

## **ABSTRACT**

### **DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE PREACHING MINISTRY FOR URBAN PASTORS IN THE PHILIPPINES**

by

Winston C. Reyes

This research sought to ascertain the factors that characterize the effectiveness of preaching among urban pastors in the Philippines through case studies of five Victory churches in Metro Manila, the National Capital Region. The objective of this study was to find the challenges pastors face in sermon preparation and delivery so that ongoing pastors' training and staff development will be able to address those difficulties.

The research strategy required a qualitative multi-case design that entailed personal interview of ten pastors, questionnaires completed by one hundred lay leaders, and field-researcher observation of the preaching of five pastors.

Based on the results of the pastoral interviews, the lay leaders questionnaire, and the on-site field observation of the preaching, the three elements of biblical exegesis, engaging presentation, and life transformation were identified to be integral and imperative for an effective preaching ministry. Recommendations were given on how preachers can implement these three elements in their preaching ministry so that God can use them to bring lasting change and spiritual growth in the lives of the people.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled  
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FOR URBAN PASTORS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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by

Winston C. Reyes

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **PROBLEM**

#### **Introduction**

Effective biblical preaching is a ministry skill that every pastor should possess. The pastors whom people respect and follow are those who are able to preach effectively. One general observation I have made in most mega-churches is that they have a pastor or team of pastors who are able to preach and communicate effectively.

In order for churches to grow numerically and be healthy, the preaching ministry must be a priority. The apostles knew this principle for they gave their attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). Pastors have to give ample time to prayer and sermon preparation so that they can effectively preach the messages from God to the people. I believe that effective preaching will bring spiritual growth that will lead to church growth.

To know if the preaching ministry of a pastor is effective the features of effective preaching must be ascertained. Pastors have to evaluate their preaching ministry in terms of delivery, comprehension, and reception by the people in their churches. Eloquence, charisma, and organized preaching are not enough. Pastors must determine whether their messages are faithful to the text of the Scriptures, relevant to the people in the urban setting, and able to transform lives.

The word *effective* has been commonly used in management and marketing circles to describe the successful control or manipulation of consumers to produce a desired goal or objective. In this study, I have utilized the meaning of the word *effective* based on the apostle Paul's writings to the church in Thessalonica. The Word was

effectively working in the lives of the Thessalonians because they accepted it not as the word of men, but as the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13). The word *effective* here is the Greek word *energeo*, which means to be active, efficient, effectual, and operative. Preaching is effective when God's word is mightily at work in the lives of people to the point that their lives are changed.

### **Understanding the Problem**

The pastors of Victory churches in Metro Manila are facing a number of challenges in sermon preparation and delivery that impact the effectiveness of weekly preaching to their congregations.

Pastors in the urban Philippine setting are facing several challenges beginning with sermon preparation and delivery. As they study and prepare for their weekly sermons, they are thinking of the different groups of people in their congregations. Before the pastors preach, they usually ponder how they can clearly communicate the message and contextualize it to their situations. For most pastors who do not have the privilege of having gone through formal seminary training, to exegete difficult passages in the Bible is a hurdle to overcome. Another challenge they face is how to find time for study along with the demands for time with their families, their churches, and their personal commitments. These are just some of the challenges that urban pastors face today.

The urban pastor is ministering to a mix of different people every week. In the Metro Manila churches are rich and poor, single and married, old and young people. One of the challenges is trying to strike a balance in terms of contextualization and application of the Word of God. Some of the preaching challenges faced by urban pastors are sermon

preparation and delivery skills, exegesis of difficult Bible passages, demands of family and ministry, and contextualization of the message to the multi-sectored groups of people in Metro Manila. In short, the urban pastor faces a two-sided challenge—the textual challenge and the contextual challenge. The pastor has to exegete the biblical text accurately and the kind of people listening to him.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to identify the specific areas of sermon preparation and delivery in which the pastors of Victory churches in Metro Manila are encountering challenges in order to develop training that includes resources and plans for improving sermon preparation and delivery to enable continual church growth.

### **Research Questions**

Here are the three research questions that set the parameters in trying to resolve the factors that render a sermon effective among urban pastors. These questions are the basis in tackling the research problem that this dissertation will address.

#### **Research Question #1**

As perceived by the pastor, what are the present challenges that leaders in Metro Manila face in their sermon preparation and delivery that need to be overcome in order to make their preaching effective?

#### **Research Question #2**

According to the perspective of the church lay leaders, what are the features in the pastors' preaching that make it effective?

**Research Question #3**

What elements were identified to be included in the training for sermon preparation and delivery in order to make their preaching effective?

**Definition of Terms**

*Sermon preparation* is the practice of studying biblical texts with accompanying exegesis, interpretation, meditation, prayer, and research with the intent of preaching the message.

*Sermon delivery* is the manner of communicating the message that the pastor has prepared to speak to his congregation.

*Effective preaching* is a sermon based on sound biblical exegesis delivered in an engaging way so that it brings transformation to the lives of the people listening. The message is spoken by a preacher with clarity, confidence, persuasiveness, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. The message becomes effective when people receive and understand it to the point that their lives are changed.

*Metro Manila* is the term for the metropolitan area that contains the city of Manila as well as sixteen surrounding cities—the political, economic, social, and cultural center of the Philippines.

**Ministry Intervention**

This ministry pre-intervention sought to assist the pastors of Victory Christian Fellowship in Metro Manila in overcoming their present challenges in sermon preparation and delivery so that they would be effective preachers of the Word of God.

By knowing the present challenges that they face in sermon preparation, church leadership could plan for future trainings and equipping seminars for the pastors. A major

component of the research was an assessment of the homiletical and hermeneutical skills of the urban pastors.

This multi-case study involved the pastors and key discipleship group leaders of five Victory Christian Fellowship churches in Metro Manila from September 2011 until December 2011. I interviewed pastors regarding their study habits and sermon preparation practices. I also surveyed key leaders of our congregations to determine whether the sermons heard from the pulpit were effectively ministering to their needs and causing them to grow spiritually.

Once I identified the specific challenges and needs of the pastors in sermon preparation and delivery, I recommended to church leadership the books, resources, and ministry training that the pastors need so that they could have an effective preaching and teaching ministry in their churches. Currently, a staff development program is in place wherein our current pastors and staff receive two years of training on theology, Bible survey, leadership, discipleship, administration, hermeneutics, homiletics, and ministry skills.

### **Context**

This study covered the region of Metro Manila in the Philippines. Metro Manila is the metropolitan region encompassing the city of Manila and its surrounding area composed of sixteen cities and one municipality. Metro Manila is the smallest of the country's administrative regions; but the area is the most populous and the most densely populated, having a population of around 16 million people comprising 13 percent of the national population in an area of only 636 square kilometers. Metro Manila as a whole is the Philippines' seat of government, although only the city of Manila is the capital.



Victory Christian Fellowship (Victory) started in the Philippines in June 1984 when a group of sixty American students came to the country for a month long outreach and church planting mission. The first batch of disciples were won mainly through open-air preaching on college campuses, and nightly evangelistic meetings held in the Girl Scouts Auditorium in Manila, and the basement of Tandem Cinema in the University Belt area. The initial outreach gave birth to a 150-member, mostly student congregation. Victory exists to honor God and establish Christ-centered, Spirit-empowered, socially responsible churches and campus ministries in every nation. Simply put, Victory's mission is to *honor God* and *make disciples*.

Victory churches in Metro Manila currently have eighty-one services that meet in fourteen various locations, usually in malls, theaters, or auditoriums. Victory has planted churches in over forty-three cities and towns across the Philippines. As of March 2011, the weekly total attendance of these fourteen churches in Metro Manila was around fifty thousand people. Adding up the members in the provincial churches (outside of Metro Manila), the total membership nationwide would reach about 65,000. This growth can only be attributed to the grace of God and the Holy Spirit leading the pastors as they disciple, equip, and train the members to do the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-12).

For a more feasible and focused study, this research concerned the pastors of five (out of fifteen) churches of Victory Metro Manila. The five churches in this study were Victory Fort, Victory Pioneer, Victory Ortigas, Victory Quezon City, and Victory Nova.

This study also involved 100 small group leaders (twenty leaders per church) from the five churches of Metro Manila. Victory churches encourage every member to be part of a discipleship group so that each one can be established in the faith and be a

growing disciple of Christ. These small group meetings last for an hour and are held weekly in different venues in Metro Manila—in homes, offices, campuses, malls, coffee shops, and restaurants. The believers who go to a small group meetings experience Bible sharing, fellowship, prayer, and encouragement. As of February 2011, Victory Metro Manila had 3,120 small group leaders.

I am presently one of the pastors of Victory Christian Fellowship in Metro East. Every Tuesday morning the pastors of Victory Metro Manila meet together to pray and discuss the message of the week. We discuss the preaching series that was planned the previous year during our annual sermon planning. The pastors give their insights based on their study, share illustrations, and possible application points at the end of the message. As I take notes of the discussion, I organize them, construct a basic sermon outline, provide additional notes from Bible commentaries, and then e-mail the study notes to all of the Victory pastors in the Philippines.

