We are interested to know what you heard as you listened to today's sermon. Following are three sets of ideas.

READ EACH SET CAREFULLY AND CIRCLE ONE LETTER IN EACH SET BESIDE THE STATEMENT YOU FEEL WAS MOST CENTRAL TO THE OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE SERMON.

SET #1

a. I can live purposefully because God has given me new life.

b. There is no purpose at all to life.

c. Salvation is a fact not a feeling.

d. I can live purposefully because I have the kind of knowledge and fortitude to do so.

SET #2

a. The prodigal son had no right to expect that his father would welcome him home.

b. I am my own master.

c. Fallen men have a fallen master.

d. I can live purposefully because I have a new master.

SET #3

a. God acts according to divine whim and fancy.

b. God has given me a new purpose for living.

c. God is not interested in how I live.

d. The Church must remain faithful.

3. During the preaching of today's sermon, were you motivated to examine your ideas and will to see if they were in harmony with God's will and ideas?

INDICATE YOUR ANSWER BY MARKING AN X AT THE APPROPRIATE POINT ON THE SCALE BELOW.

Very Not
much / / / / / / / / At All
4. During the preaching of today's sermon, did you feel as though the Preacher was more interested in you as a person, or more interested in the doctrines contained in the sermon?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH AN X

________ More interested in doctrines.

________ Equally interested in me and in doctrines.

________ More interested in me.

5. The language used in a sermon, and the manner in which it is used, can both help or hinder an individual in understanding the message of the sermon.

INDICATE THE STATEMENT THAT BEST DESCRIBES HOW THE LANGUAGE USED IN TODAY'S SERMON AFFECTED YOU BY CIRCLING THE NUMBER TO THE LEFT OF THAT STATEMENT.

1. I found the vocabulary easy to understand and the thoughts organized in a natural sequence.

2. I understood the vocabulary for the most part, but there were some words that I did not understand.

3. I found that much of the vocabulary used is not commonly used in everyday speech. This made it more difficult for me to understand the message.

4. None of the above statements accurately represents my feelings. The following is an accurate statement of how the vocabulary and manner of presentation affected me.

6. Some individuals feel that preaching is an experience that Preacher and Listener share together. Others do not. Did you feel as though you were sharing in the preaching of today's sermon?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH AN X

_____ Yes

_____ No

_____ Uncertain
I. State in your own words what you feel to be the most important idea presented in today's sermon.
2. Sermons speak to different individuals in different ways. We are interested to know what you heard as you listened to today's sermon. Following are three sets of ideas. READ EACH SET CAREFULLY AND CIRCLE ONE LETTER IN EACH SET BESIDE THE STATEMENT YOU FEEL WAS MOST CENTRAL TO THE OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE SERMON.

SET #1

a. Beneath the surface of contemporary existence lurks a rage ready to burst its bonds.

b. Hostility between races will always exist for it is a natural thing.

c. God has broken down the wall of hostility between races.

d. The message of the Bible has nothing to say concerning the relationship between races.

SET #2

a. In the Church, distinctions do exist between the white and black race.

b. God has made us all members of the same household.

c. Ellen White says that there will never be an end to the separation between race and class.

d. God has showed partiality toward His creatures in that He has endowed certain races with gifts that are superior to other races.

SET #3

a. Racial hostility is sin.

b. Racial barriers will always be with us.

c. God has not created a racial barrier by creating some men black and some white.

d. God has brought us together in the blood of Christ.
3. During the preaching of today's sermon, how difficult did you find it to keep your full attention on the message?

INDICATE YOUR ANSWER BY MARKING AN X AT THE APPROPRIATE POINT ON THE SCALE BELOW.

Very Difficult / / / / / / / Not Difficult

If possible, please explain your answer below.

4. During the preaching of today's sermon, were you motivated to examine your ideas and will to see if they were in harmony with God's ideas and will for you?

INDICATE YOUR ANSWER BY MARKING AN X AT THE APPROPRIATE POINT ON THE SCALE BELOW.

Very Much / / / / / / / At All
5. During the preaching of today's sermon, did you feel as though the preacher was more interested in you as a person, or more interested in the doctrines contained in the sermon?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH A CHECK

( )

______ More interested in doctrines.

______ Equally interested in me and in doctrines.

______ More interested in me.

6. Do you feel that today's sermon emphasized a message directed to individuals or to the congregation as a whole?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH A CHECK

( )

______ Only to individuals.

______ More to individuals than to Congregation

______ Equally to individuals and Congregation

______ More to Congregation

______ Only to whole Congregation

7. During the preaching of today's sermon, did you feel that you were making some kind of response to the message you were hearing from God?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH A CHECK

( )

______ Yes

______ Uncertain

______ No
Taking into consideration the Preacher's tone of voice, hand and body gestures, and facial expressions, mark and X on the scales below at the point which best indicates the principle feelings he conveyed to you during the preaching to today's sermon.

Happy / / / / / / / Sad
Sincere / / / / / / / Insincere
Flippant / / / / / / / Serious
Authority / / / / / / / No Authority
Unconcerned / / / / / / / Concerned
Bold / / / / / / / Timid
Weak / / / / / / / Strong
Belief / / / / / / / Unbelief
Hopeless / / / / / / / Hopeful
I. State in your own words what you feel to be the most important idea presented in today’s sermon.
2. Sermons speak to different individuals in different ways. We are interested to know what you heard as you listened to today's Sermon. Following are three sets of ideas.

READ EACH SET CAREFULLY AND CIRCLE ONE LETTER IN EACH SET BESIDE THE STATEMENT YOU FEEL WAS MOST CENTRAL TO THE OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE SERMON.

SET #1

a. Because of the current situation in the Church at large, it is not possible to have any confidence in it at all.

b. One of the purposes for the Church's existence is to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

c. I can have confidence in the Church when I trust its divine purpose.

d. The Church has no divine purpose; it exists solely to meet social and ethical needs.

SET #2

a. The Church exists to reveal God's plan for the ages.

b. I am a part of the revealing of God's will and plan for the World.

c. I am just an insignificant nobody and have no influence or effect on the World around me in terms of good and right.

d. The Church exists to perpetuate a tradition.

SET #3

a. The Witness of the Church will have its final effect on Angels.

b. The Witness of the Church is totally ineffective both as far as this World is concerned and as far as Heaven is concerned.

c. Other institutions make a far more powerful impact on the World and its inhabitants than does the Church.

d. The purpose of the Church is to make known the wisdom of God.
3. What are some facts you have learned from today's sermon? Mention in particular anything new.

4. Can you suggest a recent incident in your life where today's sermon would make a difference? If so, how?

5. Do you feel that today's sermon emphasized a message directed to individuals or to the Congregation as a whole?

MARK YOUR ANSWER WITH AN X

_____ Only to individuals.

_____ More to individuals than to Congregation.

_____ Equally to individuals and Congregation.

_____ More to Congregation.

_____ Only to whole Congregation.
INFORMATION:

DATE: _____________________________________________

AGE: _____________________________________________

SEX: _____________________________________________

LENGTH OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: _____________________

GROUP  A  B  (Circle one)

I. State in your own words what you feel to be the most important idea presented in today's sermon.
2. Sermons speak to different individuals in different ways. We are interested to know what you heard as you listened to today's sermon. Following are three sets of ideas.

READ EACH SET CAREFULLY AND CIRCLE ONE LETTER IN EACH SET BESIDE THE STATEMENT YOU FEEL WAS MOST CENTRAL TO THE OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE SERMON.

SET #1,

a. In his prayer, Paul is demonstrating his faith in the spiritual realities of which he speaks in the Ephesian letter.

b. God does not hear our prayers.

c. The prayer of Paul is that Christ may dwell in our hearts.

d. Prayer is more an intellectual matter than one of faith.

SET #2

a. Paul's prayer is that the love of Christ may be fully known by us.

b. It is not possible to love someone one has never seen.

c. Love in an impulse, a transitory emotion.

d. There is no such thing as real love.

SET #3

a. The most powerful influences on the Christian are those of the culture in which he lives.

b. It is Paul's prayer that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

c. To speak of Christ indwelling, the believer is to speak of nonsense.

d. Even though we are sinners, we can do terribly influential things in life.
1. State in your own words what you feel to be the most important idea presented in today's sermon.
2. Sermons speak to different individuals in different ways. We are interested to know what you heard as you listened to today's sermon. Following are four sets of ideas.

READ EACH SET CAREFULLY AND CIRCLE ONE LETTER IN EACH SET BESIDE THE STATEMENT YOU FEEL WAS MOST CENTRAL TO THE OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE SERMON.

SET #1

a. We are to live with all lowliness and meekness.
b. It makes no difference how we live.
c. God is not interested in our personal lives.
d. The life we are to live must be worthy of God's own character.

SET #2

a. To be patient is very difficult.
b. Patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit.
c. We are to live with patience.
d. It is not possible to learn patience.

SET #3

a. We are to live forbearing one another in love.
b. Believers are called to live a certain kind of life.
c. The life of the Christian is really no different from anyone else's.
d. Love is powerful.

SET #4

a. Vigilance is required if we are to live God's way.
b. We are to live eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
c. It is not possible for people of all races to live together in peace in the Church.
d. Peace is the bond that holds the Church together.
Sermon #1

TITLE: "Faith to Face the Future"

SUBJECT: Faith

THEME: The Biblical reasons why faith to face the future is possible.

SERMONIC PROCESS: Modification

TEXT: Ephesians 1:3-10

HYMNS: 379 - 433

SCRIPTURE READING: Romans 8:28-30

PLEASE NOTE: Hymns and Scripture readings are those used in the Order of Service when this sermon was preached. Hymns are in the order of use.
Are you afraid to face the future? So many people are these days. And there is so much to bring fear to our hearts. The constant threat of nuclear war. That a son may die in Vietnam in a war that seems to have no meaning. Pollution threatens to destroy our source of pure water, the productivity of our soil, and the life-giving oxygen of the very air we breath. Overcrowding in great cities turns them into human jungles. Crime in the streets and along the roads makes us afraid to go out at night. The increase in addiction to narcotics, as it enslaves bodies, makes us fear for our youth. Radical and anti-Christian philosophies of life and government threaten to enslave their minds. Revolution is in the air! Hearts are breaking for fear! Voices cry out for something to hold on to as the ship of life rocks so violently—for something that will give hope.

In many cases minds are incapable of seeing any hope for the future and are drifting into the past. Americans are backing away full steam astern, because they are afraid. Hair styles, dress the resurrection of the beard, are some indications that Americans are reaching back instead of forward. NOSTALGIA is the word today. In a recent issue of TIME the theatrical section reviewed a Broadway musical called "Follies" in which a desire to bring back the 30's and 40's is reflected. BUCK ROGERS again buzzing over the air waves. Nostalgia is all right, I suppose, for we all yearn for the good old days. Trouble is "nostalgia reflects only what is agreeable, and even that it distorts or turns into myth." But if it is caused by fear, what then? What positive results can nostalgia have? Trouble is mankind doesn't want to go far enough into the past to find its ground of hope, to find the eternal truths which help to face the future. The Ephesian church had some problems in facing the world of its time, and the future, and Paul writes with his
counsel and encouragement. But first he indicates what the ground of their hope is: The ETERNAL BLESSINGS OF GOD. 

The Word of God is full of the message that God's care can give us faith to face the future. Why can His care give us this faith? Because His blessing are eternal. These eternal blessings are clearly revealed in this passage from Ephesians. Paul begins by reminding us that God has "blessed us in X with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." The blessings we receive from Him in life originate in heaven. The heavenly ministry of Christ continues to shower them upon us day by day. ALL of God's blessings to us are given IN CHRIST. God blesses us in and through Jesus Christ. He was with God in the beginning. He is the promised one. He is the saviour, the redeemer, the intercessor, the sanctifier, the High Priest. All four of the eternal blessings mentioned here are given in and through Christ!

I—HE CHOSE US IN CHRIST BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD. That's God's DECISION. In God's mind a decision was made to create us, and also to redeem us should we go astray. Doesn't it give you a sense of worth, not of pride, but of worth to know that you originated in the mind of God? Doesn't it help to give meaning to your existence to know that you are not here simply by chance? That the human race is not just an accident?

I'm so glad the Bible calls God FATHER. You and I have a heavenly Father who cares for us, who made us, and who made us because He wants us. There are those who, if they have any thought of God at all, it is just to curse Him for creating them to live in the misery and trouble of this life. They think He has simply made Himself some toys which He enjoys watching and fiddling with until they fall apart and are cast aside. But that's not the picture of God the Bible paints. He is our Father. He cares for us. He thinks of us. All He does in this world is FOR us. He wants us. He loves us. Are your children an accident? Or did you want them? They know the difference you know. They know if they are loved and wanted. In a manner of speaking, just as
a man and his wife decide to have children, so God and Jesus made a joint decision to CHOOSE us. This choice had a purpose and goal: "that we should be holy and blameless before Him." He made man perfect. His will was that man would live forever in that perfection as a witness to the glory of the Father who made him. But man disobeyed and sinned.

I. HE DESTINED US IN LOVE TO BE HIS SONS THROUGH CHRIST. That's God's PLAN. He not only decided to create us, He carefully planned it. We are not afterthoughts! We are not experiments! In creating us He wanted to glorify Himself, and to bless us. The text says that this plan was "according to the purpose of His will." Imagine! God's plans are complete. They are prepared to meet any contingency, any waywardness on our part. In His foreknowledge God was aware that man would disobey Him and sin, that his perfection would be destroyed, and He PLANNED a way to restore us to sonship. We were first His sons by creation and perfect fellowship. That sonship was broken when we sinned. But IN CHRIST God's purpose for restoration is realized. He ADOPTS us as His sons again! He reached out for us THROUGH Christ. Christ became God's hand of love reaching out to draw us back into fellowship with the Father. "For God so loved the world that He gave..." Didn't you plan for your children? Lots of thoughts and dreams in those days, do you remember? Anson, a daughter, a home, a yard, a school, etc. Set up nursery. When the baby was born all was ready because you had planned well. Hospital and doctor paid. Suitcase was packed so father wouldn't panic! What a blessing it is to know that God PLANNED for us, and that life, in spite of its present imperfections, is a part of that plan!

II. HE FREELY BESTOWED HIS GRACE UPON US IN CHRIST. That's His ACTION. God didn't spend eternity making plans, He did something about it. He acted. He created us according to those plans and decisions. And when we fell into sin and rebellion He acted again! He not only tells us He loves us, He SHOWS. By giving His son for our sin, 2 verses on this point. Big words here. Important truths. Christ gave His life voluntarily, shed His blood, took the wrath
of God upon Himself in our place. When we accept
that act of atonement, that Christ, by faith we ex-
perience forgiveness of sin. In Christ we are restore
to fellowship with the Father.

The text says this was done FREELY. It was Gods
decision and plan, together with Christ. We
didn't ask Him to do it. We can't earn or merit
forgiveness and salvation. No self attempts to
clean up our lives and crawl back to God on our own
power, will gain us redemption. It is FREE! Free gift
only become ours when we accept them in gratitude.

This gift of forgiveness and redemption is the
GRACE of God. Mercy is God's withholding from us
that which we deserve, punishment and judgment. Grace
is His giving to us what we do not deserve, forgive-
ness and sonship. And the text says that these gifts
of grace are LAVISHED upon us. God doesn't hold back.
Christ shed ALL His blood. God in Christ forgives ALL
our sin and rebellion. There is FULL restoration to
sonship with the Father. ALL of His love is
spread abroad in Christ, EXTRAVAGANT. (Almost
WASTEFULLY.) Conscious of being undeserving we
can only accept with grateful hearts. When God
gives it is in "good measure, pressed down, shaken
together, running over" and put into our laps. (Lk6:38)
//How is it with you and your children? The chil-
dren you chose to have, planned for, don't always
obey and follow your instructions and training. Some-
times they follow different paths for awhile. Does
your love follow them in prayer and concern? And
when they come home in repentance and sorrow do
you welcome them with open arms and lavish your
gifts upon them? Sure you do! Because you love
them. Because they are your children. What a blessing
it is to know that God forgives sinners! To know that
even though my obedience as His child is imperfect an
incomplete, He still loves me and lavishes His
care upon me!

IV—HE MAKES KNOWN THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL IN
CHRIST. That's His REVELATION. How thankful we
should be for the Bible! Jesus Christ is the theme
of Scripture. In the OT He is the One who is to
come. In the NT He is the One who has come.
And in certain places in both O and NT He is the one who is to come. Answers to all of the questions that perplex man are found in the Bible; Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? What is the meaning of Life? All are answered in and through Christ who is the revealer of the Father.