### **Methodology**

This project employed a Qualitative Multi-Case Design of study. The study sought to know the experiences and practices of pastors in their sermon preparation and delivery. Moreover, the research explored the opinions of key leaders of the five churches concerning the effectiveness of the pastors' preaching. To gather the information, this research entailed the methods of questionnaire, interview, and field-researcher observation.

### **Participants**

The participants of this research study were the pastors (two pastors per church) and key lay leaders (twenty small group leaders per church) of five Victory churches in

Metro Manila; namely Victory Pioneer, Victory Fort, Victory Ortigas, Victory Quezon City, and Victory Nova. The five churches were selected based upon the proximity of their location to each other and because of the church growth in terms of their total weekly attendance. The key leaders interviewed were the twenty small group leaders from the five churches who volunteered to participate in this project.

### **Instrumentation**

In order to conduct this project, I used three qualitative instruments. The first was an interview of two pastors per church. The second was a lay leaders' questionnaire. The third was a field-researcher observation of the pastors' preaching in five Victory churches in Metro Manila. The observation was done through on-site visits to the worship services of the five churches, and video recording the pastors' preaching.

### **Variables**

The variables in this study were sermon preparation and delivery, and the impact of their preaching on the congregations. In the case study design, the questionnaire, interviews, and field observation were structured to control for intervening variables.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection took four months. From September to December 2011, I visited five Victory churches wherein I conducted pastoral interviews and distributed questionnaires to selected lay leaders of the five churches. The field research observation occurred during the whole four months. On-site visits of the worship services of the five churches gave me a first-hand experience of the pastors' preaching.

**Data Analysis**

I used the results of the interviews, questionnaires, and field research observations for comparison, integral analysis, and critical evaluation. I then identified the challenges pastors face in sermon preparation from the data collected and developed training to encourage effectiveness in preaching.

**Generalizability**

This study was limited to the pastors of five churches in Metro Manila. The pastors of Victory Christian Fellowship in the Philippines will be the beneficiaries of the findings of this research. The challenges of sermon preparation and delivery were identified, enumerated, and forwarded to the bishops and senior pastors of Victory for the purpose of creating a training course to develop the effectiveness of the pastors' preaching ministry. The findings of the research can also be utilized by other urban pastors of various Christian churches and denominations in the Philippines so they can develop the preaching ministry of their pastors.

**Theological Foundation**

I wish to present the basic elements of an effective preaching ministry according to the Scriptures. Effective preaching involves a sermon based on sound biblical exegesis delivered in an engaging way in order to bring transformation to the lives of the listeners. The eighth chapter of the book of Nehemiah offers valuable insights on effective preaching to support this definition.

Ezra was a scribe, a priest, and a teacher of the Word of God (Ezra 7:6). He read the Book of the Law to approximately 30,000 to 50,000 people assembled in the public

square. Nehemiah called for a national gathering and invited Ezra to come and read and preach the Word of God to the people:

[Ezra] read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women, and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. (Neh. 8:3, NIV)

An effective preaching ministry must always be based on the Holy Scriptures. The Bible is the basis of the text of our preaching. Pastors should first endeavor to know and study the Bible for their message before looking for illustrations, stories, analogies, or jokes.

An accurate exegesis of the biblical text is necessary for the faithful interpretation of the Scriptures.

Nehemiah 8:7-8 is a foundational passage on how preachers can effectively communicate the Word of God:

The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah— instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

Thirteen men assisted Ezra to ensure that the people of Israel understood what they read from the Torah. They went among the people and helped them comprehend the Scriptures. The people in our congregations have to comprehend and know the meaning of the Scriptures so that the message of God's word can change their lives. The Levites made the Scriptures plain and clear to the people. Because the Jews had been exiles in Babylon for a long time, they translated their Hebrew Old Testament into Aramaic, the language that the people spoke. The people understood the Scriptures as the Levites gave the meaning of what Ezra read. Jesus said in Matthew 13:23, "But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He

produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Comprehension of the Word of God would produce fruitful lives.

Another mark of effective preaching is the application of the Word of God. When people understand the Word, then they should respond to what they heard. The goal of effective preaching is for people to receive, understand, and obey the Word of God. The Word is meant to lead them to become disciples or followers of the Lord Jesus Christ:

Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them. On the second day of the month, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra the scribe to give attention to the words of the Law. (Neh. 8:12-13)

The Jews understood that the reason for their exile in Babylon was because of their sin of idolatry. They were disciplined for their disobedience to God and when they came back from Babylon they no longer practiced idolatry. They have been monotheistic from the Babylonian captivity to this present day. As the Jews understood the message of the Scriptures, they resolved to change their ways and they recommitted their lives to the Lord.

The Holy Spirit working through an effective preaching ministry transforms the lives of the people turning sinners into saints, unbelievers into believers, and disobedient people into disciples. As people hear the Word of God preached, the Spirit of God convicts their hearts causing repentance that leads to change in the way they live (John 16:8; 2 Cor. 7:10). The Lord can use a message coming from an effective preacher to bring spiritual growth. When lives are changed, they have an impact on their communities bringing opportunities for outreach, evangelism, and discipleship, which eventually lead to church growth.

In speaking of church growth, I refer both to numerical growth and spiritual health. Though many megachurches today have succeeded in evangelism, many of the people who attend are just churchgoers and are not involved in a life of discipleship. Jesus commanded us to make disciples, not just converts (Matt. 28:19). Megachurches can be good in reaching lost people, but assimilating them into discipleship groups is a challenge. Thus, preaching should result not just in conversion, but also in a continuous process of leading people into becoming true disciples of Christ.

### **Overview**

Chapter 2 identifies the essential review of literature in the area of effective preaching as seen in Scripture, pastoral theology, the history of the church, and recent developments in Christianity. Chapter 3 is a presentation of the methodology. Chapter 4 reports the findings of the research based on the data from questionnaires, interviews, and observation. Chapter 5 is the analysis of the findings and a broad discussion of the study that is vital for the design of the training for effective sermon preparation and delivery.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

Effective preaching includes a sermon based on sound biblical exegesis delivered in an engaging way so that it brings transformation to the lives of the people listening. According to the *Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus*, to be engaging means to be appealing, pleasant, agreeable, winsome, captivating, interesting, engrossing, gripping, involving, absorbing, fascinating, and not boring (“Engaging”). Effective biblical preaching is a ministry skill that every pastor should possess. The pastors whom people respect and follow are those who are able to preach effectively. If a pastor is able to articulate clearly the message of the Word of God and meet the needs of the congregation, then the church in which he is ministering will inevitably grow.

For churches to grow and be healthy, the preaching ministry must be a priority. The apostles knew this principle for they gave their attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). Pastors have to give ample time to prayer and sermon preparation so that they can effectively preach the messages from God to the people. I believe that effective preaching will bring spiritual growth in the lives of the people, which will lead to church growth.

#### **Problem**

The pastors of Victory churches in Metro Manila, Philippines are facing a number of challenges in their sermon preparation and delivery that impact the effectiveness of weekly preaching to their churches. For pastors who do not have the privilege of formal seminary training, oftentimes to exegete difficult passages in the Bible requires



considerable effort. Another challenge they face is how to find quality time for study along with the demand for time with their family, their church, and their personal lives.

As the urban pastors study and prepare for their weekly sermons, they are thinking of the different groups of people in their congregation. In the Metro Manila churches, people rich and poor, single and married, old and young. Before the pastors preach, they ponder how they can clearly communicate the message to their situations. One of the challenges is trying to strike a balance in terms of contextualization and application of the Word of God.

In summary, some of the challenges in the area of preaching faced by urban pastors are sermon preparation and delivery skills, exegesis of difficult Bible passages, and contextualization of the message to the multi-sectoral congregations in Metro Manila.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to identify the specific areas in sermon preparation and delivery in which the pastors of Victory churches in Metro Manila are encountering challenges in order to develop training that includes resources and plans for improving sermon preparation and delivery to enable church growth.

Victory Christian Fellowship in the Philippines started in June 1984 when a team of American students and missionaries went to Manila for one month. After a month-long outreach, a church of about 150 members was birthed in the University Belt of Manila. From there, the church grew and planted other churches in the Philippines and other nations of the world, mostly in Asia. Victory Philippines currently has fifteen churches in Metro Manila (the National Capital Region) and forty-three churches in the provinces

with a total membership of about sixty five thousand (of which fifty thousand are in Metro Manila).

### **Theological Framework**

In this theological framework I have incorporated a definition of effective preaching to specifically delineate what I am writing about. I have gathered materials from the Scriptures, theological doctrines, and church history to provide support on the topic of effective preaching.

#### **Definition of Effective Preaching**

Effective preaching is a sermon based on sound biblical exegesis delivered in an engaging way so that God can bring transformation to the lives of the people. From this definition can be identified three vital ingredients of effective preaching—exegesis, engaging presentation, and life transformation. For a sermon to be effective, preachers must properly exegete the text of Scripture they are using. Then they should preach their messages in a way that engage and connect with people so that the Lord can use the messages to transform and bring lasting change in the lives of the listeners.

Effective preaching includes a spoken message by a Spirit-filled preacher and is characterized by clarity, confidence, and persuasiveness. A person can be eloquent, charismatic, and intelligent but without the Spirit of God working the preaching will not be effective. The effectiveness of a sermon comes not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord (Zech. 4:6). The message becomes effective when the people receive and understand it to the point that their lives are changed. The Holy Spirit using an effective preacher transforms the lives of the people. Puritan William Perkins, whose preaching text influenced thousands of preachers such as Jonathan Edwards, stated that

effective preaching involves reading the text clearly, explaining the meaning of the text, gathering some profitable points from the natural sense of the passage, and then applying the doctrines in a straightforward, plain speech (Merida 173).

The effectiveness of the pastor's preaching can be measured in different ways. Preachers can be considered effective if they are competent speakers, faithful to the Word of God, empowered by the Spirit, and able to connect with their hearers.

Good preachers and teachers join self, subject, and students in the fabric of life. They preach poorly when they veer away from their message, but they preach well when they make sure the message is coming from inside them and is going directly to their listeners. True preaching, as defined by Haddon W. Robinson, is the delivery of a text's message "which the Holy Spirit first applies to the life of the preacher, then through the preacher, to the listeners" (21). They have to remember the simple, yet profound, formula—effective preaching is much more about the identity and integrity of the preacher than mere technique (Mead). In other words, the speaker is the message. If preachers live out what they are preaching, their message will come forth naturally and powerfully.

According to Pastor Ben Mandrell, senior pastor of Englewood Baptist Church in Jackson, Tennessee, a faithful preacher who stays true to the call of God should give people a bigger picture of God (2 Cor. 4:5). Ultimately, people need to be told repeatedly that the God of Scripture is bigger than all of their problems here on earth. They need to be reprogrammed to the idea that God is in control, that he loves them immensely, and nothing is impossible for him (8). A preacher has to assure the people that no matter how distressed they are because of their heavy problems, God is greater than all of these

problems, and nothing is impossible with God as believers put their faith in him. If the pastor fails to do this, people may listen to the sermon but they are thinking and worrying regarding their current situations.

Barbara Brown Taylor says, “What I am hunting for is the God in it, God for me and my congregation at this particular moment in time” (50). As preachers survey the biblical text, their task is to discover and introduce God’s nature and works to the people. In the sermon, a preacher has to magnify and focus first on who God is and what he can do. The preacher can then tell the people what they should do in response to who God is and what he has done.

### **Biblical Materials**

Nehemiah chapter 8 contains the elements of effective preaching. In this passage, the Word of God was faithfully spoken, delivered in a manner that people could understand so that their lives were changed as they responded to the message. This chapter demonstrates the reading, exposition, reception, and application of the Word of God.

In Nehemiah 8:1, the people asked Ezra to read the Book of the Law from early morning until noon: “All the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel.” They chose Ezra because he was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses (Ezra 7:6). Effective preaching comes from having a disciplined and dedicated study of the Word of God. The word translated *skilled* has as its root the idea of speed. He was so conversant with his material that he could make well thought-out judgments rapidly (McConville 46). Ezra had a disciplined lifestyle of studying the

Scriptures, which made him skillful in handling the Word of God. Ezra set his heart to study the Law of the Lord and to practice it so he could teach God's rules and commands to the Israelites (Ezra 7:10).

To be an effective preacher is to be a disciple, a faithful follower of Christ. Preachers must follow and obey Christ before they can demand people to follow their examples (1 Cor. 11:1). Preachers do not have to resort to antics, bombastic delivery, or fancy gimmicks just to gain the attention and respect of the people. Alan Jones points out, "You are a word about the Word before you ever speak a word" (qtd. in Taylor 52). I believe that the life testimony of a preacher is a major factor in credibility and authority of his message (2 Tim. 3:10). Consistency between the Word proclaimed and the life of the proclaimer should be evident. This principle is the first fundamental way of serving the Word: being at its service, obeying it in one's own life (Cantalamessa 22). If not, that preacher will be likened to the Pharisees, of whom Jesus said not to follow their example (Matt. 23:1-4). As the preacher constantly goes through the three fundamental elements of the Christian life—welcoming/listening to the divinely inspired Word, reflecting on/contemplating the Word, and putting the Word into practice, he will be an effective teacher and preacher of the Word of God (Luke 6:46-48). James Smith writes in his *PreachIt* newsletter, "Your greatest sermons are not the ones you preach every Sunday, but the ones that you live before God and man every day!" In short, the man is the message; the conduct and lifestyle of the preacher gives credence to his sermon.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy even if they had memorized the Torah. He told his followers to obey them and do everything they tell them; but do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. (Matt. 23:3) Dean Shriver

highlights the power of integrity in the life of a preacher:

By God's design, the Word preached has little transforming power apart from the life and example of the preacher. Persuasion requires credibility and credibility requires integrity. Integrity is the consistency that exists between our message and our lives when we do in fact watch both our lives and our doctrine closely. (9-10)

The power to persuade the hearers therefore lies in the integrity of the preacher.

Congruency between life testimony and public teaching should be evident if the preacher wants to be effective.

People will hear effective preaching from ministers who have diligently studied the Word and have endeavored to rightly handle the word of truth. To have effective preaching, the church must have effective preachers. Jesus Christ first chose and called his men and then communicated the substance of the message he wished them to declare to the world (J. Jackson 10).

Effective communication of the Word comes as a preacher hears from God the message that ought to be preached. The Lord Jesus reiterates seven times in the book of Revelation, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). When the Christian message is communicated both publicly and privately, pastors need to ask the Lord to give them his words to say. God can give a preacher words to say that would be fitting to the precise situation of the people (Barrs 246). Thus, preachers should hear from the Holy Spirit from the time of choosing the Bible text up to the exposition and declaration of the word.

Nehemiah takes note of the groups of people listening to the Word of God: "So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand" (Neh. 8:2).

The “first day of the seventh month” was the day on which the Israelites were to observe the Feast of Trumpets (Lev. 23:24). The priests blew trumpets to assemble the people, to announce God’s working among them, and to signal preparation for the Day of Atonement, which followed on the tenth of the month (Lev. 23:27; Constable 19). Knowing the occasion and the kind of people in their congregations will guide preachers in the form of message to be delivered. Knowing the people listening will enable preachers to tailor fit their messages, communication style, application, and illustrations so they will be applicable and comprehensible to the congregations.

Preachers have to create a coherent balance between two focuses—the listeners and the biblical text. The sermon should give insight to the people’s domestic, social, political, and economic context as it relates to the historical, theological, and literary context of the biblical text. The sermon should be established on the original message of the text and be interpreted with the parishioners in mind (Craddock 127). Pastors have to be wise in communicating a message that is both faithful to the biblical text and sensitive to the situation of his listeners. For example, if the preachers’ audiences are mostly students and young single professionals such as our church in the Victory U-Belt, then illustrations, stories, concepts, ideas, and language should be relatable to the young people.

A preacher can navigate the locus of his sermon. J. Ellsworth Kalas offers this solution: “The sermon is best found at the intersection where the four ways meet. The four ways are the preacher, the text, the occasion, and the congregation” (36). I was invited to preach in a Methodist church one Sunday in June 2008 where the pastor told me to preach a message based on the lectionary. Only after I preached did I realize my

dilemma because in that week, the nation celebrated its Independence (June 12), and that same Sunday was Father's Day. The message became a sort of a hodge-podge of several themes. Thus, the next time a similar situation occurs I will find the most pressing issue, the most important theme for the week, and the greatest concern of the people as the springboard for the message.

Zack Eswine gives advice to preachers on knowing their audience, "A preacher should be aware of the people in his audience. He should remain sensitive to the ages, spiritual maturity levels, and varying life experiences of those listening" (37). Preachers should know the spiritual, social, economic, and cultural background of the people they will be preaching to so that they will be able to speak to their levels and situations.

The assembly who listened to Ezra was made up of men, women, and all who were able to understand (Neh. 8:2). Interesting to note is that women and children, at least those children old enough to understand, are included in the congregation (Blenkinsopp 287). Throughout the Bible the Lord instructed his people to teach the children with the Word of God (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:1-7; 31:12; Josh. 8:35; Ps. 78:1-7; 2 Chron. 20:13; Eph. 6:4). For this reason every Victory church we have in the Philippines has a kids' church ministry to the children. In most Victory churches in Metro Manila, the children's church is divided into toddlers (0-3 years old), junior kids (4-6 years old), kids (7-9 years old), and preteens (10-12 years old). The children's church services are held simultaneously with the adult worship services in different rooms of the church building or worship facility.

The object of the assembly was instruction in the Torah, which Ezra had carried with him from Babylon (Ezra 7:14). In fact, the chief purpose of his coming to Jerusalem



was to apply the Law of God to the situation as he found it (Myers 153). Since Ezra was cognizant of the situation and the condition of the people, he knew what they needed to hear from the Book of the Law. Likewise, pastors today should know the condition of their flock (Prov. 27:23)—their needs, challenges, situations, struggles, and concerns so that they can be able to preach relevant messages to their congregation:

Effective preaching is characterized by attentive listening of the people. Ezra read the Scriptures aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. (Neh. 8:3)

The people who listened to the Word are portrayed as eager (v. 1), attentive (vv. 3, 7b), and worshipful (v. 6b). Their solidarity is also emphasized (Throntveit 96). The hearts and attitudes of the people play a significant part in the effectivity of the preaching.