You know, God does nothing in secret. The only thing He hides from us is His person for no man can look upon Him and live. Even that is a way in which He blesses us and cares for us. But He wants us to know why He has made us, why He has acted the way He has gone through history, why He sent Jesus to die on the cross, why His blood was shed, why He was resurrected, why He ascended, why He ministers for us in heaven, why He shall come again.

His care for us is revealed in all of this, for knowledge of His will gives us hope and assurance. Study of the Word is so important because it brings us the answers to our questions, and it reveals how much God cares for us. We are not alone in that study. We have a teacher who will guide us into all truth, the Holy Spirit. Isn't it amazing that God not only gave us the written Word, but also has provided us with a teacher who is reliable?? The Spirit of Christ is at our side as we search the revealed will of God, and will not lead us astray. We trust Him.//CONCL.

— Yes, God's care for us is eternal. It stretches from before the foundation of the world to the fulness of time. It began before the world was made in His DECISION to CHOOSE us as His own. It took shape in His PLAN as He DESTINED us to be His sons. It was ACTED out as He BESTOWED His grace on us in Christ. And the MYSTERY of it all is to be found in His REVELATION.

It was all part of a marvelous PLAN. A plan that has a goal, an eternal goal. It points us to the future and says because God did all this for you, you can face the future with faith. Not because you have faith, but because God is faithful and will care for you until the end even as He has done since the beginning of time.
God keeps. God unites all things in heaven and earth
in the end. All began with Him. All will end with
Him. These are His eternal blessings for us!
It is because we know this, and know God the
Father through faith in His son, that we can
FACE THE FUTURE WITH FAITH.

Drumage 1971
January of 1971
Steevesville 1971
Battle Creek Lab. Nov. 72
Incorporated. Feb. 73 and Morgan

Nyme 69
379
433
Sermon #2

TITLE: "A Happy Life in an Unhappy World"

SUBJECT: Happiness

THEME: How to have a happy life in an unhappy world.

SERMONIC PROCESS: Modification

TEXT: Ephesians 1:11-14

HYMNS: 209 - 656

SCRIPTURE READING: Romans 8:12-17
One of the greatest human problems we face today is that of unhappiness. All of us are in contact with people who are experiencing some phase of terrible unhappiness. Some have become so unhappy that they fall into periods of deep depression out of which it is so difficult to return. Their days and hours are spent in sad brooding. As they sit and brood a debilitating feeling of hopelessness settles upon them. They begin to cry. Tears of hopelessness and despair are shed. They don't know where to turn, or what to do, and ring their hands in total frustration. Gradually withdrawal takes place and we begin to notice that they are taking less and less interest in life, in what is going on around them, in what is happening to others. Daily life begins to fall apart. The dishes get left in the sink. It's so easy to sleep in and stay home from work. So easy to let the dirty clothes pile up at the foot of the basement stairs, the garbage in the garage. The individual becomes fixated at the point of his own unhappiness and is incapable any longer of living a useful and happy life.

It is a phenomenon of contemporary life that we are able to see this experience of unhappiness in people of all ages. It is not just something common only to the aged, those whose families are gone and who have been left alone. It is being experienced by the middle-aged, by the young marrieds, and most striking of all, by youth of high school and college age. We are told, for example, that the suicide rate among youth is increasing year by year. Unhappiness is reflected in the rooms of institutions for the aged, where often great bitterness and despair are expressed. Unhappiness is to be found in the assembly lines of great factories, where boredom with routine is commonplace. It is to be found in family relationships where the members feel they are not understood, where a sense of unity and oneness is not present. It is found in the classroom where the students wonder what significance for the future their studies have. In most cases unhappiness is directly related to a person's sense of the future. In our day this is true whether we be old, middle aged, or young. We are living in a time of depressing dread concerning the future. We are living in an uncertain, skeptical, faithless age. And one of our greatest human needs is to find happiness. Any good dictionary defines happiness as a state of well-being and satisfaction, and joy as an emotion excited by the acquisition or expectation of good. Our interest is with the aspect of expectation. It is anticipatory joy that causes happiness. Now, one can hardly be in a state of happiness if he anticipates that which is bad; if his view of the future is negative and hopeless. What men need today, therefore, is an enhanced view of the future.
That contemporary man is on a religious quest is rather obvious. Evidenced by the tremendous influence and attraction of the occult at this juncture in history. But this was true also of the spiritual environment in which the Ephesians lived. Ephesus was the location of a great temple which housed the magnificent statue of Diana, goddess of the hunt and of fertility. Dominated by the Temple the city's life was characterized by legalized prostitution, Magic, and superstition. An inscription found on a wall reads: "If the bird is flying from right to left, and settles out of sight, good luck will come. But if it lifts up its left wing, then, whether it rises or settles out of sight, misfortune will result." The Ephesians were concerned about the future too, and sought out the occult and magic to reveal it to them. It was an extremely wealthy city, commerce was heavy, and money flowed freely. The main street was paved with marble and ended at a magnificent arched gate at the harbor. Ephesus was also a racial melting pot with its attendant problems and strains. Without a doubt the citizens were seeking a positive way of life, one that would bring happiness; a way of life that would look toward the future in anticipation of good.

Into that milieu God had planted a Church! A body of people with a positive message, a body of people who in their own lives reflected a happy expectation. No doubt their lives reflected the two great truths which are called to our attention in this passage; the two truths that elicit joy and serve to establish a state of happiness. The Word of God is saying to us that WE CAN LIVE A HAPPY LIFE IN AN UNHAPPY WORLD. How? We can live a happy life in an unhappy world by believing the truths that make it possible. What are they?

1- WE HAVE BEEN DESTINED AND APPOINTED TO LIVE FOR THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST. (vsl2) God made a decision to create us and to redeem us; He carefully planned it all; then He did it; and since then has been engaged in making know the mystery of His will in order that in our lives we might be privileged to fulfill His will for creating us. He has a purpose for us. We are not just bits and pieces of matter floating on the sea of time with nowhere to go and nothing to do. God has a plan for us, a plan in which He himself is involved! Our lives are to reflect His glory. Martin Luther expressed man's duty by saying: "We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things."--Small Catechism. Ellen White puts it this way: "God designed that man, the crowning work of His creation, should express His thought and reveal His glory."--8 Testimonies, p.264. And the old West Minster Catechism puts it this way:

"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."--8 Testimonies, p.264. How thankful we can be for the good testimony of the Church down through the centuries, for such inspired commentary and explanation of the truth of the Word of God!
How perfectly marvelous is God's eternal care for us, in that He has raised up the messenger for every hour of man's history; has matched the message with the hour and with the need!

In every age, at every hour, the Church's life is to bring forth from mankind praises for the glory of Christ. He is to be exalted before the eyes of the world by the way His people live and worship. This God will accomplish. He has said so! It is the counsel of His will to do so! It is His plan that until Jesus comes again there will always be a unique people, called the Church, who will bring glory to Christ; who in their lives reveal an amazing and mysterious enjoyment of God. Moses had concerns about the future at the time of the sojourn in the wilderness, and asked the Lord about it in prayer. He was concerned about his own leadership qualities, and his influence in the people he was to lead. God answered and said: "I pray thee, show me they glory." (Ex33:18) Show me your power! Show me your position above men! God promised to pass His goodness before the eyes of Moses by means of grace and mercy. He instructed Moses to cut two tablets of stone and to meet Him the next morning on Mt. Sinai. There he wrote the commandments a second time. A renewed emphasis on His law which was to reflect His glory. God made a covenant with His people and said: "I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth or in any nation; and all the people among whom you are shall see the works of the Lord." (34:10) And in chapter 34 and 35 special emphasis is made concerning the Sabbath, which in itself points to His acts in creation. So you see God's glory is His works, all that He has done for His people down through the centuries of time. All His promises fulfilled, and many more yet to be fulfilled. God reveals His glory in His acts of grace and mercy!

Our glory is to glory in His glory! "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practice kindness, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, says the Lord." (Jer9:23-24)

To the Father and to the Son glory is due. "To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever." (1Pt4:11) Paul tells us that God has highly exalted Christ in His ascension to the Father's right hand, and therefore, at the very mention of the name JESUS CHRIST "every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil2:9-11) All creatures, the heavenly and the earthy, shall confess the Lordship of Christ and thus vindicate God's decision and plan for man's salvation and the final solution to the sin problem.
In these closing days of earth’s history the whole world is being summoned to “Fear God and give Him glory (credit), for the hour of His judgment is come.” (Revel 7:7a) Happy are the people of God who look to the future in anticipation! Happy are they who expect to be numbered among those who will share in the great litany of praise as they witness the last act of God in history.

"Hallelujah!" they will shout! "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us REJOICE and EXULT and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His BRIDE has made herself ready.” (Revel 19:6-7) No unhappiness here! No sadness here! Unfathomable joy! An everlasting state of happiness! Living for the praise of His glory we can experience deep joy and satisfying happiness though living in an unhappy world.

2. WE HAVE BEEN SEALED BY THE PROMISED HOLY SPIRIT.

In the Bible references to seals and being sealed are both literal and figurative. The use of literal seals helps us to understand the meaning figuratively. We cannot underestimate the importance of seals in the ancient Near East. They were used in place of signatures. Every important person, and many unimportant persons, possessed seals. They were of many kinds: some like buttons, some like small cylinders, some in the form of rings called signets. A ll were engraved with figures or emblems and designs which served to distinguish one from another. Impressed into clay or wax they legalized and authenticated documents. Sometimes the impression was left in pottery, etc. in order to establish ownership. The Bible is full of references to their use. For example the ring of Pharaoh which was entrusted to Joseph was the Pharaoh’s scarab seal. (Genesis 11:2).

In the time of Esther King Ahasuerus of Persia signed documents with his ring so that no man might revoke their contents. (Esther 8:10). When Daniel was cast into the lions den it was shut by rolling a huge stone over its entrance, then "the king (Nebuchadnezzar) sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, THAT NOTHING MIGHT BE CHANGED CONCERNING DANIEL.” (Daniel 6:17).

In the parable of the prodigal son the father placed his own ring on his finger, no doubt a signet ring which indicated to the community that he had been fully restored to his fathers house in that he was now able to transact business also as an accepted member of the community. All of these examples, and there are many others, indicate that the use of the seal involved legalizing, authenticating, protection, authority, acceptance, and ownership.

These are all examples of the use of the seal by humans. But God has a seal also which implies ownership, protection, acceptance, and authentication. It is figurative but just as binding, just as authoritative. It is the Holy Spirit. Those who are His have been stamped, impressed, with the Holy Spirit.
in order that their status before God which they entered into upon accepting the Lord Jesus as Saviour would remain unchanged. God Himself through the ministry of the HS would protect what was now His! Isn't that a wonderful truth?? What God has wrought rests on a firm foundation says Paul: "But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His.'" (2Tim2:19a) He says further: "...He has put His seal upon us and given us His Spirit as a guarantee." (2Col:22) The HS is the "guarantee of our inheritance UNTIL we acquire possession of it." (Eph1:11) What inheritance? The EARTH (Mt5:5), ETERNAL LIFE (Mt.19:29), the KINGDOM OF GOD (Mt.25:34). Is this inheritance a sure thing? Yes, for God Himself is its caretaker and protector. It is an inheritance "which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. IN THIS YOU REJOICE.." (1Ptl:14-6)

No unhappiness here. Joy elicited by an expectation and anticipation beyond the understanding of the world. To be sure we long to put on our heavenly dwelling so that we need no longer sigh with anxiety, so that we might be fully clothed with the garments of righteousness and know life in its fullness and completeness. For this we are being prepared by our Heavenly Father, and by His Spirit. "He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee." (2Cor5:2-5) No wonder the people of God can be happy in an unhappy world! No wonder the sad and hopeless think we are unrealistic and "out of it"! God's people are involved in the affirmation of life rather than the negation of life! We assert and bear witness to the world that joy and happiness are not possible without the knowledge and the assurance that we have been redeemed, that we have an inheritance of eternal life prepared and waiting for us, an inheritance that nothing in this world can harm or take from us, and that is guaranteed by the HOLY SPIRIT.///But the HS has been given to us not just to arouse good feelings of joy and happiness. Paul says: "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might UNDERSTAND the gifts bestowed on us by God." (16or.2:12)

Certainly God wants us to be happy, but on the basis of a sure and certain knowledge. Thus happiness is dependant upon knowing the truth. It is "those who have heard the truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him" who have been sealed with the HS. God wants us to UNDERSTAND His gifts! He wants us to read and study the Word of God, to probe its depths and dig out its truths. The HS is the Spirit of truth and will lead us into all truth. Being sealed by the HS is connected with faith in Jesus Christ AND the knowledge of TRUTH.

Happy is the man who knows the truth!! For he cannot be deceived. His faith is in a sure thing, and is unshakable.
To know the truth is to be sealed with the HS who is the Spirit
of truth. And this matter of being sealed is gravely important;
it is not something we can ignore for the aquireing of our in-
heritence depends on it. The book of Rev. tells us that only
those who have been thus sealed will be prepared to stand firm
during the times of stress preceding the return of Christ.
"Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, till we
have sealed the servants of God upon their foreheads."
(7:3) That final seal will be the NAMES of God and His Son
impressed upon the faithful so that they, the entire world, and
Satan will know to whom they belong and will dare not harm them.
§:12 Believing these two great truths is that which alone can
give us an enhanced sense of the future, and with such a
sense of expectation and anticipation of good we are able
to LIVE A HAPPY LIFE IN AN UNHAPPY WORLD.

*Tomorrow, "A Western View in the Eastern Age"*

See Rev. 1:18-22 for defense of what begun—
when men do not pass glory to God, and the unhappy
state thus results.
Sermon #3

TITLE: "A Certain Hope in an Uncertain Age"

SUBJECT: Hope

THEME: How to have a certain hope in an uncertain age.

SERMONIC PROCESS: Modification

TEXT: Ephesians 1:15-23

HYMNS: 81 - 379

SCRIPTURE READING: I John 3:1-3
Emil Brunner, one of this centuries great theologians, wrote: "What oxygen is for the lungs, such is hope for the meaning of human life. Take oxygen away and death occurs through suffocation. Take hope away and humanity is constricted through lack of breath; despair supervenes, spelling the paralysis of intellectual and spiritual powers... As the fate of the human organism is dependant on the supply of oxygen, so the fate of humanity is dependant on its supply of hope."--Eternal Hope, p.7. The moment you use the word hope you have reference to the future. One cannot hope for what is past for it is gone, nor for what is present for it is here. Hope has to do with the future. It is an essential of life. Every person has some kind of hope for the future. Even the unbeliever; however his hope is a worldly hope in that his expectations have to do with his philosophy that 'better days are coming', or 'tomorrow will tell the story' or 'tomorrow is another day.' Next time, always the next time! He dare not live in the past for that is where his guilt is. That is where his failures are, where his mistakes are. The future, tomorrow, holds all the possibilities. And his hope is in the passing of time, rather than in the fulfillment of time. Thus his hope is not real, but a delusion and each subsequent day in the passing of time brings the same hopelessness. How we need a sure and certain hope! Outwardly modern man's life is smooth and orderly like the plastic, wall-to-wall carpeted world he lives in, but on the inside it is broken, hellish, and anguished, broken in pieces and racked with tears. There is a reason for this condition. We have just passed through that period in history during which man developed the concept that he had control of his future in his own hands. Because of this he neither hoped nor feared. Hope, you see, is not needed if we are able to shape our own future. For a long time we have not seen the future as something that comes upon us from the outside, but as something we are able to manipulate and determine. The self-confidence and arrogance of mankind grew and grew, and as it grew hope lost all significance. But his hope was horribly and drastically shattered by the two world wars of this century. When they were over what did he have? A world of ruin. A world in material, emotional, psychological, spiritual, shambles! His self-confidence was shattered too. The last two decades have witnessed the emergence of sheer, maddening, hopelessness and uncertainty. And it is DIFFICULT for contemporary man to believe in hope. His experiences in this age have made it difficult. Some who seek a better life are going by way of regression—denial of the 20th c—a yearning for the caveman life. But ALWAYS away from God!
People may not be asking today 'What must I do to be saved?'— but will soon be asking 'How can I and my children live through the last days?'— and this is really the priority question of our age. And man's extremity WILL BE God's opportunity.