Preachers must spend a considerable amount of time praying for themselves and their audiences before they preach so that the people will listen to them. Pastors and congregations would benefit if they had an intercessory team (prayer shield) to pray for them before they preach the Word. The apostle Paul constantly asked for prayer support from the churches so that the message of the gospel would spread and be preached with clarity (Col. 4:3-4; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1).

As pastors preach the gospel, they should expect the Lord to stir up the hearts and minds of the hearers so that they can cooperate with the Holy Spirit what He wants to do at the end of the message. Thomas G. Long writes,

While the herald has to remain faithful to the biblical message, the pastoral preacher has to think about the impact of the sermon on the people. Pastoral preachers are charged with the additional responsibility of developing a communicational strategy designed to provoke change in the hearers. He must know people and how they listen to messages. (28-29)

Preachers should learn to anticipate how their message would be received by the congregation and aim to gain their attention from beginning to the end of the sermon.

Towards the end of the sermon, preachers should give a challenging conclusion that will encourage people how they can obey the word of God.

Preachers ought to know how to capture the interest and attention of their listeners. According to Kenton C. Anderson, they must be able to engage their listeners and make a connection with them:

Preachers looking for powerful communication will learn to speak with the listener's voice. Framing issues and questions in the listener's voice is an effective means of drawing people in to the sermon and helping them to care. The listener responds to the sermon as the preacher offers it. Good preachers will anticipate the listener's response to various elements (positive or negative) and give voice to these reactions in the space of the sermon. This helps listeners feel included and draws them in to deeper engagement. Preachers who have the courage and the skill to anticipate what listeners are thinking and to give voice to these things in the sermon will preach to great effect. (78-79)

Preachers should not be limited to their notes but they should think on how they can communicate their message wherein the people will feel and sense that the truth is being spoken out of compassion and concern for them.

Effectiveness must be understood in terms of bringing the listeners to a clear appreciation of the biblical message. Our knowledge of the listeners, their biases and predispositions to and against certain ideas becomes a means, not a substitute, to leading them to a full comprehension of God and his intention for their lives (Johnston 53). For this reason, preachers ought to be careful not only in choosing the right words but how to say things so as not to offend social and cultural sensibilities which could become a hindrance to hearing the gospel. If people are to be offended, it should be by the message of the cross (1 Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 5:11), and not by pastors' insensitive or tactless

presentation of the Word of God.

Simple hearing with the ears and intelligent understanding (hearing at a much deeper level) are quite distinct kinds of activity. Unless the hearers are already positive toward the message, deep-level understanding requires persuasion (Kraft 116).

Sometimes certain topics are not readily accepted or interesting to some listeners.

Preachers must convince people of the importance of the subject they will speak on at the beginning of the sermon so that people will listen. Preachers should create interest in the introduction and maintain that interest until the end with the aim of convincing people of the truth they are presenting. Paul was at the synagogue in Corinth every Sabbath trying to reason with and persuade the Jews and Greeks (Acts 18:4).

Ezra was not alone in his ministry of teaching. He had several Levites who assisted him in the ministry. “Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. (Neh. 8:4)

Ezra was mentoring these men in the teaching ministry.

When Ezra retired from public life, he opened a school to train Levites in the Torah. He also transliterated the Old Testament into Aramaic, developed an oral interpretation of the Scriptures in Aramaic, and trained the Levites in learning this interpretation (Elwell, *Evangelical Commentary* 319). Ezra can be commended for his job of raising up preachers and teachers because it shows that he was committed to reproducing himself by training other teachers who would be capable to teach the Word of God.

I believe that the church will not lack competent preachers and teachers of the Word if continuous training and education are provided for its pastors. This project aims

to identify the specific areas where pastors in urban Philippine churches need further equipping in the ministry of preaching.

Preachers should stand on a place where everyone can see and hear them clearly. This practice is what Ezra did as he had a public reading and exposition of the Book of the Law: “Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up” (Neh. 8:5). The people stood up as they listened to the reading of the Scriptures.

The rabbis deduced from “the people all stood up” that the congregation should stand at the reading of the Torah (Gaebelin 724). This act was a sign of reverence for the Word of God. They remained standing until the reading was finished (Fensham 216). For this reason in most of our churches, pastors ask the congregation to stand during the reading of the Scripture text in reverence to God who is the author of the Scriptures.

The public reading of the Word of God elicits a response from both the preacher and the people: “Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, ‘Amen! Amen!’” (Neh. 8:6a). Evidently the people were wholeheartedly accepting and believing what they heard to the point that they raised their hands and said “Amen.”

The people responded by saying “Amen” to express their consensus to the Scriptures. Congregational response to the preaching is one way to gauge how the preacher is connecting with his hearers. In travelling and speaking to our churches in different cities in the Philippines, I have noticed that generally the Filipino people in the urban churches are responsive to the preaching of the Word.

Ralph L. and Gregg Lewis recommend the inductive style of preaching to encourage the people to be responsive. Inductive preaching, lays out the evidence, the examples, the illustrations, and postpones the declarations and assertions until the listeners have a chance to weigh the evidence, think through the implications, and come to the conclusion with the preacher at the end of the sermon. Such a process involves listeners by giving them a part in the sermon process (43). Deductive preaching, on the other hand starts with a declaration of intent and proceeds to prove the validity of what the preacher says is already determined to be true. Today's preacher needs to understand the meaning and implications of inductive preaching because today's hearers demand to be involved (46).

Aside from raising their hands and affirming the words they heard, the people made obeisance to the Lord: "Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground" (Neh. 8:6b). Worship was the people's overwhelming response to the truth encounter. Worship intertwined with the Word of God brings forth effective preaching.

Worship plays an important part in preparing the hearts of the people to be receptive to the word of the Lord. Praise and worship brings the presence of God into the congregation. As the believers sing and the musicians play their instruments unto the Lord, it brings forth the anointing upon the preacher. Second Kings 3:14-19 says that the prophet Elisha asked for a minstrel before he would declare the word of the Lord. When the musician played the harp, the hand of the Lord came upon him and he was able to speak God's message to the kings. The worship leader should be cognizant of the topic of the sermon so that the songs selected and prepared will synchronize to the theme of the

preaching. A simple but effective technique is to simply ask: “How does this song connect to today’s text?” (Roncace and Gray 11) The pastors and staff in my local church (Victory Metro East) take time to review the lineup or list of songs that will be sung on a coming Sunday service. The pastors coordinate with the worship leaders to make sure that the songs will complement or flow with the Sunday message:

Because of the huge number of people assembled to hear the word of God, Ezra’s assistants mingled among the people to bring elucidation of the Scriptures. “The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. (Neh. 8:7-8)

The Levites gave their time and effort to make sure the people comprehended the Book of the Law.

The word *instructed* (Hebrew, *biyn*) originally means to separate mentally (or distinguish), to understand, consider, discern, inform, instruct, and teach (“Instructed” 995). When preachers teach the Word of God, they declare the truths from the Scriptures that cause people to know and discern what is right from wrong, and to know the will of the Lord in their lives.

The Levites helped the people understand the law by translating it from the Hebrew into the Aramaic vernacular of the people (Hamrick and Allen 489). Thirteen men assisted Ezra in making sure that the people understood what was being read. Because the Jews had been exiles in Babylon for a long time, their Hebrew Old Testament must be translated into Aramaic, the language that they now speak. Some scholars have thought that the Levites’ task was not translation, but explanation.

*Making it clear* (meporas) literally signifies *to be separated or split up*, i.e. with distinct pronunciation, or more probably, with pauses between each verse (Clines 184). Being precise in pronunciation and speaking in a right pace (not being too fast or too slow in speaking) and in an adequate volume are essential to clear communication. Clarity in communication is one of the factors of effective preaching. The apostle Paul asked the church in Colosse to pray for him that he may proclaim the message as clearly as he should (Col. 4:4).

Since the people remained in their places, the Levites probably moved from group to group among the people making sure that all had understood what they had heard (Williamson 290). The Word of God that the people hear on Sundays should be discussed in a smaller setting within the family or a small group Bible study. The people in small groups can discuss how they understand, and how they can apply the message in their individual lives.

Many of these people had never before heard the Word of God. The clear reading and teaching of the Law caused them to be convicted of their sins (Neh. 8:9-11) causing a great emotional outburst and the tears of repentance to flow (McGee 145). The Jews understood that the reason for their exile in Babylon was their sin of idolatry. They were disciplined for their disobedience to God. However, when they came back from Babylon they no longer reverted to idolatry. They were monotheistic from their Babylonian captivity to this present day.

Nehemiah, the governor of Judah, spoke to the people to encourage them. He said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD

is your strength” (Neh. 8:10). Nehemiah exhorted the people to share food with those who were less fortunate. Whenever genuine generosity is demonstrated in a practical way it brings gladness and joy among the people.

The element of joy or laughter is one way to connect with the people, especially Filipinos. When used appropriately humor can build rapport and lighten up the mood of the people. J. Kent Edwards expounds on the effect of humor within a sermon in his book *Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching*:

Humor is frequently underestimated as a communication tool. On the surface, it appears light, frothy, irrelevant, and perhaps irreverent. Like an iceberg, however, its most influential feature rests beneath the surface.

Humor’s power lies in its ability to create a sense of identification. (120)

The conversational and high energy preaching style of megachurch preachers draws attention from people and even critics. In most megachurch sermons, an element of humor with frequent laughter from the congregation is present (Thumma and Travis 95). The preacher just needs to select jokes or funny stories that would be relevant to his preaching so that it would complement his point rather than just be a way of entertaining his audience.

David Murrow points out that religious and hyped preaching may sound artificial, hypocritical, or showy, especially with men. The problem with preacher-speak is that unchurched men may see it as performance, not heartfelt communication. The message may be obscured because the listener is paying attention to the way the pastor speaks and not the words he is speaking. Pastors must make their preaching delivery as conversational as possible. Passion in the pulpit is great, but they must avoid anything that looks staged or performed (172).



The people did what Nehemiah the governor told them: “Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them” (Neh. 8:12). Their understanding of the Law brought exuberant joy and generosity.

The Israelites mourned and wept as they were convicted of their departure from God’s will when they heard the Law being read (v. 9). However, the Law stated that the Feast of Trumpets was to be celebrated joyfully, so Nehemiah urged them to rejoice in the Lord (Constable 20).

Effective preaching calls for a decision. Application presents specific changes that put the ideas of Scripture into personal experience. All preaching aims for repentance, which basically means *a change of mind*. Before attitudes and behavior can change, a person must change his thinking (McDill 128). At the end of every sermon, the preacher must foresee how the Word of God could change the mind-sets, perspectives, or attitudes of the people listening to him. The way people think will determine the way they act. Thoughts will foster decisions that will bring about actions that in turn will produce habits, character, and destiny.

Effective preaching should lead to a clear and doable application of the Word of God. When people understand the Word, they will be compelled to do something about it. Eugene H. Peterson describes the activity of preaching in this way: “Preaching announces what God is doing right here and now, at this time and in this place. It calls hearers to respond appropriately” (11). Dan Kimball believes that “all preaching should somehow teach on kingdom living as a disciple of Jesus. We need to refocus our application, no matter what the topic, to this critical awareness of living as a disciple, or

an apprentice of Jesus” (181). Jesus said that the people who truly love him are those who obey His commandments (John 14:15). Obedience is a mark of a genuine disciple of Christ and thus discipleship is the process of teaching people how to obey the word of God (Matt. 28:19).

Small groups are the avenue through which people can share what the Word of God means to them and how they can apply it in their lives. In James 1:22 the apostle wrote that Christians should not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive themselves. They have to do what it says. Larry Osborne shows how sermon-based small groups will lead churchgoers and members into a greater commitment to God and his Word. He contends that the most important number to know in his church is not the total weekend attendance of their services, but the percentage of adults who participate in one of their small groups (21). The pastors and leaders of Victory are inculcating this same mind-set among their congregations in Metro Manila and in even in the provincial churches. The leaders are aiming for disciples, not converts. Why? Because we believe that God wants serious followers of Christ, and not casual churchgoers. Discipleship small groups are important in the spiritual growth of a believer because a Sunday sermon discussed in a small group meeting during the week will bring reflection, retention, comprehension, and application of the Word of God.

The Victory churches have always emphasized the importance of discipleship. Disciple making is a process that systematically moves people toward Christ and spiritual maturity and not randomly disconnected church activities or events. The preaching ministry, church events, and activities will be more effective when they are integrated into a strategic discipleship process (Murrell 208). For this reason Victory group leaders

employ the series-based discipleship lessons posted on the Victory Web site, which are small group lessons based on the sermon heard on Sunday.

Studies show that adults learn on a deeper and more meaningful level when they discover truth for themselves. If this observation is true, then the discovery process itself becomes imperative. Asking powerful questions in a small group setting forces one to process his inner life and engage truth. This practice forces discovery and seeking on the part of postmodern hearers and brings greater buy-in to the truth. The coaching model of learning in small groups seeks to come alongside the learner and aid him in personal discovery of the truth. Discipleship coaching can be done by asking questions, listening intuitively, and offering support, encouragement, and accountability (Chasteen 82). The small group lesson has application questions at the end, which ask people what significant truths they have learned, and how they can put it into practice.

Effective preaching will bring a greater desire and commitment in the lives of people to study the Word of God: “On the second day of the month, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra the scribe to give attention to the words of the Law” (Neh. 8:13). From this passage we can see that the people have a hunger for the Word of God as they gathered around Ezra to get a deeper understanding of the word of God.

The people in this revival had an insatiable appetite to learn more about the Scriptures (Gaebelein 727). One remarkable outcome of the preaching of the Word of God is that people committed their lives to study the Book of the Law. This positive aftermath is similar to what happened to the people in Berea (Acts 17:10-12). The heads of the families led in the study of the Scriptures. Fathers ought to lead their families in the

discipline of reading and studying the Bible because they are the spiritual leaders of their families (Gen. 18:19; Acts 18:8; Eph. 6:4).

The family heads of all the people, the priests, and the Levites gathered around Ezra the scholar to gain a deeper understanding of the words of the Law. The preaching moved the people to seek greater insight into the Word of God. Preaching that transforms should bring about a life of discipleship, a life that seeks to follow God and his precepts.

Within the Victory churches, we define a disciple as someone who follows Jesus, fellowships with believers, and fishes for people (Matt. 4:19-22). A disciple is a person who seeks to follow Christ by holding on to his teachings (John 8:31-32), one who walks with God and fellow disciples (John 13:34-35; Acts 2:42), and lives to be a witness for Christ (Acts 1:8) by reaching out to people who need the Lord. As he grows in his faith, he participates and uses his talents and gifts to serve in the church and in the community where he lives (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 14:12).

Ezra the scribe led Israelites in the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles: “Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly” (Neh. 8:18). They based their celebration on what was written in the Book of the Law.

The Israelites celebrated the Feast of Booths to commemorate God’s care over them when they were journeying through the wilderness for forty years. The Jews read Leviticus 23 carefully to ensure they had observed it year by year in conformity to the Law’s teaching (Bruce 504). During the festival, God’s word was not only to be declared orally, but also enacted visually so that, by hearing and seeing, people would recall what

God had done for them (R. Brown 137). The Israelites celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles so they could remember how God had blessed and provided for them during the time of the Exodus, and appreciate God's blessing and provision for them in the present.

Just as the Feast of Tabernacles reenacted visually what God did in the past for Israel, I believe that people today need to hear, read, feel, and see the Word of God. The urban pastor has to make use of various visual aids and available resources to illustrate his message. Pastors are now preaching to a *sights* and *sounds* generation. I believe that the effectivity of a sermon can be enhanced if the pastor supplements it with a short video clip, creative drama, PowerPoint, pictures, an object lesson, or other teaching tools. The message would then be a holistic and engaging presentation. One reason why people are attentive to the preaching of our Lord Jesus Christ is because he used simple word-pictures called parables to help people understand who God is and what his kingdom is like. Jesus used examples, images, events, and characters taken from everyday life to illustrate his messages.

Mark Batterson recommends adding object lessons to our preaching. Jesus set a precedent in his parables. He used everything from mustard seeds to Roman coins to little children to drive home his points. Preachers can think of objects as condiments. They help people remember the point that they are making. On the value of using object lessons in preaching, Joel Hunter makes this observation:

We live in a media-saturated society, which is naturally disposed to communication methods that appeal to all the senses. When the church in the Middle Ages explained the gospel to illiterate masses, it did so with great paintings, sculptures and other forms of art. We need to reengage the arts, especially by using videos, to effectively communicate the gospel.

Illustrations are used to make the truth concrete, interesting, impressive, persuasive, and practical (Jones 137-39). Those illustrations that the preacher invents for himself are the most effective because they are part and parcel of his own thinking (140). Sermon illustrations should be firsthand or secondhand in nature as much as possible so that they can carry a great deal of authenticity, honesty, and accuracy.

The pastors at Victory have used different objects and props to illustrate the message. The pastor in Victory U-Belt once preached from Matthew 14 about overcoming the fear of failure. The passage told about when Peter walked on the water to come to Jesus. The pastor entered from the right side of the stage paddling a boat (while someone was pulling the boat from the left side). He stood up on the boat as he preached and walked out of the boat to illustrate that Christians should step out in faith and not be afraid of failure. On another occasion a pastor in Victory Pioneer used a spoon, a ladle, and a shovel to illustrate that the measure of giving will determine the measure of reaping the harvest (Luke 6:38).

The preacher must know about the current pop culture. When preachers use relevant and up-to-date illustrations they are communicating that they know and care about this present world. Kevin Miller, on illustrating from pop culture, says, “People expect the pastor to be knowledgeable about the Bible, God, prayer, and other spiritual matters. But they appreciate when I make a comment that shows I know at least something about their world, and they respect my effort” (509). As a preacher, I plan to engage the audience with the text by sharing a modern and contemporary version of the text. I have to explain the background of the text in modern language. From time to time, I use modern and paraphrased versions of the Bible if needed. I normally use visuals,

object lessons, and PowerPoint in my sermons.