The Church at Ephesus, that little group of the faithful, must have felt rather hopeless too. They were surrounded by rampant materialism and greed, by obviously advertised immorality, by a captivating spiritualism and occultism, by people coming and going, buying and selling. No doubt they thought the world of their day gone mad. They needed a message from God! So under the inspiration of the HS Paul wrote them this letter containing a message designed to give them hope. God saw that what that Church needed more than anything else was a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Christ, in order that their hearts would be enlightened concerning their hope, their rich spiritual riches, and God's sustaining power. In order that they might discover an increased appreciation and thankfulness for what they possessed in Christ. That same inspiration and message comes to the Church of the 30th C., and it proclaims that WE CAN HAVE A CERTAIN HOPE IN AN UNCERTAIN AGE—how?—BY ACCEPTING THE PROVISIONS OF GOD WHICH MAKE IT POSSIBLE.

1- THE CALL TO HOPE. The Bible tells us that God has called us to salvation in Christ by means of the Gospel, the Good News concerning Jesus. It is this Gospel call that has brought life and immortality to light. (2Tim1:9-10) God's calling out to us in this way was part of the way His plan for our redemption was to be carried out. All has been provided in Christ, for "Those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified." (Ro.8:30) His call is eternal having its origin in His own Father heart before the world was made, and finding its fulfillment in the glorification of His people when Jesus comes again. His call is to salvation, sanctification, and glorification. "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it." (1Thes5:23-24) God is not calling His people to a hopeless existence. He calls us to a hopeful existence, one full of hope. It is a part of His plan for our living experience that we have hope. Hope, therefore is not an extra but is a distinctive trait of the Christian faith and life. Paul evidently knew this in his own life for he was able to speak of hope and suffering in the same breath. He lived in a real world, like we. He was not a mystic, a recluse. He saw the hopelessness of people around him. But speaking of Christ he said: "Through Him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we REJOICE IN OUR HOPE of sharing the glory of God. More than that we REJOICE in
our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." (Rom 5:2-5)

There is no doubt that those to whom Paul addressed his Epistle were believers. They were children of God, had experienced forgiveness of sin, but had not yet understood and assimilated the full and complete nature of being the Church in the world. They were also to have the hope that would envision more than they could ever imagine, that would enable them to live in the present in victory and look to the future with confidence. Hope regarding the future is unique to the Christian believer, it causes him to stand out from among his fellowmen as an attractive figure. We have been called by God to a sure and certain hope, to abound hope. It is the will of God! It is the normal and natural Christian life! It is related to joy and peace and a firm faith. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." (Rom 15:13) We are to be permeated with hope! We are to exude hope! In that sense we are to be as lights shining in a dark place! In an uncertain and hopeless world God has set a people to stand out in stark contrast, and who will thus serve in their task to draw men to God and to give Him glory.

Why are we different? Because we have Christ within us which is our hope of glory! (Col. 1:27) Why can our hope be so certain, so boundless? Certainly not because of any qualities we possess, but because God cannot be proven false. Our hope rests on unchangeables: His promise and His oath. "...so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us." (Heb. 6:18) Seize it! In what, and where, do we place our hope concerning the future? Certainly not in man's abilities to solve his problems and restore the world to sanity. "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Heb. 6:19-20) Our faith consists of hope that is based on the activities of our Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary and not upon progress and the self-confidence of men. People are hopeless today because they have put their confidence in mankind. The Christian abounds in hope because He puts his confidence in Christ the High Priest who at this very moment is engaged in the fulfillment of the great issues of history, because he knows that control of the future is in God's hands. Unbelieving man is fearful for he has come to realize his impotence. The believer is fearless because he knows that God is faithful and has a good future prepared for His people. Thus his faith is not only
visionary but courageous.

An inheritance is something that has been earned, accumulated, by another. Therefore it is in essence a free gift. One does not earn an inheritance. That's why, speaking of our spiritual inheritance, it is a sure thing. For if we had to earn our inheritance we would never be certain that we have worked enough. It would be an illusive dream. The reason why we can know that our inheritance is a sure thing is because it is eternal and has been ratified, sealed, authenticated, by the blood of Christ. "Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant." For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself; NOW TO APPEAR IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD ON OUR BEHALF." (Heb9:15,21)

You and I have title to that inheritance because we are sons of God. HE HAS DECLARED US SONS! "So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir." (Gal. 4:7)

In Revelation 21, where we have the description of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven as well as the attendant blessings that will accompany that event, we find this covenant promise: "He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son." (21:7)

Paul describes our inheritance as being rich. The Ephesians certainly understood that word, living as they did in the midst of wealth and affluence. We too should understand it. Jesus said: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field...like a merchant in search of fine pearls." (Mt13:44-45)

Our inheritance is rich because it meets every need..."And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Phil.1:19) God is rich in grace, in mercy, in love, in power! "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." (2Co8:9)

Our inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, is described graphically in Hebrews 12:22-24. Its all there! Listen to the description! "But you have come to Mt. Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel." The gathering on Mt. Zion! New Jerusalem! The great celebration of the heavenly host! The justice of God! Complete perfection! To Christ's mediation! His sprinkled blood that atones and satisfies the demands of the Law! THE ASSEMBLY, EKKLESIA, THE CHURCH whose members are enrolled in heaven and are
first-born sons! We shall receive the FULL inheritance. It is a whole possession. Abraham gave his inheritance to his first-born Isaac even though portions to the other children. If you are a son of God YOU shall receive the full inheritance!

How rich the New Jerusalem is described in Rev. 21! City wall of pure Jasper! City built of pure gold! Foundations of precious gems! Each of the 12 gates made of pearl! Single gigantic pearls! Street of transparent gold! City lit by the glory of God! A place of utter purity and holiness! WE ARE THE WEALTHIEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD! Thus happy and thankful we wait in anticipation for the day when our inheritance shall be fully ours. "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe." (Heb12:28)

Our hope, our trust, is in the riches of God! "He who trusts in his (own) riches will wither, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf." (Prov. 11:28)

3- THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S POWER. It's one thing to be called, it's another thing to be promised a rich inheritance. But will it happen? What is the guarantee that we shall in fact inherit that which has been promised to those who live for the praise of the glory of Christ? The HS is the guarantee that we are the sons of God, and it is the INMEASURABLE GREATNESS OF HIS POWER that guarantees the reception of the inheritance. The great Apostle bases the guarantee on the proof of God's power revealed in two mighty and significant events in the life and ministry of our Saviour. A-His resurrection! Now Jesus was not the only one to be raised from the dead. He himself raised Lazarus. The difference is that He was raised for our justification. He rose in our place, as having borne our sins and satisfied for them. His death was a perfect sacrifice. It accomplished fully our redemption. The wages of sin is death. The wages were paid in His death. His resurrection was proof that the wages had been fully paid. "But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it." (Acts2:24) Nothing outside of creation itself could reveal God's power more than the resurrection of Christ.

That same power will operate in our own resurrection. "And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power." (1Cor6:11) How important and revealing this is, for "If Christ was not raised, YOUR FAITH IS FUTILE and you are still in your sins." (1Cor. 15:17) Without the resurrection of Christ we would believe in a lost cause! There would be no outcome to our faith, no reception of the glorious inheritance no matter how sincere God's promise. There would be no happy anticipation. No hope! For while faith accepts, hope expects.

B-His exaltation. The Bible says that angels, authorities, and powers, are subject to Christ. (1Pt3:22) It tells us that Jesus our High Priest reflects the very glory of God,
bears the stamp of God's nature, upholds the universe by His power. (Heb. 1:3) It tells us that His throne is an everlasting throne. (Heb. 1:8) Furthermore: "And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." (Dan. 7:14) That's the same Christ who was done to death in humiliating fashion! Who suffered untold agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and on Calvary! Who was spit upon and scouraged and ridiculed and scoffed at! Who is now exalted at God's throne in heaven! Who has the power to keep that which we have committed unto him against that Day! "For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God." (2Co. 13:4a) WE WHO HAVE BEEN CALLED TO HOPE HAVE A RICH INHERITANCE KEPT IN HEAVEN WHICH THE POWER OF GOD HAS BOTH PROVIDED FOR US AND IS GUARDING UNTIL IT SHALL BE REVEALED AT LAST.

Because of what God has done in Christ and even now through the living Christ in the heavenly sanctuary WE CAN HAVE A CERTAIN HOPE IN AN UNCERTAIN AGE! "If it is for this life only that Christ has given us hope, we are of all men most to be pitied." (1Cor. 15:19—New English Bible.) "Happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God." (Pslm 6:5)

Happiness and hope are present blessings which point to still greater glories in the future. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1) Facing the future with faith in what God has done and is doing on our behalf results in an unshakable stability and certain hope that gives us the kind of stability and courage needed to live in this uncertain age.

Tomorrow - "A Purposeful Life In A Purposeless World"
Sermon #4

TITLE: "A Purposeful Life in a Purposeless World"

SUBJECT: Purposeful Life

THEME: How to have a purposeful life in a purposeless world.

SERMONIC PROCESS: Modification

TEXT: Ephesians 2:1-10

HYMNS: 75 - 396

SCRIPTURE READING: Romans 8:28-39
"A Purposeful Life In A Purposeless World" Ephesians 2:1-10

Not long ago I was called to the hospital at the urgent request of a patient who was not a member of any Christian Church. When I got there I found a man in excruciating pain as the result of a bone graft involving his right arm and hip. He was a young man in the late 20's, early 30's. When I arrived there was a visitor with him. He asked His visitor to step outside so that we could visit. He told me that he was sick, and with the sweat poring down his handsome, rugged face, it was very much evident that he was in fact sick. But he had something besides his physical pain on his mind. His sickness had to do with the fact that he was unhappy, bitter, disillusioned. He hated the way he had been living for many years. He detested his own unhappy and joyless attitude and was reaching out for something better. He expressed the feeling that he had no real purpose in life. He had indicated that he had the kind of job which no doubt was quite lucrative, but now revealed his purposelessness. His handsome, virility, his lucrative employment, his tasting of the pleasures of the world, had not been providing the sense of purpose that he needed. We talked, and I shared the Word of God with him: "He who gives heed to the word will prosper, and happy is he who trusts in the Lord." (Pro. 16:20) I called his attention to his heavenly Father: "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me; for in thee my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of thy wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by. I cry to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me." (Ps 57:1-2)

That young man is not the only person without purpose in the world. The world is filled with them. They are everywhere, in our homes and families. In our neighborhoods. On the street corners. Purposelessness is a malady which has attacked the young to a great degree today. They are very concerned with the questions: Why was I born? Why Am I living? What am I here for? What is the meaning of life? Is there any real purpose for it all? Our youth are reaping the whirlwind that the sowing of the wind in past centuries has produced. Intellectually they are utilizing thought patterns based on assumptions made over the past centuries and that have found root in the fertile soil of mankind's basic unbelief and rebellion. The assumption that everything is to be doubted, articulated first in the 16c, is a part of man's thinking today. The belief in pure reason, articulated in the 17c, which embodied the idea that the power of truth and justice was embodied in man himself and that he is able to control nature and society. The belief that all a person can really know is a flow of experiences and sensations, 18c, and that matter, mind, and God are to be discarded, and that all one can really know from experience is that a certain order of events does occur. 19c. the concept of evolution in which it
was believed that mankind would slowly but surely continue to evolve to a high degree of perfection. The ground was ready for a Karl Marx whose thought represented the climax of man's climb toward total rejection of the Christian interpretation of history. The only thing in this world that is evolving is the consequence of mankind's sin and rebellion. The Word is "fall." Not up, but down! We are now in the backlash of despair and disillusionment of 20c, for these philosophies have failed. Belief in evolution does not satisfy for it is plain for all to see that man has not improved morally and humanly but has in fact deteriorated at an alarming rate. Thus evolution has no real purpose for its end is illusive. Is it any wonder then that people are asking questions concerning the meaning of life? Concerning the future? People are beginning to realize that the accumulation of wealth and material things has no ultimate meaning in itself. There is no real purpose for it all beyond the fact that it puts food on the table. And even that is discouraging in that people are beginning to realize what they have been doing to themselves by the way they have eaten. The believers at Ephesus, as they lived in the midst of a city embarked on a mad race to accumulate wealth, no doubt were at times tempted to join them. The passion of the Ephesians for wealth is clearly evidenced by their reaction to Paul's preaching when it began to affect the trade of the silversmiths who made and sold silver images of Diana. Their orgies and their mystic and magical religion no doubt was a temptation to some of the Christians there. God cared for them! It was His concern that they remain faithful and be conscious of the purpose for their existence! He addressed them by means of Paul's pen. And He reminded them about the LOFTY PURPOSE of their lives! By means of this eternally relevant Word He would remind us of the same thing today. He says that "YOU CAN LIVE A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IN A PURPOSELESS WORLD WHEN YOU SURRENDER FULLY TO THE DIVINE FACTS WHICH HAVEMADE IT POSSIBLE." (Assertions to Christians tempted!)

God's PURPOSE has been fulfilled in them! In us! He chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless; He destined us to be His sons through Christ! "according to the purpose of His will." (1:5) He bestowed His grace on us in Christ, redeemed us through His blood, lavished His grace upon us, made known to us the mystery of His will "accoring to His purpose which he set forth in Christ." (1:9) That same divine purpose has been fulfilled in that we have been appointed to live for the praise of His glory and have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. Now God urges us to surrender more fully to these divine facts. 1-NEW LIFE. He would remind us that He has in fact done that which He planned and promised. His purpose for us has been fulfilled in that He HAS given us new life. Now our purpose is to be fulfilled in remaining faithful to what we are in Christ. One is able to sense the love and concern behind the
God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ." Paul appeals to the LOVE of God.

What else than the same love that sent Jesus to the Cross will suffice to fortify us for resistance to the worldliness and greed of the world? Paul does not appeal to the justice, or righteousness, or sovereign authority, of God, but rather to His love, His mercy, His RICH mercy, His GREAT love, His grace, the IMEASURABLE RICHES of His grace, His kindness, His CREATIVEL power! He would remind us that we have a kind and loving heavenly Father, not a grumbling ogre who stalks the halls of heaven thinking up ways in which He can make life more miserable for us! When the believer falls for the enticements of the world, he doesn't wound the Law of God. He wounds the heart of God! Because behind God's Law stands God's living heart! Every word of instruction and warning He ever spoke was because He loves us! And we don't have to understand it all either, just accept and bask in His love! And do what He tells us to do like trusting children.

Newness of life is ours as a gift of God! "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." (2Co5:17-18) The HS gives life.

Jnc 6:63, Jesus has the words of life, Jn6:68, Jesus is the resurrection and the life, Jn11:25, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, 11:6, eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ, 17:3. New life is Christ living in you, Gal2:20. New Life contains the promise of future everlasting life. "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." (Col3:4) "And this is the testimony, that God GAVE us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son has not life." (1Jn5:11-12)

Your name is written in the Book of Life! (Phil3:3) These are facts and not illusive dreams! The new life we experience now, and the life everlasting we shall inherit, are present and assured future gifts because of the power of God evidenced in the resurrection and ascension of our Lord! It was that same Creative power which has been at work re-creating us.///// This new life for us as individuals, as well as for the Church, originates in Heaven. It is in the heavenly places that we have been blessed with Christ! (Philippians 2:6) We have been GIVEN a LOFTY position! We have been made to "sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (2:6)

New life, Salvation, is a FACT not a feeling. If you are in Christ you ARE a new creation! Don't you just love the following 4 words in this passage: "...you have been saved." "For by grace you have been saved through faith." And also:
"this is not your own doing, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD."

NEW MASTER. Once we walked in trespasses and sins following the prince of the power of the air, "the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience." Notice that this is in the past tense. It is in the past! It is behind us! We don't live like that any more! That's the way we used to be before we were made alive. That was a part of the dead life, when we were dead to God and His Spirit. That was the way it used to be when Satan was our Master and we lived in the passions of our flesh, and followed the desires of our bodies and minds and were children of wrath like all of mankind. Aren't you glad you're not like that anymore? Aren't you glad your loving heavenly Father saved you from all that and gave you a new and better kind of life?

When the prodigal son came to his senses down there in the pigpen where he was working and living and went home, his father ran to meet him and restored him to the lofty position he had lost when he ran away. However, the condition that would assure the son's position was his acceptance of his father as Master of the household. The contrast was obvious between life in the pigpen and life in his father's house.

The opposite of being children of wrath is being children of God. The opposite of disobedience is obedience. We have been given new life, have been restored to complete and full fellowship with the heavenly Father through faith in Christ, and now recognize that we have a new Master. He is the Lord! "..you have one Master, the Christ!" (Mth23:9) Emphasis on the word "one". There is only one Master. There can only be one Master. Our loyalties cannot be divided for eternity is at stake!

How crucial this is today for the Bible gives us clear warning that a denial of the true Master will be a part of the last days apostasy. "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their licentiousness and because of them the way of truth will be reviled." (2Pt.2:1-2)

A person who is licentious is one who has been made alive in Christ but lives as though he were still dead in sin. He has not accepted Christ as his Master, his Boss. To be a new creature is to have a new boss! To be a new creature is to accept instruction from One who is higher than Satan, who addresses us straight from the Throne Room in heaven! Satan was cast out of the heavenly courts and only a fool will take instruction and guidance from someone who has no authority. Satan has no right to command you! That's what makes his deception so evil for he would entice us to recognize an authority which he does not have. You can't use the word "rich" in reference to Satan. He's bankrupt! He can do nothing for you. He can only ruin you by tempting you to accept a false authority.
Fallen men have a fallen Master. Redeemed men have a reigning Master. Godly men have a glorified Master. A FACT.

3. NEW PURPOSE. We have a purpose because we have a God of purpose. He does nothing by whim or fancy. The first chapter of Ephesians reminds us in 3 places that He has a purpose. We have learned that He made a DECISION, formulated a PLAN, put His plan into ACTION, and is now engaged in REVEALING His ultimate purpose for it all. His purpose is to "unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." (vs10)

God and His throne are in heaven. The Church is on earth. But God and His Church are united by Christ who is both High Priest in heaven and Head of the Church. We need to know this dynamic truth as we face the future as members of the Church which is His body. In this marvelous epistle Paul's thoughts bounce from earth to the heavens, and back to earth again as the relationship of the Church with its Lord is revealed to him. It seems as though he cannot speak of the Church on earth without reference to its Head in heaven, nor can he speak of the Lord in heaven without reference to His Body on earth. To Paul they are so closely united that he is able to speak of Christians as being seated with Christ in the heavenly places. The climax of chapter one is Christ seated at the right hand of the Father, to whom all authority has been given, from whence He exercises His authority over the Church and ministers to the Church. In chapter 2 when Paul thinks of the individual believers relationship to Christ he thinks of him as seated with Christ in heaven. In such a relationship there is no place for disunity—seated with Him in the heavenlies all believers of all races are united as one. In this unity of the Church a divine purpose is being realized.

God promises that He will do what He says: "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose." (Isa6:10b) His purpose has an unchangeable character. The decisions and plans He formulated before the world was made, will be fulfilled. And you and I who believe in Him have been included in the fulfillment of His divine purpose, that only good is in store for us. Listen: "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose." (Ro8:28) Yes, God has a purpose, and that purpose is to save thy world for His kingdom and bring glory to His name! And you and I have a purpose that is equal to our position in Christ. Our position is in the heavenlies, our purpose is on earth. Not only do we have a lofty position but a lofty purpose. We have been made to "sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."
The Church is to remain faithful because it has a mission that goes beyond the confines of its immediate existence. Its mission encompasses the ages. Its purpose is to evidence the love, mercy, grace, and kindness of God in Christ in historic time; to reveal the wisdom of God in the fulfillment of His purposes to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. The lofty life of the Church would have its influence not only in this world but in the heavens as well.

The purpose as individual believers, and as members of the Church, is articulated further when the text reads: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." God not only planned how He would create us and redeem us should we go astray, but also how we were to live. And this formula is embodied in the Ten Commandments, and in love which is their essence and His very character.

The Father makes these factual assertions concerning new life, Master, and purpose, because He knows, and has decreed that our choices do influence history, for this life and the life to come. You and I are not nothings. We have influence. Sin itself is not a nothing. Evil influences history. But so does GOOD. And THAT is our purpose. We are to do GOOD works!

While God makes the above factual assertions about us, at the same time, however, He makes it exceedingly plain that He will have a faithful Church that will go on to victory! Now, do you know why you were born, why you are living, where you are going, and why you are here?? You have a lofty position in Christ and a lofty purpose in the world, and both position and purpose are wrapped up with having a new life and a new master.

With a new life, a new Master, and a new purpose you can live a purposeful life.
Sermon #5

TITLE: "Peace and Unity in a Hostile World"

SUBJECT: Peace and unity

THEME: How to have peace and unity in a hostile world.

SERMONIC PROCESS: Modification

TEXT: Ephesians 2:11–22

HYMNS: 647–421

SCRIPTURE READING: Galatians 6:7–10
Beneath the surface of contemporary existence lurks a rage ready to burst its bonds. Periodically it manifests itself in attempts at self-destruction and murder. Contemporary man, whether he be white or black, is living in the throes of a neurosis of defiance. One of the most apparent symptoms of this sickness is the eruption of hate and violence which occurs periodically, and very often for no good reason. Like when a simple matter of grievances concerning working conditions in a school district results in the calling of a strike, which in turn presents individuals with both the opportunity and with what they believe to be the legitimate provocation for acts of violence on property and on persons. And for no real sound reasons, the hate and the violence which we witness everywhere today baffles and frustrates world leaders. Everywhere there is hostility, bitterness, resentment. A grinding and bitter resentment that eats like a cancer at the sensibilities and traditional tolerance of the Western world. People lash out at each other given the slightest opportunity and provocation. Parents ridicule children. Children laugh and scoff at parents. Wives scream at husbands and husbands at wives. Psychologists and psychiatrists are saying today that the most serious emotional problem faced by human beings today is that of deep hostility. Everybody is an enemy today. Watch people on the street and see the resentment expressed at every pedestrian that gets in the way. Watch a lady with a shopping cart, the driver of an auto. Watch the children on the playgrounds of our schools. There was a day, not too long ago, when it was not necessary to build a fence around every school and keep it locked at night, or around a yard simply to protect the flower beds, or to even lock one's door when away from home. But that day is long past. Now in the big cities home owners must have locks and bolts on doors and on windows and alarm systems as well. Why? Because the human being is becoming increasingly more hostile, more an enemy of the human race. He has become unpredictable and unreliable. And he sees his neighbors as sinister and undependable and untrustworthy. Nowhere is this seen so graphically as in the relationship between the white and black race in America. We need to assert at the outset what the hostility that exists and that periodically expresses itself is something that is common to BOTH races. We are not talking about something that is unique to just one race, for we refuse to make a DISTINCTION on the basis of color. Remember that hostility can be expressed in many ways. We need also to remember that all of us are living in a world that is becoming increasingly more hostile every day and that the problems that exist between races are a part of that increasing hostility. We are thus
dealing with a HUMAN problem and not a white or a black problem. As Christians we need to be extremely careful that we do not adopt a RACIST approach with regard to the hostility that exists, but a Biblical and Christian approach.

Hostility as a human problem is not something new. Paul dealt with it in his day. Evidently it had reared its ugly head among the members of the Ephesians congregation which required the writing of this particular passage in his Epistle to them. Ephesus was one of three of the great trading and commercial centers of the eastern Mediterranean and because of this had become a racial melting pot, a cosmopolitan commercial center. This was a gentile congregation. Gentiles of many races and cultures no doubt, who were evidencing a hostility toward the Jews. Now they may have felt justified in their hostility, basing it on what they felt were pretty good reasons, but the apostle Paul dealt with it because he knew and had no doubt heard that their hostility was hindering peace and unity among God's people, the Church. Paul had one concern, the mission of the Church in the world. Anything in the life of the Church that would hinder or blunt that mission had to be dealt with. Being a good pastor he did not hesitate to do so.

By means of this same inspired word and counsel the Holy Spirit addresses all Christians of the 20th century and says that WE CAN EXPERIENCE PEACE AND UNITY BETWEEN THE RACES WHEN WE ACCEPT THE ACTS OF GOD WHICH HAVE MADE IT SO. We want to assert that ALL hostility, no matter what its provocation, no matter how justified it might seem, no matter the philosophical reasoning behind it that we might adopt, is related to SIN. Hostility is part of the Godless life. We also want to assert that this message is no attempt at solving the problem of racial hostility sociologically, psychologically, or economically. We shall not be talking about justice or injustice. Shall make no reference to grievances real or imagined. No references to past historical errors. Shall fix no blame, make no recriminations. (If you have come expecting to hear a message that will allow you to leave satisfied that the sin is with the other guy, you are mistaken. Because this preacher refuses to make racial distinctions. I preach only to people, and only the Word of God. What we are concerned about here is an exposition of the ACTS of God which are clearly proclaimed in this text, which have by divine power and decree already established the environment in which GOD'S PEOPLE are to live, worship and fellowship, and if not recognized and accepted by anyone of any color who calls himself Christian constitutes a denial of the TRUTH and a continued rebellion against the Almighty Himself. When we leave this sanctuary this evening each one of us should be asking ourselves if we are members of the Body of Christ and related to one another on the basis of these acts of God, or not.
Therefore, we shall not be discussing the extent or ratio of black or white guilt; nor shall we be discussing what blacks and whites have or have not done to or with one another. What we shall do is hear the Word of God as it proclaims what God has IN FACT DONE in Christ!! And on that basis pose the question of whether or not we shall accept in faith what He has done and LIVE in unity and peace as members of His Body; or shall we continue to make distinctions which He does not make and continue to misrepresent what the Church is to be in the world?

ACT 1-GOD HAS BROKEN DOWN THE WALL OF HOSTILITY. Notice, the text says that God "HAS broken down the wall of hostility." That's past tense, and makes reference to an accomplished fact. God has acted in Christ and accomplished, at least as far as He Himself is concerned, what He set out to do. Now, obviously the context here specifically refers to the hostility and animosity that had existed between the Jews and Gentiles. Still it has widespread racial implications as we shall see.

What was it that caused the Gentiles to feel hostile toward the Israelites? It was the nationalism that developed during the time of the Kings of Israel. God had made them a holy nation, a royal priesthood, and they were to call all mankind to worship and fellowship under one God, Jahweh. But in this they failed. They did not do what God sent them to do. Instead they became concerned about preserving Israelitic nationality and culture. The restriction God had imposed on Israelites marrying non-Israelites, originally designed to preserve their spiritual heritage and to which they were to attract others, had become instead a wall of separation between human beings. Because they made it into a national and racial thing it only served to cause hostility rather than attract. The key to the development is the fact that God's plan had been abandoned. His will and purpose was not being followed. The Israelitic nation grew to feel superior over other peoples. Not even the fiery denunciations of the prophet Amos could shake them loose from this national pride, even though he predicted the total downfall of the kings. Contempt and hatred for aliens was a natural by-product. Is it any wonder then that all non-Israelit felt hostile? There is ample evidence in the Bible that God did not create man to be divided racially or any other way. Racism is condemned by the Bible. Moses married a Cushite, an Ethiopian, and Aaron and Miriam, his brother and sister, criticised him for it. No doubt they disapproved of that inter racial marriage. But God judged Aaron and Miriam and they became lepers.

ALL men were created in God's image. ALL men fell into sin. ALL men need a redeemer. Jesus broke down the barriers that would divide mankind. He broke down political, class, social, and national barriers. He overlooked economic barriers. He set aside denominational barriers. He leaped the gaps of age. He by-passed racial barriers. No wall set up by man ever stopped Him.
Acts 13:1 tells us that in the Church at Antioch there were two Jews, two Africans, and a Roman statesman. All one in Christ!

Racism is a consequence of spiritual rebellion against God.

No greater division between peoples has ever existed than that between Jew and Gentile, still Paul says that God broke down the wall of hostility. As far as God is concerned there is no such thing as racial superiority. The greatest insult that could be uttered was to call a man a Samaritan. Jesus was insulted with that accusation. But He refused to accept that kind of prejudice and went to Samaria many times, spoke of the fact that the only one of the ten lepers healed who came back to say thank you was a Samaritan, and He did not hesitate to speak to a Samaritan woman who was a prostitute besides. And it was into Samaria that He expressly commanded His disciples to go with the Gospel message. The whole life and ministry of Our Lord is eloquent testimony to the fact that He has broken down the wall of racial hostility. In Christ the Hebrew national laws of distinction were done away with. Even the ancient system of atonement, designed originally to be a blessing to all mankind through the witness and service of the chosen people, was done away so that all men might come to God through the one perfect sacrifice even Jesus Christ.

God has made us all members of the same household. The text says: "So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." Now, I want to emphasize that this is what God says! The implication is that racial and national distinctions vanish in Christ! Jesus is the bridge between peoples. He in Himself has removed the enmity, the hostility, between peoples. He recognizes no such thing. We may still think distinctions exist and thus cause difficulties and perpetuate animosity. But God's word says such distinctions do not exist in His church and among His people!!! He is our Father and we are His children. And are all a part of His household no matter the color of skin, the social class, the economic level, the age, or the sex of individual members. It is the height of gall and arrogance to argue this point with Him! Especially we who seek so faithfully to obey and keep His commandments; we are hardly in the position to refuse His will and to accept one another as members of the same household. No more inconsistent or hypocritical position could be taken by the members of the remnant church.

To foment agitation, argument, and fussing, over the color-line is a tactic of the Devil. He wants to play up prejudice. He wants to keep it before our eyes. He wants to twist the wedge he has inserted between God's people in order to disturb the household, for he is out to discredit the Church in the eyes of the world. We need to remember, both black and white believers, that it was Satan who coined...
the first skeptical question. It is he who comes to us and slyly asks: Did God really say that you were all members of the same household? The truth is that when we are filled with the HS there will be a triumph of God's people over prejudice. The solution to the hostility that lurks beneath the surface does not lie in digging up all the old ugly skeletons of the past and parading them for all to see. The solution is to let Jesus Christ lift us above prejudice in an acceptance of one another as members of the same household, as brothers and sisters in Christ. The solution is to completely accept the position He has given us in Christ, and the relationship with one another that that position reveals and establishes. The unbeliever, be he white or black, will not understand what I am saying. But if you are a Christian you will understand it. What the Word is speaking to us here today it addresses to believers! The household of God, the Church, is to lead the world in brotherhood! Love is the key to human relationships! When we truly love one another in Christ we will meet as equals; we will be honest and fair and just with one another; we will not feel superior or inferior. Did you know that to feel inferior to another man is as much in error as feeling superior? And our heavenly Father straightens that all out by treating each of us alike. He shows no partiality to the members of His household. Because Jesus is our example and we ought to walk the way He walked we must relate to one another in the same way. "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10) We need to be as firm and as committed to this conviction as we are to the Sabbath commandment. We must not allow either the winds of human praise or prejudice to sway us, any more than Jesus did. He was not a trembling reed in the wind, and we must not be either. One insightful commentator writes: "The light shining from the throne of God upon the cross of calvary forever puts an end to man-made separations between class and race. Men of every class become members of one family, children of the heavenly King..."—Selected Messages, I, 258.

God Has Brought Us Together in the Blood of Christ. "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one...for through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father." The Son of God had to die not only that we might be redeemed, but that we might live together as human beings in unity and peace. He died for our sin, and it is our sin that keeps us apart as people. There is nothing in this world that can bring peace and unity except the cohesive power of Christ's blood. Sin is the barrier to fellowship with God. Racial hostility is sin and is also therefore a barrier to fellowship with God. No amount of historical research intended to expose past cruelties, no
amount of condemnation for acts of frustrating violence will tear these barriers down. But the blood of Christ has already torn them down. Our hostility caused the death of Christ, but as we recognize His infinite love in His dying our hostility is slain by His atonement.

God has not created a racial barrier in making some black and some white. We cannot blame creation for the hostility that exists. The hostility is our own doing. We erect the barriers ourselves in refusing to accept the fact that in Christ we are all one and that we have been reconciled to God and one another by means of His blood. And that's the only blood that counts! A false conception of human blood lines serves to continue prejudice and fear. The blood of Christ has abolished all that. He is our peace, and has made peace by means of His shed blood. He also came and preached peace to both Jew and Gentile—to both black and white. It is the cross which has made all this possible, thus there should no longer be any barriers of hatred and contempt between people who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ.

"The secret of unity is found in the equality of believers in Christ. The reason for all division, discord and difference is found in separation from Christ. Christ is the center to which all should be attracted; for the nearer we approach the center, the closer we shall come together in feeling, in sympathy, in love, growing into the character and image of Jesus."

We have been talking about peace and unity in the Church and between Christian believers. But this peace and this unity is God's will for all men be they believers or not. It is at this point that the witness of the Church is so significant. Unbelieving men will not be attracted to the truth concerning human equality if he cannot see it in action in the Church. Mankind's unity in Christ must come to expression in the fellowship of the Church in which Christ dwells if the witness of the Church is to be credible rather than incredible. Without it there can be no hope for the future.