The Scottish preacher and author Arthur John Gossip says, “What bunglers we are that we have the most exciting tale in the world to preach about and cannot manage to interest the very people who will sit spellbound for two or three hours in an opera or a movie!” (64). Concerning this statement, John Killinger agrees that Gossip is right: “There is no excuse for boring, pedestrian preaching—not when we are talking about Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God” (92). Creative preaching that will arouse and keep the interest of the people will require imagination, fresh ideas, and innovative methods that will cater to the culture and worldview of the people that we are preaching to. The timeless truths of the Bible need to be restated and relived in fresh, creative, and relevant ways to modern man.

The dominant theme of Nehemiah 8 is the declaration of the Law of God, its explication, and the people’s consequent response (Williamson 297). The preaching of the Word of God brought a national and spiritual revival in the lives of the Jews. As the Jews returned to their homeland, for their hearts to return to the LORD was crucial. The reading, exposition, and explanation of the Word of God brought truth and conviction of sin that led to the transformation of the lives of the people. Preachers of our generation should hope and strive to emulate the examples of Ezra and Nehemiah so they can teach the Word and make disciples in the nations of the world.

One key to having strong preachers is having a systematic training for them. Just as Ezra trained other teachers of the law, pastors and preachers who will be skillful in handling the Scriptures and preaching it in their congregations must be trained. In Victory’s Schools of Ministry, senior pastors and instructors teach courses on theology,

hermeneutics, and homiletics. The school has a practicum in preaching wherein the teachers hear, evaluate, critique, and encourage students as they preach in class. Campus ministers, church planters, pastors, and cross-cultural missionaries are trained every year to be prepared in their calling and ministry.

Isaiah 61 is the text that our Lord Jesus used when he stood up to read the scroll in the synagogue of Nazareth:

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. (Isa. 61:1-3)

Throughout the Old Testament, the concept of the Spirit of the Lord resting or being on someone connotes supernatural wisdom and capacity. Here in Isaiah 61, God has anointed the Servant/Messiah for the task of preaching the good news to the poor, announcing hope, healing, and deliverance. The poor here is not restricted to financial or material conditions. The passage speaks of all who are distressed and in trouble for any reason, including sin (Oswalt 564-65). Materially rich people are often spiritually poor. Likewise materially poor people can be spiritually poor. The preacher's task is to preach the good news to all people—whether they are materially rich or poor.

As an anointed messenger announcing meaningful things, the message from the Spirit of God brings freedom, comfort, and encouragement. The effect of his words turns negative conditions into beautiful positive things (Watts 305). The anointing from the Spirit of the Lord makes a sermon effective. When the message and the messenger are anointed, the people will be set free from their bondages (Isa. 10:27).



Here is what Rick Warren wrote in his Ministry Toolbox newsletter regarding the preaching of Jesus:

When Jesus preached his first sermon at Nazareth, he read from Isaiah 61 to announce what the preaching agenda of his ministry would be. Jesus began with people's needs, hurts, and interests. Jesus usually taught in response to a question or a pressing problem from someone in the Crowd. He scratched where people itched. His preaching had immediacy about it. He was always relevant and always on target for that moment. Jesus had Good News to share, and people wanted to hear it. He had a message that offered practical benefits for their lives. (47)

Jesus was effective in his preaching because he preached the Word to the areas of life where people needed to be instructed, corrected, encouraged, and set free.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul mentions the Word of God working effectively in the lives of the people. Only the New King James Version uses the phrase *effectively works*:

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. (1 Thess. 2:13)

Truly, the Word of God has living power among people who have faith.

The power is God's and the Word is his instrument. The verb *works*, incidentally, is almost always used in the New Testament with reference to supernatural activity (mostly that of God; Morris 63). As the Word of God is preached, the Lord performs his work in the hearts and minds of the people. God's word will never return void but will accomplish its purpose (Isa. 55:11).

The efficacy of the gospel in the believers in Thessalonica was seen in the fact that they became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus (1 Thess. 2:14a). The Judean churches are singled out for mention because they were the

first to be planted. All true churches that belong to God are bound to display a certain similarity, especially in their receiving the word (Stott 55). The gospel worked mightily in Thessalonica because they welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit, and so they became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 1:6-7). F. F. Bruce asserts, “The gospel has to be both heard and accepted which results in its becoming an active power that goes on working in those who go on believing” (1463). If people will not welcome the message or accept the message, the word cannot work in their lives. Even our Lord Jesus could not do miracles in his hometown because of the lack of faith of the people (Mark 6:1-6).

The researchers at Durham University’s College of Preachers who surveyed three hundred hearers of the Word from various denominations, found that a whopping 96.6 percent of the 3.6 million people who regularly attend a church in England look forward to hearing a sermon each week. That is great news, as is the fact that 62 percent say those sermons frequently provide them with a better sense of God’s love and a better understanding of who Jesus is. Unfortunately, the survey holds bad news too. Only 17 percent of those responding said the sermons they hear on a regular basis cause them to change their attitudes about others or give them a fresh perspective on tough issues. Only a fraction of those listening to preachers is actually moved to make external or internal life changes (“Are My Sermons”). Seeing this result makes me curious to know how much of the preaching among churches in Metro Manila, Philippines are causing transformation and change in the lives of the people.

Since the goal of preaching is to change lives, preaching is a very vital tool for church growth. Preachers should know how to check themselves on how they can be

effective in their communication. Philip Harrelson lists eight questions to ask before preaching:

- Who will I be preaching to?
- What does the Bible say about their needs?
- What is the most practical way to say it?
- What is the most positive way to say it?
- What is the most encouraging way to say it?
- What is the most personal way to say it?
- What is the simplest way to say it?
- What is the most interesting way to say it?

Effective preaching is not an accident but a well-thought process of getting the answers to these questions (9-10).

### **Related Theological Doctrines on Preaching**

The noted homiletician Andrew Blackwood, Sr. gave two worthy definitions of preaching: “Preaching is divine truth voiced by a chosen personality to meet human need,” and, “Preaching means interpreting life today with light from the Scripture so as to meet the needs of the hearer now, and guide the hearer in doing God’s will tomorrow” (qtd. in Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary* 868). Being cognizant of human needs and addressing them in the message should be the tone of the message of the urban pastor. Jesus was well aware of the concerns of people but he taught his hearers that if they seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all the things that they need in life will be added to them (Matt. 6:25-34).

Effective preaching is preaching that is understood clearly by the plain people. If a sermon is expounded correctly but communicated poorly, the substance and the values of its content would not be appreciated and thus its effect will be diminished:

Preaching, to be understood should be colloquial in its style. A minister must preach as he would talk, if he wishes to be understood. The gospel will never produce any great effects until ministers talk to their hearers, in the pulpit, as they talk in private conversation. (Finney 138)

Heeding this principle, preachers need to be flexible and sensitive to be able to relate to the level of people that they are speaking. They have to preach in the modern and common vernacular being used by the masses so that they can be understood. For example, if a preacher is speaking before a group of young people, he must be able to connect with them by being acquainted with their culture, language, and the things that interest them.

Communicating and connecting with people are two different mediums of discourse. Tony Campolo and Mary Albert Darling differentiate the two:

Connecting is a different level of communication than talking in an interesting manner or using solid communication techniques in our interactions. Connecting suggests a depth of mutual understanding and sharing. Saying we connect with someone means we sense a special bond, or even feel a sense of unity, with that person. (10)

The way to connect with people is an urgent task for preachers, especially at the beginning of their preaching, because people often decide whether the preacher is worth listening to or not at the start of their sermon. For this reason the preacher must look for a common ground, a mutual experience, or an imperative cause for the topic to wrest the attention of his hearers.

Proclamatory preaching is staking a claim and taking a stand, with clarity and conviction, with a passionate desire to connect and communicate. Jesus was interested in

changed lives, not guilty consciences. Jesus' preaching was proclamatory because in it Jesus (1) announced the kingdom, (2) resisted the powers, and (3) shared and shaped the faith of the people (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; BroSEND 70). Many scholars would agree that the main theme of Christ's preaching is the kingdom of God. The word *kingdom* appears 114 times in the Gospels (NIV). The Greek word for kingdom, *basileia*, can have the dynamic meaning of rule, reign, kingship, realm, and territory governed by a king (Ferguson and Wright 367). Thus, a person who repents and believes in Jesus submits himself to God's rule (i.e., the lordship of Christ; Rom. 10:9-10; Col. 2:6-7).

The present and continuing reality of revelation through each believer's life occurs under the enlightening ministry of the Holy Spirit, who interprets to Christ's followers the contents of Scripture. As only the Scripture unaugmented from any philosophical or religious source can bring people to know God, the Spirit opens Scripture to Christians and writes its teachings on their hearts so that this knowledge becomes a reality for them (Ferguson and Wright 629). A preacher ought to ask God for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17) to come upon the people as he preaches the oracles of God. People cannot know God on their own strength but by the Holy Spirit who opens the eyes of the believers' spiritual understanding as they hear or read the Word of God (Eph. 1:18).