We can experience peace and unity between the races when we accept the acts of God which have made it so: He has broken down the wall of hostility, made us members of the same household, and brought us together in the blood of Christ.

for better believe us!!
Sermon #6

TITLE: "Confidence in the Church in a Critical Age"

SUBJECT: Confidence in the Church.

THEME: How to have confidence in the Church in a critical age

SERMONIC PROCESS: Modification.

TEXT: Ephesians 3:7-13

HYMNS: 433 - 437

SCRIPTURE READING: Romans 16:25-27
"Confidence In The Church In A Critical Age" Eph. 3:7-13

Many young people, reflecting the general critical mood, are turning off the Church with the remark: "The church has nothing to offer to me," those of us who over the years have learned and experienced the importance the church plays in our lives are stung to the heart by such remarks. Our first reaction is to turn those youth off and be critical of them in return. On second thought, however, one who has some knowledge and insight into the present condition of Christendom is not so apt to discount such remarks as being simply an expression of adolescent rebellion and lack of appreciation. Let's face it, we are living in a period of the Church's history when the traditional Christian concerns of evil, suffering, and death have been minimized and all but buried under a mountain of other interests. Now you might be responding to what has just been said with the argument that this is not so; after all our message is vitally concerned about evil, suffering, and death. Indeed we have very clear and specific answers for such concerns! And right you are; but let us not forget that we do not live isolated times from the rest of Christendom. The attitude of countless people who are no longer receiving a message that answers their deepest needs, a message of hope for the future, is having its effect upon us as well. We all rub shoulders with friends and acquaintances who are extremely critical of the Christian Church in any of its forms, and often are tempted to adopt such attitudes ourselves. Pessimism, skepticism, criticism, are sometimes quite infectious. We begin to look at our own church or congregation and start to pick it apart from every angle.

The world of religious art presents us with some rather shocking illustrations of how the church's conception of her Lord has changed over the centuries. 2nd c. portraits of Christ show Him very troubled and meditative. There was no hesitation to reveal a thorn scarred brow and sad countenance. The 11th c. Christ was depicted as being stern and somewhat forbidding. The 16th c. Christ was depicted as weeping and splattered with blood. Today's Christ, however, has no lines on His forehead. He is curley-headed and rosy-cheeked, with a benevolent and tolerant smile on His face. He is the ideal boyfriend! A living doll! This is the kind of a Christ the Church is projecting in general today. He looks as though he has not lived, has not suffered, has not had a profound thought for years, is devoid of all feeling, and is only concerned about making the right impression and presenting the correct appearance. People think twice about turning for help to a man like that!

In many cases the church has allowed its message to degenerate into simply one of the ingredients in the formula
for success, a kind of tranquilizer that can be swallowed for fast relief. This development has spawned the writing of any number of books over the past 15 years that have been extremely critical of the Church. Certainly the Church needs to take a good hard look at itself once in awhile, but today we are faced with the phenomenon of young people all caught up with the Jesus Movement and so-called Christian communes because they have had it with the organized, institutional Church. As Seventh-Day Adventists, we are not immune from this either, as many parents are discovering. We need to be aware of the fact that the very nature of our message and mission in the world is antagonistic to all the forces of hell, and that a mighty assault is being prepared against us by the Satanic hosts. His plan is to undermine our confidence in the Church and its message, to make us skeptical regarding the relevancy and usefulness of the Church as an institution in today's world. But God's Word says that HE WILL ALWAYS HAVE A CHURCH. There will never come a time when there will be no need for the Church. The very terms the Bible uses to describe the Church, which is a miracle of history, indicate His perpetual regard for it. It is called the Body of Christ, the people of God, the communion of Saints, a Holy Temple, the Gathered, the Remnant. A special Church! Unique Church! Evidently Paul's readers in Ephesus were losing heart. Perhaps they were beginning to think that Christ's cause was a failure. Paul was in prison in Rome, his work seemingly at an end. Surrounded by the entire populated world not yet evangelized they must have felt weak and impotent, and beginning to question the wisdom of God in the establishment of Christian congregations as His instrument of evangelism.

But the great apostle felt otherwise and was willing to put his life on the line as the downpayment. In this passage he proclaims to his beloved Ephesians brethren, and by means of inspiration on to us as well, that WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE CHURCH IN A CRITICAL AGE WHEN WE REALIZE AND TRUST ITS DIVINE PURPOSES.

**Pauline**

1. **TO PREACH THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.** That God makes a man the channel of communication for His gospel is marvelous indeed. Paul evidently felt that it had a rather miraculous aspect as well, for he had been a persecutor of Christians. As an employee of the Sanhedrin he had despised the Gentiles. That's why he refers to himself as the "very least of all the saints." But he says that he was "made a minister" by the grace and power of God. Over and over again he reiterates that he holds the office of apostle by divinely appointed, and in the opening verse of this epistle refers to himself as an apostle "by the will of God."
Of Paul:

"HIs work never loses its halo, and his road never becomes entirely commonplace and grey. He seems to catch his breath every time he thinks of his mission, and in the midst of abounding adversity glory still more abounds. And, therefore, this is the sort of music and song that we find unceasing, from the hour of his conversion and calling to the hour of his death: 'Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ'...

'Whereunto I am ordained a minister preacher, and an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.' Do you not feel a sacred, burning wonder in these exclamations, a holy, exulting pride in his vocation, leagued with a marvelous humility that the mystic hand of ordination had rested upon him?

That abiding wonder was a part of his apostolic equipment, and his sense of the glory of his calling enriched his proclamation of the glories of redeeming grace. If we lose the sense of the wonder of our commission we shall become like common traders in a common market, babbling about common wares."

---The Preacher His Life and Work, John Henry Jowett, pp. 20-21
Our attention is being directed to the fact that the office of the ministry, of preaching, is a divinely appointed office. There is nothing in the Word of God that even remotely hints that a time will come when this office is no longer needed and necessary. Paul told the Corinthians that Christ had sent him specifically "to preach the Gospel" (I Co. 1:17), and that it was through preaching that men would be saved (vs. 21) Paul tells the Corinthians in the first chapter of the first epistle that Christ he preached was a stumbling block to Jew and Gentile alike, but was nevertheless the power and wisdom of God to those who are called and who respond in faith. Then he added: "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." Couple that with the fact that he referred to preaching as "folly" and you can't help but wonder if Paul did not have preaching in mind as well as a stumbling block and also the power and wisdom of God. To many people today preaching is a stumbling block. To them it is an outmoded, old-fashioned, and useless means of communicating the love of God in Christ. They don't like preaching and can't stand listening to sermons. Now I'll grant you that there are many sermons not worth preaching, but that's not the fault of the message. No man should ever dare enter the pulpit without something pertinent to say about the Lord Jesus Christ, without being well prepared, and without his message having gripped his own heart to the point where he lives for the preaching moment. The Word of God still says to this extremely sophisticated and rebellious 20th c.: "But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?... So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ." (Ro. 10:14,17)

There have both the divine method of communication and the divine content of that communication. We have been GIVEN both the message and the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Co. 5:18-19) God has decided to make His appeal to mankind through the means of the preacher and the witness. The message is the unsearchable riches of Christ. (Inexhaustible--some translations.) It is part of the unique ministry and mission of the SDA Church to share new treasure with the world. There are countless faithful Christians in the world who love Christ and are seeking to be faithful. We are privileged to share with them the inconceivable stores of spiritual truth, insight, and blessing, that lie deeper in fellowship with Christ. There is wisdom and knowledge of Christ that needs to be shared. And how those are blessed who heed our testimony and come to know the Lord in a fuller sense. Beauty and power unbeknownst before become available to them. The eternal care of our Father bouys
them up in increased praise and thanksgiving! These riches are always ours upon them we are to draw for sustenance and spiritual energy. The supply is infinite and inexhaustible. To proclaim these riches we have been sent into all the world!

2 - TO REVEAL GOD'S PLAN FOR THE AGES. We are not only called to preach Christ but also to be a part of God's revelation of His will and plan for history. Verse 9 is fascinating! "...and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things." By the power of the HS it is through the preaching and witness of the Church that God MAKES "all men see." And what He wants them to see is His plan for mankind and the world, especially in terms of ultimate redemption and victory and restoration. Here the word "believe" is not used. The reference is to sight. God wants to reveal insight, that special gift of grace that enables a person to get a grasp on God's will and plan for the whole of history. That mystery involves not only the remedy for sin purchased on the cross of Calvary, but the final solution to the sin problem when sin and Satan will be destroyed no longer to plague the redeemed of God, the final restoration of the fallen earth to its original perfection, the ultimate vindication of God Himself, and His plan, in the new heaven and new earth where peace and justice and righteousness will dwell forever. The God "who created all things" will continue to exercise His grace and power until it is so! The same power revealed when the world was made, is being exercised even now in drawing the cords of history together to bind up the message and mission of His church in the final events of time. That He wants men to see! The plan of the mystery hidden for ages, but now by means of the prophetic Word revealed in all its glory and fullness for believing man to enjoy and from which he can receive comfort God even now is fulfilling the promise He made to Daniel through the angelic messenger when He said: "Behold, I will make know to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation; for it pertains to the appointed time of the end." (Dan. 8:19)

God's plan is "for the fulness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth." (1:10) And His Church, His spiritual body, is an integral part of that will and work of God! God's people are inextricably involved not only in proclaiming the Saviourhood of Christ to the world, but also in pointing to Him is the unifier, the only One who is able to make things make sense.

Paul speaks of the office of the ministry which had been given to him for the sake of the Church also to the Colossians. He speaks of it as a "divine office" given "to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now made manifest to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the
riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim... (Col.1:25-28) The beginning of the revelation of the mystery hidden for ages is initiated in your life when you experience the new birth and the indwelling Christ. It is He, your new master, who then undertakes to reveal more of the mystery, the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Why? Because it takes a spiritual man to understand the mysteries of the faith. "The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned... But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Cor. 2:11-16) Paul wraps up his epistle to the Romans with a benediction that includes all these concerns: preaching, revelation of the mystery, with faith as the goal. "Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but now is disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about obedience to the faith—to the only wise God be glory for evermore through Jesus Christ!" (Rom.16:25-27)

3 TO MAKE KNOWN THE WISDOM OF GOD. God has a purpose for all of this. A purpose that reaches far beyond the salvation of a single person. "...that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made manifest known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him." (vss.10-12)

The Church, composed of the redeemed of all nations, colors, and tongues, is to be an instrument of revelation not only by its faithful witness to Christ and truth, but also by means of its victorious life. Part of that wisdom which is to made known has to do with the creation of the Church as His channel of communication and instrument of evangelism in the world. Man has become skeptical of his own institutions, and also of the Church. Somehow many people have gotten the idea that the Church is simply another human institution, a sociological phenomenon. But we need to know and accept the fact that the Church has no human origin, has a divine origin, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. That was the promise of Jesus! (Matt 16:18) Made up of people who have been given a lofty position in Christ, the Church has been given a lofty purpose in the world. To preach Christ and win souls, and also to be a part of the revelation of God's wisdom to the heavenly hosts! Did you realize that the faithfulness and victory of the Church constitutes a sermon preached to the congregation in the heavens? The Bible tells us that the angels long to look into these things. (I Pet. 1:12) Evidently there are
things we are privilaged to know that the angels are not priviledged to know. This is a part of uniting all things in Christ, things in heaven and on earth. The witness of the Church will have its final effect on angels! God has designed His Church to be the object of wonder and amazement to all the beings in heaven! To make them realize also the great wisdom of God!

The message of the Gospel was to go to all the world, and when that has been accomplished and Jesus comes again, and when the Church is perfected and glorified, the end result will be the fulfillment of the eternal purpose of God for which the Church was created. Is the Church, then, something which we can take lightly? Is it an institution no different than any other of human origin? How can anyone who rightly understand the whole purpose for the Church's existence ever think it has become irrelevant and unnecessary? To think thus would be an act of unbelief! God will always have a Church. It shall be a faithful Church! A Church in possession of the whole truth! A perfected Church! A gathered Church! A glorified Church! A victorious Church! No wonder Ellen G. White was able to write: "Although there are evils existing in the Church, and will be until the end of the world, the Church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin. The Church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reproved, warned, and counseled, is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard." (TM-49). "The Church is the depository of the wealth of the riches of the grace of Christ, and through the Church eventually will be made manifest the final and full display of the love of God to the world that is to be lightened with its glory." (TM-50). "Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it, and He will replenish, refine, ennoble, and elevate it, so that it shall stand fast amid the corrupting influences of this world. Men appointed of God have been chosen to watch with jealous care, with vigilant perseverance, that the church may not be overthrown by the evil devices of Satan, but that she shall stand in the world to promote the glory of God among men." (TM-53).

We can have confidence in the Church in this critical age when we realize and trust its divine purposes: to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, to reveal God's plan for the ages, and to make known the wisdom of God.
Sermon #7

TITLE: "Strength to Face the Future"

SUBJECT: Strength.

THEME: How to have strength to face the future.

SERMONIC PROCESS: Modification.

TEXT: Ephesians 3:14-21

HYMNS: 29 - 279

SCRIPTURE READING: I John 4:7-12
"Strength To Face The Future". Ephesians 3:14-21

Prayer plays a striking role in these first chapters of the letter to the Ephesians. Paul prays twice in three chapters. He concludes this portion of the letter, the first three chapters of which are doctrinal, with a prayer that is almost startling in its boldness. Paul has presented us with some of the most profound and exciting truths concerning the Christian life and experience. As readers we are thrilled with the knowledge and reality of our position in Christ and our purpose in the world. We are awed and inspired by the importance and significance God's Word attaches to the Church. As we have responded to these great truths God's Holy Spirit has been working faith in our hearts. But faith itself is not enough to face the future, as Paul himself has recognized in his own experience. Spiritual strength and fortitude is also required if believers are to stand in an evil day.

This prayer is the transition between the doctrinal and practical portions of the letter. Paul has set forth the ground and basis of the Christian faith and hope which encompasses all of history and beyond. The believers' lofty position, seated with Christ in the heavenly places, has been established beyond question. And how we should thrill to it! So has the lofty purpose of the Church: to reveal the riches of the grace of Christ and to reveal the wisdom of God to the world and to the heavenly host. To be faithful to this purpose requires spiritual strength, inner strength. Here we are dealing with such things as conviction, obedience, certainty, commitment that is unswerving and dependable. The great apostle, imprisoned as he was and thus circumscribed as far as missionary activity was concerned, prays for the inner strength he knew the believers would need if they were to fulfill God's purpose for the Church. The task of the Church, while glorious, is not without hazard and risk. Imprisonment and death awaited many of her faithful people; even Paul himself would be put to death for his faith. Opposition was to be the experience of millions of God's people even down to the present age. Jesus had said: "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." (Mt 5:11-12) "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep your word also. But all this they will do to you on my account, because they do not know Him who sent me." (Jn 15:20-21) And Paul's counsel to the Romans was "Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them." (Ro 12:17) And to the young evangelist Timothy he wrote: "Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and
deceived. But as for you continue in what you have learned and firmly believed..." (2Tim. 3:12-14)

To stand and withstand, great faith, great insight, great conviction would be required. God's saints of all time must be firmly rooted and grounded; with a faith firmly rooted in the love of God revealed in Christ, and a knowledge of past and future events grounded in the prophetic Word. These people would have to be a people of hope! They would have to be a people of spiritual experience, firm in their trust that God would fulfill His Word and do what He has promised.

The Church faces a formidable task in the world, but not one that is insurmountable or impossible. It is no less formidable to us in the 20th c. Especially in view of the present state of world and church affairs. The future looks grim until and unless we get a grip on God's promises concerning the future. There must have been moments when Paul, imprisoned as he was, felt powerless and unable to accomplish anything of significant value. It may even have seemed a bit ridiculous for him to write such glorious and glowing things about the plan and purpose of God for the Church and for the future, while in his own personal experience all had come to a halt in a Roman prison. But God is powerful and He is able! The Church is bigger than Paul! Bigger than you and I! History has proven this to be true! Nearby in Oak Hill cemetery lie the remains of a servant of God, her grave marked only by a simple and unobtrusive stone inscribed "mother." There are others there as well. The Church is bigger than they! There is no stone to mark the resting place of Paul, or any of the other apostles. Fruitful for God in life, anonymous to the world in death, these and countless others shall reign with Christ when He comes.

In the act of praying this prayer Paul is DEMONSTRATING his faith in the spiritual realities of which he has just spoken. Paul was no fake! He lived what he believed and his imprisonment gave him the opportunity to demonstrate his faith. He prays as an adopted son of God; as one who has "access in one Spirit to the Father" (2:18); as one who has "boldness and confidence of access" (3:12) through faith in Christ. He prays as one whose belief concerning his position in Christ is firm, and whose confidence in the Church and its purpose is unwavering. He would die in that faith and confidence! He wrote to the Philippians from the same prison: "Yes, and I shall rejoice. For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I shall not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil. 1:19-21) Truly Paul had experienced that strengthening
in the inner man for which he prays! We can receive strength to face the future by adopting these petitions as our own.

1. **THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN OUR HEARTS.** The petition is: "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

This is a favorite theme of Paul's. No one knew better than he that we are saved not by believing doctrines, but by personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. Union with Christ is at the center of Christian experience, otherwise redemption operates mechanically or magically, is outside of us and completely independent of our attitude. The truth of Christ FOR us cannot be separated from the truth of Christ IN us!

This is especially vital for Seventh-day Adventists for whom justification is not simply a forensic matter, something that takes place in the heavenly courts, but is something in which the believer is involved in that he identifies himself with Christ in His attitude toward sin. Furthermore, sanctification is seen by us as the manifestation of Christ's own character in the believer's life.

What Paul recognizes is that in spite of all the glorious truths he has written, which are doctrines of the faith, there is no power or strength in the doctrines. Power and strength comes only by means of the indwelling Christ! What that means is that while you may know all of the doctrines of the faith inside and out you will not be able to stand and withstand in the evil day. For that you need the indwelling Christ! It's not for knowledge of the truth that Paul prays here, but for the experience of the indwelling Christ!

The secret of power and happiness lies in union with Christ. It is directly related to all hope for the future, for it is Christ in us that constitutes all hope of glory! (Col. 1:27) The motor on your car will not respond at all no matter how carefully you explain to it, by reading the driver's manual, how it ought to run. But when you put gas in the motor and give it the spark that will ignite the fuel it will roar into life and speed down the highway.

To be united with Christ means to possess inner sources of supernatural power and strength. All that Paul means by "salvation" is bound up in the words "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20) "There is therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1)

If there is to be a measure of inner strength the life of fellowship with Christ must be experienced. The result will be a certain quality of life that has moved beyond the negative to the positive. It is in essence a supernatural life which alone is able to produce the peace that passes all understanding.

The moment one speaks of being in Christ, or Christ being in him, he is saying something tremendous about Jesus. He is saying that Jesus Christ is no mere historical figure. He
is much more than an important and influential personage of the past. Rather, the affirmation is being made that Jesus Christ is a living, contemporary Spirit who is God. Furthermore, the affirmation is being made that Christ is the very environment in which the redeemed man lives. He has been "transplanted into a new soil and a new climate, and both soil and climate are Christ." (Stewart, A Man In Christ, 157) If we are to be strong enough to face the future we must have the mind of Christ; able to discern truth from falsehood, good from evil, right from wrong, and able to make the right decisions as we are faced with the crucial crossroads of life.

The petition is: "...that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge." Strange words—that we might know something that surpasses knowledge. Love is a part of an intimate relationship with the indwelling Christ. "God so loved the world that he gave..." "He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world, so that we might live through him..." Beloved if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another... if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:12)

The love that Paul is talking about is not a fickle feeling or a passing emotion. It is a loyal, undying, everlasting love that can be totally depended upon now and in eternity. Neither tribulation or persecution or peril are able to separate us from the love of Christ! "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:37-39)

It is this powerful and everlasting love that we must trust. It is this love that will bring us through to the end, and carry us over through the time of tribulation to the earth made new! This love is behind the Commandments, sent Christ to the Cross, caused His resurrection and ascension, and now is being fulfilled as He ministers in heaven before the throne of God on our behalf. Love created us, commanded us, redeemed us, sanctifies us, will glorify us, and will ultimately save us.

We are to live in this love. It is not a weak sentiment but an abiding principle of life. It is the principle that must govern the life of the Church, for it is to be comprehended by, and together with, all the saints.
Paul seems to run out of words in an attempt to describe the immensity of this love. He speaks of breadth, length, heighth and depth. What he is saying is that this love is beyond the description of human words. It is not even possible to fully estimate the value of this love of God. It surpasses knowledge. Our limited human capacities of feeling and intellect are inadequate to express and conceive its magnitude. This is so because LOVE is the very nature of the Godhead! But still the prayer is that we would have a knowledge of this love. That we would be spiritually strengthened by this love and thus share it with our fellow believers in the Church, and through the Church to the world. As the believer becomes more Christ-like, and the Church which is His body reflects His character, the same kind of divine love is shared with the world.

God by His Spirit will give us this love to share. "...the fruit of the Spirit is love." (Gal 5:22) Notice it is the Spirit's fruit and not ours. It is dependant upon the indwelling Christ and His creative power. And it is a strengthening force in the inner man, both in the individual believer and the inner life of the Church.

THAT WE MAY BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD. This is not possible until we have first known the indwelling Christ and the power of His love which leads to the fullness of God. This prayer of the apostle is most startling in that it requests a moral perfection like that of God Himself. The phrase "fullness of God" has to do with the divine perfections of God. Now, no-one can ever share in the divine attributes of God such as omniscience and omnipresence and omnipotence. Nor can we become divine. But we can be filled with the virtues of God! As Jesus Christ is permitted to dwell in the heart by faith He increasingly creates within us the virtues of God—fruits of the Spirit. Thus both individual believers and the Church are being filled with the moral qualities of God and are to manifest them to the world. The very fact that this is possible, and that God undertakes to do it, says something very significant both about God and about man. Without a doubt man is spiritually lost, but he is not a nothing. He has been created in the image of God! That we dare not forget. Even though you and I are sinners we can do terribly influential things in life. Man is able to influence history either for evil or for good. Let us not underestimate the influence human beings are able to make in the world. This is precisely why this petition—that we might be filled with the fullness of God—is so important. God would undertake to fill us with Himself and then motivate us by means of divine grace and power to do the good, to reflect His glory and praise His name. Someone has said that God blesses the man with whom His glory is safe. So you and I are never just cogs in a wheel. We have influence! What kind?
Let us remember that we have been chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him." (1:4) That's His will! And He will accomplish it! For this we must pray. It is His power, and His power alone, which is able to work holiness in us so that we are able to stand blameless before Him. So Paul concludes this bold prayer with a wonderful doxology. He has been concentrating in the first three chapters on all the wonderful things God has done for the Church, and upon the wonders the future holds for His people, as well as the moral excellency He would give to the Church. The prayer itself sounds presumptuous. But now Paul indicates that such a prayer is not too bold. He indicates that there is no limit to God's power! "Now to him who by the power at work within us IS ABLE to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations." We are justified in our bold prayers! God is able to do far more than we could ever conceive possible! He will do more for us than we have the courage to ask for in prayer! The truth is that it is impossible to ask too much of our God. His giving to us will surpass the most lofty request. We need the faith to believe that because of our position in Christ and our purpose in the world God our Father will undertake to supply every need and every grace to see that we make it through to the end.

Speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul says: "For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness of life in Him, who is the head of all rule and authority." (Col. 2:9-10) Because the divine fullness of God dwells in Christ it comes to you and me as He is permitted by faith to dwell in our hearts. As we rest in Him He enables us to walk in love and to stand against the wiles of the Devil.

Faith is meant to lead to the strengthening of the inner man. We can receive strength to face the future as we pray that Christ may dwell in our hearts, that His love may be fully known by us, and that His virtues and perfection may be imparted to us.
Sermon #8

TITLE: "The Worthy Life"

SUBJECT: The Life that is worthy.

THEME: The nature of the life that is worthy.

SERMONIC PROCESS: Clarification.

TEXT: Ephesians 4:1-10

HYMNS: 409 - 396

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 11:23-30
"The Worthy Life"  Ephesians 4:1-10

Three times in this letter Paul makes reference to the fact that he was a prisoner: 3:1; 4:1; and 6:20. In the last reference he refers to himself as an "ambassador in chains." It is apparent that this threefold reference to his imprisonment was deliberate.

It was certainly not for the purpose of soliciting undue sympathy, nor was it intended to diminish the hope, the faith, and the expectation of good in the future, of the believers at Ephesus. On the contrary, it was intended to remind them that a man's faith can be a victorious element in his life, though he be chained in prison! And, it was also intended to bear witness to the fact that even though Paul's ministry was circumscribed, nevertheless God's truth would still be spread abroad and eventually triumph by means of the faithful and sacrificing Church.

Furthermore his imprisonment should serve to impress their minds with the seriousness of his words, both of the doctrin and of the instruction that he gives. His suffering is being endured for the sake of Christ. Surely those who are not in chains ought to have an even greater enthusiasm and hope, be motivated even more toward a more noble life. He is in jail for the greatest cause in the world, the salvation of mankind! Paul is conscious as he writes that while he address the Church in the world its Head is in heaven. He has said that God has put all things under the feet of Jesus and "has made him the head over all things for the Church, which is his body." (1:22-23) THE HEAD HAS SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT HOW THE BODY LIVES AND FUNCTIONS. And by means of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the Lord Jesus Christ who is seated in the heavenly places addresses the Church, you and me, by means of these words of the great apostle.

The last three chapters begin with a "therefore", and whenever you see a "therefore" in the Bible it is there for a reason. It means that what is said next is said on the basis of what has been already said. So, it is in view of the grace received in Christ, of the imparted new life, of the union of the members of the Church, of the position of the believer in Christ and the purpose of the Church in the world, in view of the hope we have in the future, that the believers are called to a certain kind of life. It is a life that is as lofty in principle and ideal, in ethic and moral, as the doctrines on which it is based. Members of the Church, Christ's body, are not to live lives that are a contradiction to their Lord's life. Better to have no doctrines, no beliefs at all, than live a contradiction. Thus there is more than knowing all about chapter 1-3. We are called to put 1-6 into practice. We must go beyond what is right toward what is pleasing to the Lord! The point is
that the life we live as individual believers, and as a Church, must be consistent with our lofty position in Christ and our lofty purpose in the world. Because we have been GIVEN a lofty position, GIVEN a lofty purpose, we are also GIVEN a lofty life.

The word says we are called to a calling, to a life that is worthy of that calling. The calling itself has been shared in 1-3, now we are to consider the life that is worthy. We need to remember at the outset that the moment we disobey Him who is our Head we decapitate the Body! No body can live without its head. Spiritually speaking, the Church cannot live without its Head for its very life-blood would drain away. What is left would be a lifeless corpse, a semblance of the real thing, described by Paul as "holding the form of religion but denying the power of it." (2Tim,3:5)

So you see we are not talking about one of many alternatives, but of the one Way, God's Way! It is not only the doctrines, the truths, that are GIVEN, but the life itself.

Thus this passage tells us that we are called to live a worthy life. A STUDY OF CERTAIN WORDS AND STATEMENTS IN THIS PASSAGE WILL HELP TO CLARIFY THE NATURE OF A LIFE THAT IS WORTHY.

1. We are to live with all LOWLINESS AND MEEKNESS. "Worthy" is a lofty word. It is a word that we need to understand carefully in this context. Use it properly. We must avoid all considerations of this word in terms of our own worthiness, for no man has ever been intrinsically worthy of God's attention and grace. What we want to exalt is the kind, the nature of, the life God has GIVEN to us as it is outlined in the remaining chapters. The kind of life He has given us to live is one that is completely worthy of His own character, worthy of the lofty truths upon which it is based, worthy of our lofty position in Christ, and worthy of the Church's lofty purpose in the world. If we keep this in mind we will avoid the dangerous trap of thinking that BECAUSE we live a certain way, even though it be His way, we thereby BECOME worthy. Our worthiness is in Christ and in His life, the life He imparts to us and that He will live in and through us when we surrender to Him in faith.

Paul has been sharing some extremely exalted thoughts with us, has he not? Being a good pastor, and a good psychologist as well, he anticipates that once we have accepted our high position in Christ and purpose in the world that we would be tempted toward a lofty view of ourselves. Therefore at the very outset of this section of his letter he undertakes to let us know clearly that to live this worthy, this lofty life, it must be done in lowliness. We are to hold absolutely no exalted views about ourselves. To do so would be less than the worthy life of Christ.
Traits of character such as lowliness have never been highly regarded in the world, except by Christians. If you are an unconverted person the admonition to lowliness is a hard saying. You want none of it. You feel you must assert yourself for you live in a highly competitive society. The key to our understanding of the term is to be found in the life of our Lord. Jesus said: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and LOWLY in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Mt11:29) Now a yoke was meant to ease the burden rather than make it greater. When we submit to the discipline and training of Christ we discover that He carries the heavy end of the road of life. What a blessing it is to realize that I don't have to compete with my fellow man, that it is possible to live a life of cooperation and mutual regard! The yoke is a symbol of submission, of surrender, and to be lowly is to be surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Such lowliness of life is not possible unless we are cognizant of our total unworthiness. We are to live also with all meekness. This trait also is repudiated by the world. Paul connects the word "meekness" with "gentleness" in speaking of Jesus, (2 Cor. 10:1) and with "patience" in speaking of the believer in his relations with others (Col.3:12) Thus the believer is to be lowly when it comes to his relationship to God, holding no exalted views of himself, and meek in his relationships with others. It suggests a certain gentleness like Christ's and a certain self-restraint in meeting the challenges and the irritating circumstances of life in the present age. Without the character traits of lowliness and meekness there can be little hope of living the overcoming life.

We are to live with patience. This is particularly pertinent for Seventh-day Adventists because the Bible speaks forcefully of patience in relation to the second coming of Christ. The Greek word for patience (makrothumia) is translated differently by the King James and the RSV in various places. Sometimes the word "longsuffering" can best give the meaning of the word. In other cases it has a suggestion of endurance. Very often the Greek word is used with another Greek word that means "endurance", such as in Luke 21:19 where Jesus is speaking of His return and the difficult times that will precede that event. He says: "By your endurance you will gain your lives."

Some translators make it read "patient endurance." One of the most striking passages is James 5:7-11. It is self-evident that patience is an important virtue for those who are awaiting the return of the Lord. One who is patient does not grumble at circumstances nor because of people. Patience, steadfastness, and happiness are all connected here. One cannot be happy in his anticipation of the coming of Christ if he is impatient about it. We need to remember that God is in control of
history and that things will happen according to His time table and not ours. While we may desire His imminent return, and that He may come swiftly and soon, we must not be impatient about it. Impatience and faith are incompatible. While we are certainly to look to the future with keen anticipation and expectation we must not do so with frustration and impatience. "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." (Ro. 8:25) While a part of the purpose of the Church in the world is to spread the Gospel and thus assist in hastening the Day of the Lord, we must always remember that we cannot push God into precipitant action. God will act when He is ready and not before. Faith in His promises will rest in His wisdom as it waits patiently for the fullness of time. 

Patience is a divine quality which can be known only as it is GIVEN by God to His people. No amount of straining will produce patience, no self-help, not even good resolutions. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit—Gal. 5:22. It is contrasted with a work of the flesh. Patience is the Spirit's fruit in one's life and not his own, and it can come only as by faith one surrenders fully to the Lord Jesus Christ and allows His Spirit to work within.