In this sinful world, God must enable the people to be persuaded or they would never believe in him. Second Corinthians 4:4 says, "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." Paul wrote to the Corinthians that his preaching came in demonstration of the Spirit and of power and not based on human wisdom (1 Cor. 2:4-5). Men and women are

dependent upon God to remove the blindness and irrationality caused by sin, believe what Scripture says, and come to saving faith in Christ (Grudem 112). The Reformed theologian Louis Berkhof (1873-1957) says, “If God had not revealed Himself, man would not be in position to know Him at all, and all religion would be impossible” (13). Even as God has revealed himself through the Scriptures and through his Son, his message spoken by preachers must be conveyed through his Spirit in order to be like a double-edged sword that will penetrate the ears and minds of men.

Woodrow Michael Kroll underscores the importance of having love as the motive for preaching:

The most important element in speaking is not physical or mental but spiritual. It does not take an audience long, however, to determine whether or not you are speaking from a sincere heart. It is essential that a speaker have a genuine love for his audience. He cannot function well without it. (111)

Speaking the truth in love makes the message palatable in the ears of the congregation. In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul writes, “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.” Speaking the truth in love does not mean preaching only the things that people like to hear, but preaching what they need to hear so that they will grow in their walk with God.

Preaching carries a responsibility to teach and preach sound doctrine while warning people about heresies that are currently infiltrating the church (Tit. 1:9; 2:1-2). Fred B. Craddock states, “Preaching is a vital part of pastoral work in that it permits both preacher and parishioners to weigh, submit to theological examination, integrate, bring to clarity, and express issues that are scattered through the many pastoral contacts and

activities” (40). The call to preach is to evaluate current issues in society and deliver a biblical and theological message that will align the lives of the people to the will of God. About five years ago, the book *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown made waves into the Philippines. I immediately researched and created a seminar to refute the errors and heresies in that book (which became a movie) and presented it in some of our churches. The call to preach is a call to be deeply rooted in sound theology so that we can be able to watch out for false doctrines and lead the body of Christ towards maturity (Eph. 4:11-15).

Biblical preaching is Christocentric preaching that becomes biblical not just by mentioning the name of Jesus or some gospel account, but by demonstrating that every human predicament has a solution found in Christ. This principle is the message of Bryan Chapell’s book. According to Chappell, the preacher has to realize that every text has a context. Every text is part of God’s redeeming work through Jesus Christ. The Bible is not a self-help book. The Scriptures present one, consistent, organic message. They tell how people must seek Christ, who alone is the Savior and source of strength, to be and do what God requires (277). The author warns that messages that are not Christ centered become man centered. Those preachers who preach man centered sermons will just assume that believers can secure their relationship with God by adopting right behavior, or improve their relationship with God by trying harder. All such messages are dangerous because they assume that Christians are able to do something about their fallen condition. The messages may sound positive or motivational in nature but they bypass God’s enabling grace and the saving work of Christ.

### Materials from Church History

Throughout the history of the church are many examples of preachers who have an effective and life-changing ministry in the proclamation of the Word. The following are some examples of effective preachers in the history of the church.

A cause and effect relationship exists between dramatic spiritual renewal and effective biblical preaching. Every revival of Christianity has been marked with a renewal of preaching. When God brought renewal to the early church, he laid his hand on John Chrysostom (349-407), an eloquent preacher and Archbishop of Constantinople. Chrysostom took the biblical text seriously, spoke in an engaging and conversational style, and filled his messages with vivid imagery. His preaching helped pull his church and society in the direction of holiness (Edwards, *Deep Preaching* 32).

Chrysostom was the favorite preacher of John Calvin. Calvin praised Chrysostom's virtues as a preacher and expositor for the people (Mitchell 7). Calvin adopted Chrysostom's method of preaching through the Bible, book by book—an approach that is still being practiced by preachers today.

For John Calvin (1509-1564), preaching meant the exposition of Biblical books, taking phrases, clauses, and sentences so that the meaning for faith will be understood and received by the contemporary believer. Calvin believed that God's lively encounter with people came through the nexus of such Biblical exposition, vivified by the Spirit (Dillenberger 9).

Calvin had a passion to develop proficient preachers. Over the course of years, Calvin tried to form a competent group of pastors. The formal gathering was called *the company of pastors*. The company met together for prayer, Bible study, and mutual



examination of their lives as ministers, and arguments for the correction of errors of thought or life. Calvin held the office of pastor to a high standard (Davis 48).

Calvin and his company of pastors set a historical precedence for what leaders are doing among the pastors in Metro Manila, Philippines. The pastors of Victory Metro Manila meet every Tuesday morning to discuss the upcoming message of the week, the sermon that will be preached on Sunday. In the group study, pastors have discovered an enormous advantage of sharing notes, insights, research, and illustrations that lead to a materially rich sermon.

The message is usually part of a series (normally three to four weeks) on a Bible book, Christian doctrines, biblical themes, contemporary issues, the core values of our church, or the important occasions of the year. In order to develop sermon series for the whole year, pastors have a strategic planning event where they group into teams and plan the different series. During the preaching planning, the pastors have a time of group study, discussion, deliberation, and presentation of the sermon series.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) preached with such authority on God's sovereignty, holiness, and the reality of hell that people thought that they were sliding into hell. His preaching aimed at the affections because emotions are the springs of all godly action. Good preaching aims to stir up "holy affections—such emotions as hatred for sin, delight in God, hope in his promises, gratitude for his mercy, desire for holiness, and tender compassion" (Piper 82). For Edwards, gracious and holy affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice (Piper 83). Effective preaching affects the thoughts, beliefs, feelings, outlook, and views of people, which in turn affect the way they live. The apostle Paul preached that people should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by

their deeds (Acts 26:20).

The results of Edwards' preaching were conviction of sin, repentance unto life, and a revival of sincere piety among those who were influenced—that interest was reawakened in genuine religious experience in the Christian context cannot be denied (Hosier 75). Edwards was a revivalist preacher during the Great Awakening in the middle of the eighteenth century. Not only did this movement bring multitudes to the Christian faith, but it also influenced the framers of the Constitution, who ensured freedom of religion in the United States.

John Wesley and George Whitefield decided to preach to the crowds in the open fields and coal mines when the churches in England closed their doors on them. Their mighty preaching brought about the Methodist Revival in the eighteenth century. Wesley preached with power. His words pounded like a hammer and burned like fire (Jer. 23:29). Speaking about God's anointing in preaching, Wesley said, "It is indeed the gift of God, and cannot be attained by all the efforts of nature and art united. God made the application. And truly God preached to their hearts" (Dewel 88). The anointing of the Spirit brings conversion, conviction, and transformation in the lives of people. Upcoming preachers must be taught how to seek the Lord and learn to receive the anointing from the Spirit of God.

While both Wesley and Whitefield are considered successful revivalists in their time, the effectiveness of their ministries can be evaluated by the long-term results of their efforts. Both of them traveled across continents to preach the gospel and saw thousands brought to the kingdom of God, but Wesley wisely preserved the fruits of his labor. He provided follow up, nurture, and accountability to the believers. In February of

1742, Wesley started to organize classes for the convinced believers, which proved vital to the long-term success of his movement. The classes were formed into groups of twelve wherein reliable people were appointed leaders who questioned, exhorted, and advised their sponsors or protégés, and regularly reported to Wesley (Tomkins 100). This discipleship class is clearly an exhibition of what Jesus said to his disciples, that he has chosen and appointed them to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last (John 15:16).

Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) was undeniably one of the greatest evangelists in church history. Campaigns that were held by Moody and Ira Sankey caused millions of people to hear the gospel and be saved. Whenever Moody preached, he always asked for a decision. He emphasized the doctrine that Christianity is not mere feeling, but a surrender of the whole nature to a personal, living Christ. Inquiry room sessions after each meeting played a pivotal part in a person's decision for Christ (Harvey 125). In order for a sermon to be effective in the hearts of the people, preachers should extend an invitation for people to respond to what they heard. The altar call after the sermon can have some variations. A preacher can ask people to raise their hands, come to the front, and pray a prayer of repentance and consecration to the Lord. Especially in a revival meeting where many lost people are getting saved, the church should provide a room where seekers can be personally counseled and prayed for, and then arrange for a follow-up appointment for personal or group discipleship.

Charles G. Finney (1792-1875) can be considered one of the most effective evangelists because over half a million people were converted under his ministry in an age when no amplifiers or mass communications were available. After preaching for several days, Finney would set a day of meeting to give instruction to the inquirers who

sensed the heavy conviction of the Holy Spirit in their hearts (Finney, *Autobiography* 63). This is where sinners will get converted as they repent and pray on their own while being instructed on how to repent and receive salvation from God.