There is a special promise in the Bible for those who have been patient in awaiting the coming of the Lord. "Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth. I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown." (Rev. 3:10-11) The Word of God does not mean to suggest that a deal is being made here that would lead us to believe that BECAUSE we do our part God will do His. On the contrary it means that the keeping of His word of patient endurance on our part is actually the working out of our faith in His promise and ability to keep His promise. We must in faith hold fast to what we have been given. God will protect our inheritance! This kind of Spirit produced patience is worthy of the truths upon which the believer's life is based. If it is to be worthy of such lofty truths it has to be something produced by the author of those truths or it would be less than they. "Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience. But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be (people) perfectly and fully developed (with no defects), lacking in nothing." (James 1:3-4—Amplified New Testament)

3-We are to live FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE.
This simply means that in our relationships with one another in the household of faith, we are to be understanding and kind. We are to bear with one another. While we must certainly desire the highest for each other in terms of Christian experience and sanctification, yet we must not be impatient. It is the HS who is the agent of sanctification. No amount of criticism or harping on our part will move another person along the way of sanctification. That is the work of the HS. We are called to live balanced lives in relation to one another. We are called to live in such a way that our lives do not constitute a hindrance or stumbling block that would keep another believer from sanctification, nor are we to relate to them in such a way that we try to push and shove them into holy living. That's not our business. Our business is to be faithful to the Lord in our own lives and HE will use our testimony for the sake of others. And LOVE is the key. Notice how careful Paul is to say that we are to forbear one another in LOVE. That means love for the other person, and not love for our own success in witnessing. The kind or quality of love the apostles speak of he expresses in other places. (Ro.5:8) -- "But God SHOWS his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." He didn't wait until we became good people before He died for us! (Ro.13:10) -- "Love does no wrong to a neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." If you seek to be a keeper of the Law of God the most apparent attribute of your character will be LOVE! The believer is controlled by the love of Christ--(2Co.5:11) -- "For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all." That kind of love cannot be broken. There is nothing in this world as powerful, as sure and certain as the love of Christ. Its power and influence encompasses all of life; extends beyond death and into heaven itself: "For I am SURE that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ro.8:38-39)

This kind of love is the FIRST fruit of the Spirit. Without this love in your life there can be no other fruits. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control... And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Gal.5:22-23)

With love as its quality, forbearance means the ability to keep on loving even though the other person may have faults that are displeasing and even offensive. It is only love that "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1Co.13:7)
We are to live EAGER TO MAINTAIN THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE. God in Christ has GIVEN us our position in Christ, GIVEN us our purpose in the world, GIVEN us the life we are to live, BUT WE ARE TO LIVE IT. And that requires constant vigilance, the vigilance of faith.

Within the fellowship of the Church we find all kinds of people, some of different races, some wise, some ignorant, some rich, some poor, people of widely divergent dispositions, and tastes. To preserve harmony and maintain cooperation within such a conglomeration of peoples requires lowliness: meekness and patience: attributes which are cultivated within us by the HS. The life of the Church must be consistent with its lofty position and purpose.

When the Church is healthy in love and faith; when its members are conscious of the fact that each needs the other, that they are members one of another, they will be EAGER to maintain the unity of the Spirit, "in the bond of peace."

PEACE is the bond that holds the Church together. If there is no peace among the members the Church falls apart and its mission is defeated. Peace has to be the relationship in which the church's members live if the unity that has been already established by God is to be maintained. He has broken down the walls of hostility, has made us members of the same household, has united us by the blood of Christ. Only the peace that passes all understanding, the peace that comes from personal faith in Christ, is able to maintain this unity.

"For HE is our peace, who has made is both one... that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace... And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who are near." ( 2:11-16)

When we realize our position and purpose (lofty) then we will be EAGER to keep what we have been given in such a marvelous and miraculous fashion!! We will guard the unity in the Spirit with jealous care! When we do this, when we practice the faith we have been given, when we live the life we have been given, we are then PARTICIPATING IN THE KIND OF LIFE THAT IS AS LOFTY AS THE TRUTHS UPON WHICH IT IS BASED. This is the life that is pleasing to the Lord! This is the life that is not a contradiction to the truths we confess!

"God dies - Christ is born - 
a divinely appointed ministry." - T.C.S.

Rev. 4:9-11
Rev. 7:11-12

When all is said and done.
WITH:

A happy life in an unhappy world,
A certain hope in an uncertain age,
A Purposeful life in a purposeless world,
Peace and Unity in a hostile world,
Confidence in the Church in a critical age,

WITH:

The inner strength that comes from God,

AND

Living a life that is worthy of the lofty truths upon which it is based,

WE CAN HAVE FAITH TO FACE THE FUTURE!
TRANSCRIPT OF FEEDBACK SESSION
FOLLOWING SERMON #5

Note: Feedback session was conducted by the members of Group A with Dr. Louis Venden as leader. Portions of the dialogue irrelevant to the study have been omitted in the transcript. Deletions are indicated thus . . .

(Venden) Now, what we want to do is just a very easy, comfortable, relaxed thing. . . . There are just two fundamental things that I'd like to have you share with me as freely and openly as you possibly can—with each other. First of all, as you think over the morning's worship service and you're headed on home, what one main thing out of the whole service do you think will stick with you the longest? What will you take with you? Now, is the question clear? Just today's service, just take today's worship service, the whole service, not just the preaching, but from the very beginning as you lived today and worshipped God, what do you feel is the major thing that will stay with you?

(Man) No racial distinction between God's people.

(Venden) So, it's a thought, a concept that you're taking with you. All right.

(Man) I wonder, I've heard it preached, I've heard the same sermon preached different ways before and we tend to stick up for what we know as right yet we have two different churches, we have a black church and a white church. This crossed my mind, why if we're willing to say this do you go to such lengths to make two different houses for people to meet in and support these houses with monies?

(Venden) So, for you it's a kind of question that you're going home with? What about this?

(Man) Well, it's the same for me, actually, my o my, you can't say that everyone who goes to God's house is really Christian.

(Man) Take the students on the campus at Andrews, they want to have their own church too.

(Woman) They tend to group together. I noticed at Pioneer Memorial colored people all sit in one place even though they are all at Pioneer. That they are more comfortable or not doesn't have anything to do with our attitude towards them, it shouldn't you know.
(Woman) I think that to me the central idea is when we get closer to Christ we should come closer to our brothers in many ways, no matter whether it's class or color or anything, we should automatically come to associate with our brothers in a more friendly way the closer we come to Christ, and another thing I think is just because people group together in church because according to how you look at them by color or class, doesn't necessarily mean that's why they're doing it. If you know someone you're more likely to sit with them than to go sit with someone you don't know. I think this has a lot to do with it.

(Venden) All right.

(Man) I think that when we separate ourselves from someone, we don't really separate ourselves from them so much as we separate ourselves from Christ.

(Venden) Now, if I'm catching correctly, the major thing you're all taking away this morning is related to the sermon. . . . As you looked over the whole service, is there anything else that either particularly contributed to the morning that you'll take with you or am I reading you correctly that it's the sermon and that's it? I'm not trying to structure what your reply is, I'm just trying to broaden it in case.

(Man) Does this include Sabbath School or just church service?

(Venden) Well, do you see some particular connection there? In what way?

(Woman) There's nothing like a good discussion. I'm a good listener and learn a lot from Sabbath School. Sabbath School to me is sometimes meat more so than the sermon because of the way our Sabbath School class is constructed.

(Venden) Are you going home today with primarily a Sabbath School thing in mind? Or are you talking about a general thing?

(Woman) General.

(Venden) Okay, let's see, there are three or four of you who haven't yet gotten into this, is there something you'd like to share? From the standpoint of: we're headed home now and I think maybe this is one major thing that will be with me for an hour or two, or the week or the rest of my life.

(Woman) I feel that if a man can get up and say things so well he's a courageous person and I feel this is true (inaudible) . . . Just a couple of weeks ago when there was some suggestion made in a small meeting about what, how we should handle our problems, sell our church, branch off here, and evangelize and bring into the church, you know, there was quite a large discussion and I know that he knows that there is a problem, and he has the courage and the faith to go.

(Man) I see, I don't see, I, I, can resolve the problem in my mind but what I come up with is when you meet a person who is not of your faith, do you segregate? No we don't we preach, you know, vehemently, but yet we have two churches.
Okay, now that's a problem we could discuss, in the light of the message today it would be very profitable. Our purpose here, again, is to kind of reflect—what you've shared is very important because if I read you right, you're going home saying, Man, there's more here than, and there may be some thinking and maybe even some doing that may need to follow.

That's true.

Another thing. I think his sermons are all better, and I think they are easier to follow, but it comes to me too that (inaudible)

So, you have a memory of something that happened in the past that you wished the sermon had been (inaudible).

The sermon was to me definitely better.

We want to talk about the sermon specifically in a little bit. Here we're trying to get the perspective of the whole service. So we'll come back to that. Thank you for sharing that.

Talking about the blacks and the whites or all colors, different color, but there was more than that in the sermon this morning. There's the guy who makes a million dollars a year and the guy who makes $5,000 a year. Socially they're not in the same party, they're not in the same society, even within our church, even within our church here in Benton Harbor the high society congregates together, and in the sermon and in God's sight and the way I believe, we are all equal.

So you see it broader than just black and white.

I'm glad he brought that out, that's what I saw in it myself. Everybody seems to be talking about the race thing and it's more than that, it's a bigger thing. God created all men equal and as Christians we have no other right than to treat all men as equals.

Is this a kind of major thing from today for you?

I've seen people come into this church and not be dressed well and as far as this world's goods, not so much money (inaudible) ... ahead and attack this from the Word of God and I appreciate it.

That's kind of a major thing for you from the morning.

Yes. You can count on what he says.

One point that struck me, I really hadn't looked at it that way but I could see it after it was presented, if we insist on looking on these views—the racial, social—that we are definitely sinning. I hadn't looked at that point in that light before, but it was brought out real well.

That's what you'll take with you, another major
(Woman) I think there were two things that really stuck with me today, when I think back over the whole service. One was, I don't usually do this, but I sort of stopped singing while we were singing the first song and I noticed that everybody was really singing more so than the last song because I think the first song was a really familiar song and the last song I don't think was quite so familiar. I don't know, it just left an impression on my mind—everybody was enthusiastic about singing—everyone in the choir and on the platform, as sometimes they aren't you know. Then another thing was the sermon, I'm not saying that he's not sincere in his sermons, because I think he really is, but today in his sermon, there was one part in it, I don't remember exactly when it was, but just the movements that he made and just the tone of his voice and the way he said it, he really sounded like he was really in with what he was saying and that he was really trying to get it across to us.

(Venden) Do you remember what particular point that was?

(Woman) It was something about how God created us all equal—I think it was then—I can't remember but I just remember one time that he was really sincere about it.

(Venden) Kinda grabbed ya!

(Woman) Yeah.

(Woman) Was it at the point where he was talking about different colors?

(Woman) Yeah, it might have been there.

(Venden) He said, nobody, there's not a white person here

(Woman) Yeah. Yeah.

(Laughter)

(Venden) Good, well, this is maybe a good bridge over to what I'd like to have you do the next section here, and that is to relate specifically to the sermon. Not just as far as the ideas, the presentation—you made a comment, you thought the sermons were definitely better. Would you amplify that just a little bit?

(Woman) (Inaudible)

(Man) I feel differently. I would feel that it's because we are in a group for that purpose to analyze him that we are getting more out of it.

(Woman) I have the tape to every pastor that's ever been where I have been in the church and I always go home and pick out something, a thread that should be woven through, I'd rather go to sleep or read a story or something, but I can follow these.

(Venden) But you feel like these sermons in this particular series.
(Woman) Very organized, much better organized. More on the layman's level than theology really, not way up above that you have to grasp to understand.

(Woman) I felt that all of his sermons have been so much better than the ones we had before, I lap it up, not just this particular series but all of them.

(Man) I don't know a man that has spent as much time on the sermons as he has, he makes a new one every week and he puts his whole life into it (inaudible)

(Woman) I think another thing I remember when we first started coming to this church right after we first became Adventists—I don't know, I didn't really think too much of the way he preached because I tend to listen more to a person who is domineering, who raises his voice, doesn't speak with the same tone all the time, he was, he just didn't seem real super enthusiastic about it, and I think he's changed a lot in that way. I know I have a tendency to listen more, you know, I'm not really trying harder, but since we've done this too I think he's more organized, like you say, but I think also in the way that he gives them—gestures and things and the tone of his voice—he just seems more and more sincere, more into it.

(Man) I think its basically because he's become more familiar with his people in the church. He's become self-assured, he's more confident that he's working with the people and not just preaching to them. It's a cooperation. I think he's getting something in return for what he's giving. I think you can give a lot more when you're getting something for what you're giving.

(Venden) You feel it's a two way.

(Man) Right. That's what he's trying to prove anyway. I believe he's proven it. He's receiving the response now, that's what he's looking for and we just eat it up—just like while we're enjoying the sermon more while he's enjoying giving them more. . . . In this sense so we hear it now, we're listening better, talk with people about it before we go out you know. . . .

(Man) I think if we're going to conduct a study again we should have a control group read his book. I just began reading the book this week and it has projected me so much more into him than sitting down here and listening to his sermons. I find that knowing him and he not knowing that I know him, makes me listen a lot more deeply than ever before.

(Venden) That's an interesting thing. Your acquaintance with him through the book gives you a dimension that you had no idea or maybe just a little hint of.

*Reference is to Stranger In My Home (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1974).*
(Man) In my childhood I had a picture of a minister as never using a
cuss word or never losing his temper or never having words with his wife—
he's a perfect person, he walks around with a halo, you know. And to
think that this person is, you know, it makes me love him more, to think
that he has the same problems that I have. And it just makes me more
interested in him.

(Man) What I like is that he is so completely honest (inaudible)

(Venden) Now, one of the most difficult things for a pastor or preacher
to find is people who feel that they can really just kind of share openly
with him suggestions. Usually we stand at the door and people go by and
say "Thank you very much pastor" or "Wonderful sermon," and that sort of
thing. . . . As you look at today's sermon in terms of some of the
questions he asks on the sheet here before me now, but just things you
might share in the way of—if I had one thing to say to him by way of
what might be helpful to him to more effective preaching, what might
it be? You've already commented on the organization, your appreciation
of following a theme, are there other things here?

(Woman) (inaudible) . . . he handles it nicely and I like the still, calm
voice too and usually I don't like a minister who doesn't jump around
a little and do some desk slamming, this is what I loved about Elder
White when he was here, he could move me tremendously and I still
remember.

(Venden) That's why it's a preaching style.

(Woman) I do, I like the one who can raise his voice and raise the dead,
but this goes with him, this is his style.

(Venden) You feel this genuinely.

(Woman) I do, and I can follow it, it doesn't disturb me.

(Woman) To me I like the different inflections in tone not a monotonous
tone, it kind of holds your attention, keeps you from going to sleep. I
think he's improved a lot on that.

(Venden) Originally, maybe.

(Woman) I used to fall asleep, now I don't.

(Venden) Okay, that's a practical test.

(Man) Maybe I'm different, I would rather listen to someone talk when
each word means something. He doesn't go back and necessarily repeat
for the sake of adding time to a sermon, I mean, each word has a meaning.
He says it concisely and when he says it, he's said it. I mean he doesn't,
I don't care for a very emotional wrangling type thing, more of a lecture
I guess, which I think he does more of. I think it is more like a lecture
to a class.

(Venden) And you prefer that.
(Woman) He says what he's going to say, he says it, and then he says what he said. I never enjoyed a pastor when I know what he's said if I just look up every five minutes.

(Man) I think we can all recognize from his sermons he's done his homework, he approaches it in a scholarly way and I appreciate that (inaudible).

... general speaking, how do you think the series is going and how do you think today's sermon came across?

(Man) I like his series of sermons, but I'd like to go back several years to something that happened to a minister after an excellent minister left. . . . He came in and everybody criticized him. Well, he wasn't as good as . . . He couldn't preach. Then he needed this and that. And even his wife criticized him. He had a nervous breakdown and he left the ministry as a pastor . . . I think that each and every individual has their way of presenting the message and I like Elder Holmes' way. It's quiet. It's serious. There's no joking around and things like that—he knows what he has to say and he says it. I like it. Now for him to change his style, that may ruin his sermons.

(Man) If I had to come here and lead out in a situation like this and I was working with the directive that I had to please everybody, I would throw up my hands and leave. There's no way we can. The only thing we can do with a minister is to enjoy his good parts and help him with parts that you don't perceive as being good. A couple of things that I've noticed about him people have mentioned is he doesn't smile very much. I enjoy people with humour and he, at first glance, doesn't seem to be very witty a person with humour but he is. And he does drop humorous little things if you catch them—I enjoy him very much.

... has the atmosphere been so positive that there might be some others of you that would like to share but you're a little afraid to? Or have you felt comfortable enough with each other? I don't know you that well. I can't be positive you know. I have the feeling that you're sharing very openly. Is there anything else you want to add to this?

(Woman) One thing I've noticed is that he shows an interest in other things besides just the church services (inaudible).

... Well, I've kept you ten minutes longer than I'd planned. I'd like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for sharing this. This will make a contribution not only to Pastor Holmes' study but to our whole perspective in the work we are doing this summer. You've been far freer than I thought you would be. To have a stranger such as I come in here and sit down and—When I say freer, I mean in a very healthy sense. Thank you very, very much.
APPENDIX H
Note: Feedback session was conducted by the members of Group A with Dr. Louis Venden as leader. Near the end of the session the preacher himself enters the room and the discussion.

Two things occurred during the service that day which are referred to in the transcript. Two boys were baptized and about mid-point in the sermon the preacher stopped and called the congregation's attention to his feeling that not many were listening well to the preaching of the Word.

 Portions of the dialogue felt to be irrelevant to the study have been omitted. Deletions are indicated by the use of dots. . .

(Venden) I was surprised and tremendously helped and inspired by the way you folks shared last time. And I surely thank you for that. It was very, very helpful to me and I looked forward to today with great anticipation. Okay, now, I'd like to take about five minutes just looking at today's service—the whole experience of worship—the context in which the sermon was preached. We're not thinking particularly of the sermon right now, but the totality of Sabbath morning, eleven o'clock worship. Are there elements that seem to be especially helpful to the meaning of today? Are there elements that may be distracting, that made it a little harder in terms of worship and what you might take from it? Follow me?

(Man) I couldn't keep my mind on—I don't know if it had to do with the fact that I was sitting back far, I really had to force myself to listen. I really wasn't doing a very good job of listening. If there is anything that's coming out of this series it's the fact that there's more on my part now than there is on the minister's part.

(Venden) Involves activity on your part. Any guess as to why it was harder today?

(Man) Well there were some children behind me and they were annoying me a little bit, and the humidity.

(Woman) I was terribly sleepy. I thought it was me. I thought it was my fault for being sleepy.

(Venden) You were sleepy but don't attribute it to noise particularly—maybe fatigue? You mentioned the distraction . . .

(Woman) That with the humidity kind of lulls you into not paying attention closely but at the end he woke everybody up. Then it got good.

(Woman) I was trying real hard before then, I was really struggling to remember what he said the sentence before. I heard what he was saying, every bit of it, but it was hard to think the thing through today—I don't know whether it was me or the sermon but I felt there were a lot of things I couldn't apply directly and really understand the fine meanings
between living a life that's worthy and Him (God) giving me a life that's worthy. I didn't quite understand all of that. You know, who does what first?

(Venden) That was sort of early in the sermon wasn't it?

(Woman) Well, some of it was all the way through—application.

(Man) I think maybe there's a possibility that maybe we're letting our guards down a little bit because we consciously know that this is the last of these particular events, you know, and so we probably get different thoughts about that in itself and then all the other factors that are, you know, trying to take our attention—like I hear someone driving a stake or something it sounded like, and the heat and humidity—aside from that that's the distraction that got me most.

(Venden) You have a little bit of feeling of "Huuuuuh, boy! Next week we can kind of go back to just regular sermons."

(Man) I think so, really.

... (discussion about care of children in church)

(Woman) I appreciate the fact that he stopped when he felt that, sensed it. (Reference is to lack of listening attention) In doing this, not only did he change the situation to a certain extent—he made us realize again that he's a human being and that we, you know, should give him the same kind of attention we would expect ourselves if we were in that position, you know.

(Venden) So his doing that in a way didn't make you feel hostile to him at all.

(Chorus) Oh, no!

(Man) I appreciate it.

(Woman) But he wasn't taking it personally, you see, this is the difference.

(Man) But if it's in his position to say so, why doesn't he. He's supposed to be the final man in charge.

(Venden) I guess the deacons in the Puritan Church had something soft for the ladies and something hard for the men—to hit them with—but we probably won't be doing that.

(Woman) I think also it gave us the feeling that he was really interested that we heard what he had to say, too, you know. That we had respect for him and that he was interested that we heard what he said. So, he had interest in the congregation, you know. He's not just up there preaching a sermon because he feels it's his duty but he's really interested.

(Venden) Just wants to be heard—not because it's "my" word, but because
(Woman) No, it wasn't a personal thing, you know, not putting us down or putting him ahead personally, but it was the Lord's Word.

(Man) I think that he was a little slower starting out with his sermon—getting into the knitty-gritty of it, and I mean basically, I got the three points, you know, but I got bored. I had too much time to think about other things in between the distractions that I had. But once he spoke out and alerted us and got me back on the track, then I was able to understand what he was saying and tie it up very quick and then I got into it better. I think it worked out super-good and it just follows suit with what he's trying to prove throughout the whole series, that we can work together.

(Venden) All right, let's go to the sermon then. Or is there something else from the worship? I was wondering about things such as—I remember last time talked about the singing of the hymn, that that had been something particular, she had stopped and, just to hear the people around her. The baptism or what the elders said just before the baptism or any of this? I'm not trying to prime you on it—if it didn't, why don't— you know.

(Woman) Something that especially got to me was the organist starting to play the little children's song—she just filled it right in, I liked that.

(Venden) Yes, that was some specific thought about that situation, wasn't it?

... (discussion about the value of a children's sermon)

(Man) The children that were sitting behind me weren't at all interested in the sermon until, you know, those little boys got up and got in the tank, you know, then—but it was something that stuck in my mind, those kids weren't interested until there was something up there going on that was related to them.

(Laughter)

(Venden) Having the church stand in terms of being a help by example to the two boys kind of got through to me.

(Man) I think it got through to both the two boys too because they kind of looked at each other like someone's really going to help us.

... (Lengthy discussion concerning the various versions of the Bible used in the worship service and the advantage and disadvantage of following the reading of the Scripture lesson in one's own Bible.)

(Venden) ... Well, let's come back now to today's message in particular with the question: "What are we taking home, what is the key impact of the sermon?" Now, this is a kind of personal question. I'm not asking you to repeat the outline ...
(Woman) I think the one point that sticks in my mind the most, and he emphasized it, definitely, because he said something about it being the hardest thing for him. I myself have a hard time loving people who aren't really too loveable, you know. Because—if they have bad habits, have something, you know that we really don't like—like loving the unloving, in other words—or the unloveable. The people that are, you know, loving the ugly, the person that's not the kindest to someone else or something like that. I think that's one thing that stuck in my mind.

(Woman) My idea's along the same line. He said that if we have love, love is the first fruit of the Spirit, everything else follows after that—patience and forbearance. And if we strive to keep the love going then these other things will come on behind, we just have to work with them.

(Woman) Yeah, but it's something you have to work at too. I mean He (God) can give us love, you know, but if we don't work at it...

(Woman) This is what confused me, was that like—what comes first? You know, it's really hard to put it into words so that you can apply it.

(Man) I think, you know, an overall thing about the series we've had and the relationship between the sermon and its hearers is there's more to it—like I said earlier—the hearer has to be in a situation, in other words, and I think, I kind of got a guilty conscience out of it more than anything else. I really have listened too. I like to, whenever I sit by myself or whenever I'm not doing something, I like to imagine things I could be doing or I like to think about something I could be building or, and it's a time for my mind just to, you know, forget about and put all kinds of good things together, and it's, I think I've got a guilty conscience out of the whole series.

(Venden) Let's stay with this just a bit more in terms of today's message and then I would like to move on to the overall perspective that you shared, kind of, of the whole thing. Yes.

(Man) Well, probably not as a major point, but it hit me because my brother-in-law and I'd sat up the other night discussing, so we were sitting next together in church again, the competition idea that you don't have to compete with human beings. There's probably more emphasis on that to me because of previous, from our earlier discussion, you know, it really did hit home, you know.

(Woman) That sermon should always be preached at the beginning of the school year.

(Woman) It's not a main thought or anything, but just the idea that you don't have to worry about converting anyone, but if you have the example and witness things (inaudible) and leave it to the Holy Spirit (inaudible)

(Woman) I really liked that part (inaudible) people's attitudes toward different things. There's been times when I just cringe when I see someone trying to convert someone else, you know.
(Venden) To win a soul.

(Woman) Yeah, you know, putting the pressure on them.

(Inaudible comment)

(Venden) You can't push your children into sanctification.

(Man) I think that the sermon today was very apt in the point, for our congregation as well as us as individuals with the cosmopolitan congregation we have, that patience, love and forbearance will solve a lot of the problems which we might try to solve in our own way but it might be the wrong way. Each of these sermons just happens to fall in line with that.

(Woman) (Inaudible)

(Venden) I have a feeling of a kind of— I don't know whether it's humidity or a sort of meditative reflection. Does this come from the sermon today? We're a little gentler here than as I remember last time. Maybe it's just the weather.

(Man) We're not always ready to fight, it takes us a little while.

(Venden) Well, maybe it's because

(Woman) The subject matter, though, actually it was pretty lively last time, that's why. It was pretty lively.

(Venden) Race relations, human relations, last time—and as we come back there's a little more, today we seem to be, maybe this is how I'm feeling, the sermon has already taken effect. How do you rate the sermon with the other seven? Better, than, about the same as, or less than, in terms of just your general feeling as far as "That was a good sermon" . . . you know.

(Woman) (inaudible)

(Venden) Now he's here and that's affecting us a little bit. I can tell that. He's tried to sneak in as unobtrusively as possible. Try to forget him for just a little bit more than we're going to try to bring him over here. Yes . . .

(Woman) I . . .

(Venden) Yes . . .

(Woman) I just changed my mind.

(Venden) Why? Because he's here? Does that question bother you, rating it with the other sermons, maybe that's not a good question?

(Woman) No, the fifth sermon was the best, but this was as good but it was a different kind. And—they've all been the same, on the same theme: love, getting ready for the kingdom, admonition, hope for the future—
Hope is the main thing. Regardless of what's going on, any situation, hope is still there. You can overcome all of these things.

(Man) I believe I can see the difference in his being more straight, and to the point as to be possibly less afraid of offending someone and coming straight out with the facts, you know.

(Venden) Through the series?

(Man) Right (inaudible) really compliment him.

(Woman) I think we evaluate this sermon versus the others on the basis of how it fits into life and really doesn't have a whole lot to do with whether this sermon was better or the other one wasn't, as far as I'm concerned anyway—and there were others that were probably more pertinent to what I needed at the time or I could understand better because of my relationship to the sermon—but not because of what he said or how he said it so much, you know. I think . . .

(Venden) Maybe the question "this was better than" is really an invalid question . . .

(Woman) It depends on whether the sermon was for me, more than the others, you know.

(Man) The main point is if it's getting through to us or not, I think is the main thing.

(Venden) Was there a sameness to the sermons that you were growing a little bit tired of? They're all part of a series, they follow a general pattern that you can kind of predict, or did you become calm over that, was that an asset to the sermons?

(Man) I think really—I don't think we should be tired of them (inaudible)

(Man) I think we could better give you an answer to that question after he goes back and preaches his next sermon. The way I put it together in the first sermon he was loading the cannon, in the other parts of the series he was in the process of setting off different parts of it. And I think we could give you a better answer when we hear the next sermon.

. . .

(Venden) Okay, let's take a couple minutes on the overall impact of the series. Maybe that's where we should have spent most of the time. You commented on kind of a guilt feeling that "I haven't really worked and done my part in the sermons as I could have and should have." As you reflect on the series what observations . . .

(Woman) I liked the subject of the series . . .

. . .

(Venden) A couple of you haven't said very much as last time, you made several comments.
(Man) I could tell you're waiting for an answer from me today (inaudible)

(Venden) I'm sorry, I didn't mean to put you on the spot.

(Man) No, I don't know why, today, just the sermon, well the prayer before he began that the Lord would touch his lips, tell him what to say—I was especially impressed as never before with the thought that his sermon was not his own but from God. I feel guilty about sitting here picking apart his sermon or his method of giving it. I don't know why, it's not him, it's God's word for me. How can I pick it apart?

(Venden) ... Anyone else have something to add to that? I don't want you to feel like I'm waiting for an answer from you, but I don't want to pass by something that you might like to share. Ray, how about joining us here. I'll put this chair here.

(Preacher enters the circle) ...

(Venden) I'm wondering if there is, let's say, maybe one particular question you would like to ask us? From your perspective.

(Preacher) I sort of anticipated that you might ask that question and I thought it might be helpful, you may have asked it already, but I'd like to know how you folks feel about having participated in the critique ... answering the questions, going to the training sessions, and these discussions? How do you feel about it, what has it done for you, if anything? This interests me very much.

(Man) I feel it's valuable enough that every member of the church is entitled to such training (inaudible)

(Woman) I think everyone ought to have to fill out the questionnaires. I think everybody ought to do it continually.

(Man) I think a lot of us have felt that our part of the effort was listening. It takes some effort to get something out of a sermon, I can say that.

(Preacher) To summarize: what you're saying, it seems to me, is that listening to a sermon is a more active thing than a passive thing.

(Venden) Anything to add to this or does that pretty well represent the general consensus?

(Woman) (Inaudible)

(Man) I think we are at the place in earth's history where we're going to have to jar ourselves into doing some active serious thinking, because events are going to follow which we're going to need every bit of this help we can get.
(Venden) We discussed earlier this moment when you paused and in parenthesis said something about how you perceived the crowd, the atmosphere and what was happening . . . I'm interested in your own feelings at that time. Why you did this, were you, well, just let's see both sides of it?

(Preacher) Well, I did it impulsively but there was unconscious rationale behind it, I suppose. And I suppose the best way I could explain that would be, for me the preaching of the Word of God is the greatest thing that I could ever be doing and I like to give it my complete attention, the preaching of it. And, because of that, it bothers me a little bit when those who are listening don't give it their complete attention, you know.

(Venden) We know.

(Preacher) That's one element. Another one is that I keep remembering every time I get into the pulpit something that was said to me by a Lutheran evangelist many, many, years ago. He said: "I always preach like a dying man to dying people." I think, well, if these people are dying people, they'll listen this morning to something that's vital. And when I get that feeling I feel that I'm doing a disservice to my listeners if I don't somehow just say: "Come on now, get with it. This is an important activity that we're engaged in here this morning." Now let's, I think, underline this.

(Venden) In the concrete situation, now, Ray, were you being bothered? Were you . . .

(Preacher) Yes, it was getting a little heavy. For one reason, oh, it's really strange how people can get blessed by a sermon that doesn't bless the preacher, you know what I mean. Now, this happened this morning again—up to that point in the sermon I felt like I just didn't have hold of the thing and the reason for that I think is that these sermons were prepared over a year ago and preached initially in the Battle Creek Tabernacle and I had to revive them and it's very difficult sometimes to revive a sermon that's been preached somewhere else. Because you're not preaching into the same context in which you preached that sermon when you prepared it initially. And they don't always fit, you know. You're a different person and you have a different audience and the whole life situation is different. And so I just didn't feel that I had my grip on this sermon this morning. And the fact that I sensed the distraction made me feel uncomfortable. Now, that distraction may be due to the fact that the listeners were sensing this themselves without knowing what was going on, but you people may yourself have sensed that "he doesn't have hold of this message today." And for that reason it lost a little vitality.

(Venden) Okay, let's do something right there. Is that true? . . .

(Woman) I had a little trouble getting hold of it today, I thought it was me. I was having trouble making it all fit together so I could put it in my mind.

(Venden) Did you feel he had a little trouble?
(Woman) I never thought he was having any trouble. I was.

(Man) I don't think I heard two words he said before that.

(Woman) Well, I heard it, I was trying real hard but it just wasn't sitting with me.

(Woman) I didn't feel any distraction at all, I was too busy getting one and two down.

(Woman) I was really involved in it, in fact I didn't see any, in fact I was really surprised when you stopped, I didn't see any, there was nothing going on around me.

(Man) You can see an awful lot from up front.

(Woman) My baby was sleeping and I was getting two down and then you stopped right in the middle of two and messed the whole thing up.

(Woman) All these good ideas but I kept thinking "now how do I put them together?"

... 

(Woman) You need rapport or you can't remember what you're going to say. I feel this very strongly in the children's department, if these kids aren't listening I'm not relating and I completely forget my pattern of thought.

(Vender) See, now you have your perception of it—for you it wasn't necessary—but the pastor sees the whole congregation, so there's a certain consensus he has to come to. He can see sister Rosekee over here, no problem, but today, there's a kind of general feeling.

(To preacher) What did that break do for you?

(Preacher) It relaxed me a little bit because I survived. I was a little bit fearful, you know, to do something like that. I'm much bolder now than I was five or six years ago. I would have hesitated to do that, but now I don't. But you still have a little apprehension, you know, you wonder what people are going to think, and after I did it I relaxed a bit and I think the rest of the sermon I had much better hold of after that.

(Vender) There's particular appreciation for the way you did it Ray... I think one person even suggested that this ought to be regular if needed, if necessary a reminder that this is a mutual thing we're involved in.

(Preacher) Well, it doesn't offend me as an individual if someone nods, but I believe that preaching is the Word of God and you need to hear it you know, and this bothers me. If the person isn't awake to hear God speak to them.

...(Discussion on helping the preacher by saying an occasional "Amen.")

(Vender) ... Well, listen, I've kept you beyond the half hour, but I'd like to thank you again ... Okay.