The fruit of Finney's labor validates the effectiveness of his preaching ministry even after many years have passed. Some estimate that over 80 percent of his revival converts stayed true to Christ without ever backsliding. This high retention rate was due to his urgent message stressing holiness and purity (Rogers). The secret of the power of his preaching was praying in secret:

I used to spend a great deal of time in prayer, sometimes literally praying "without ceasing." I also found it very profitable, and felt very much inclined, to hold frequent days of private fasting. On these days I would seek to be entirely alone with God—and would generally wander off into the woods, or get into the meeting house, or somewhere away entirely by myself. (Finney, *Autobiography* 38)

Preachers who desire to be mighty in spirit will learn from the life and ministry of Charles Finney that his lifestyle of prayer was the reason for his power in the pulpit. Every preacher should spend quality time in prayer to prepare his or her soul for ministry. Secret prayer leads to a successful proclamation of the word.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) was England's most popular preacher for most of the second half of the nineteenth century. He wrote:

The chief object of preaching is the glory of God, and we aim at it by seeking the edification of saints and the salvation of sinners. It is a noble work to instruct the people of God and to build them up in their most holy faith. Since the conversion of sinners is a divine work, we must take care that we depend entirely upon the Spirit of God, and look to Him for power over men's minds. (Spurgeon 336-37)

For preaching to be effective it must be for the glory of God, and not the praise of men (1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Thess. 2:6). Pastors should seek to preach the Word to honor God, to encourage the faith of believers, and to seek the salvation of sinners.

J. Lee Grady prescribes that in the pastors' preaching, they must reclaim the basics of the gospel such as sinfulness of man, God's justice and judgment, God's love revealed in Jesus, and the full atonement provided by Jesus. Oftentimes many people do not respond to the preachers' appeals for salvation because they do not fully explain what our Lord Jesus did on the cross (66).

Michael Horton, while being interviewed by Mark Galli, made this remark concerning the importance of preaching the gospel at all times:

Paul calls the gospel "the power of God unto salvation," and I don't think he meant the power of God just unto conversion. The gospel remains the power of God unto salvation until we are glorified. Calvin once said we need the gospel preached to us every week, and the Lord's Supper to ratify that promise, because we are partly unbelievers until we die. (Horton and Galli 48)

I have seen the power of the gospel as almost every week as our pastors in Victory Metro East give an opportunity for people to surrender their lives to Christ. Whatever the topic of the sermon, the pastors end up with a Christocentric passage so that they can easily transition into an evangelistic exhortation for the altar call. Around ten people give their lives to Christ per service in five Sunday services at Victory Metro East.

Pastors can learn a lot about effective preaching from the examples of several preachers throughout the history of the church. Based on the lives of these preachers, the factors that made their preaching powerful and effective are the following: faithful exposition of the Bible text, speaking in an engaging and conversational style, preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit, praying fervently before preaching, preaching holiness

and God's sovereignty, and preaching for the glory of God that seeks to edify the saints and save sinners.

### **Recent Trends on Preaching**

Moving from the past to the present, effective preaching can be learned from successful preachers who proclaim the word in their generation. Let us glean from these modern-day preachers the principles, methods, strategies, and approaches that can be employed for effective preaching today.

Steve Gray, the pastor who led a three-year outpouring in Smithton, Missouri, a decade ago, says that a new revival has broken out in his eight hundred-member World Revival Church in Kansas City. Gray says the presence of God manifests powerfully in meetings when he opens up his Bible to preach. Despite the healings and miracles that have occurred, Gray said his goal is to keep the focus on changed lives. Gray pointed out that his congregation was going through its own revival by spending time in repentance, turning to the Lord, adjusting priorities, and examining their hearts (Ghiringhelli 18). I believe that revival can come to a city when God's people first experience a revival. Judgment begins in the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17). If God's people will have humility and heartfelt repentance, the Lord will pour out his mercy and healing in the land (2 Chron. 7:14).

An understanding of the redemptive theme of the whole Bible will enable the preacher to preach the whole counsel of God. The Bible is held together by a single plot—God creates the world, the world gets lost; God seeks to restore the world to the glory for which he created it (Buechner 194). An imperative stimulus of preaching is the desire to see the lives of people restored to their relationship with their Creator. Christ

came not only to pardon us, but also to heal us. He wants the glory restored (Eldredge 136). I see the need for messages that bring spiritual, emotional, and physical healing and restoration to the lost, brokenhearted, and sick people as preachers preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). The G12 cell churches have the Encounter Retreat where people experience inner healing and deliverance. In Victory churches are the Victory Weekend retreats (usually an overnight, one and a half days), in which new believers and members go through teaching sessions and personal counseling so they can experience spiritual freedom, deliverance from bondages, and be empowered to live the Christian life.

In V. Neil Wyrick's article, he compares pastors to good chefs who must offer their congregations food for the soul, something better than canned meat. One way to prepare a satisfying sermon is to simplify. Most congregations are not theologians and have no desire to be. They are concerned with living life successfully, handling problems, and growing daily closer to God (22). Thus, the more the pastor helps people solve their problems in life through his message, the more effective will his sermon be. A message that is contextualized to the needs, concerns, and condition of the audience will connect with the hearers.

Utilizing a team of pastors and teachers to prepare the sermon will make the job easier. This collaborative practice is what the NewThing Network churches are doing every week to create the *Big Idea* of the sermon. The churches that are part of their network are Jacob's Well Community Church in Thornton, Colorado; 242 Community Church in Brighton, Michigan; Forefront Church in New York; Reunion Church in Boston; and, the Village Christian Church in Mokena, Illinois. The Big Idea teaching

team meeting brings together all individuals who are responsible for teaching and preaching. Lasting one hour and forty-five minutes, the meeting involves brainstorming ideas for the message, structuring the message, and delegating the writing of each section to different members of the teaching team. Once team members have received their writing assignments, they each have one week to write their section of the message. The teaching team collaborates to create a teaching manuscript so that they can give it in advance to the pastors for refinement, contextualization, and further tweaking (Ferguson, Ferguson, and Bramlett 111).

Andy Stanley and Lane Jones teach that effective communication requires getting a clear and unified message to the audience. A sermon with only one big idea makes people easily remember the main theme of the message and apply that theme in their lives. The challenge of using the one point approach is in discovering the main point within the text. The five sections of the sermon according to Stanley (ME, WE, GOD, YOU, WE) will enable a preacher to make a smooth transition from introducing the message (and the messenger), to explaining its importance, to presenting the biblical truth, to elucidating its application, and providing inspiration (64, 120). John Henry Jowett adjoins in setting forth the advantage of one major point in a sermon:

No sermon is ready for preaching, not ready for writing out, until we can express its theme in a short, pregnant sentence as clear as crystal. A good sermon should drive home one thing, and if so, we can express it in one sentence. (qtd. in Galli and Larson 48)

A preacher can take the main big idea and use it as a jumping board to develop the two or three sub-points of his message. Another advantage of having a single, unified theme being driven by the preacher is the people can easily remember it, take time to reflect on it, share it, and apply it in their lives.



The background or setting where Bible preaching and teaching is taking place should be given attention. The physical aspect of the church sanctuary, auditorium, or building should contribute to effective teaching and eager listening. Rick Blackwood cites Revelation chapters 4 and 5 as to how worship and teaching are done in heaven. As God communicates to all the inhabitants of heaven, he unleashes a multisensory teaching, presented in forms that are verbal, visual, and interactive. This text gives a model for the use of multisensory teaching. God selects the theme, which is the glory of the Lamb. God then uses light, color, explicit visuals, new music, and interactive participation to make the teaching compelling, clear, and absolutely unforgettable. Thus preachers can look at the multisensory elements in Revelation 4 and reflect on how to use those same elements to make the preaching and teaching compelling, clear, and unforgettable (127). Today, many churches create worship and teaching services that radiate light. The goal is to mirror the light of Revelation 4 as closely as possible. We cannot achieve that level of light, but we can honor God by trying. Needless to say, many churches that use such lighting have been criticized for mimicking a rock concert. When a church service is filled with light, color, and powerful music, the effect is not mimicking the world, but imitating the worship of God as it occurs in heaven (128).

I believe that multisensory preaching is advantageous, especially when ministering to a high-tech, modern, and young generation. However, pastors should be very cautious in using high-tech multi-media in a way that is not a distraction or a display of effects that has no bearing whatsoever on the message. The tool should enhance a point of the message, not elevate itself above the Word; it should illustrate a point in the message, and not divert the attention of the people from the message.

To sum up the recent trends on preaching, several principles can make preaching effective, engaging, and life changing. Pastors must preach with a sense of the presence of God and not rely on natural skill or talent. Preachers must focus on the changed lives of people. The minister's goal is not just to preach a good sermon, but also to bring a noticeable change in people's lives. Preaching should be fresh and simple; helping people solve the problems they are presently experiencing. Forming teams that prepare sermons is one way to bring together the collective wisdom of men in fleshing out messages from the Bible. Preachers should preach one main point or theme so that people can remember and apply what they heard. Multisensory preaching will enhance, amplify, and illustrate the Word, and should not be a distraction or just a form of entertainment for the hearers.

### **Sermon Preparation and Sermon Delivery**

The effectiveness of preaching really begins with the spiritual lives of preachers as they prepare to study for their sermons. It ends with the work of the Holy Spirit among the people who heard the sermons. The preachers have to be sure first that their own lives have been transformed by Christ and are dynamically growing in the knowledge and grace of God so they can be used as instruments to deliver the word of the LORD (John 15:5; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Tim. 2:20-22).

Preachers need to be cognizant of how they can be effective in their sermon preparation by listening to what God wants to say through them and in their sermon delivery as they speak in the power of the Spirit of God. The effective sermon is grounded on solid biblical exegesis and is delivered in an engaging manner so that it changes the lives of the people. We have to evaluate our preaching ministry in terms of delivery, comprehension, and reception by the people in the churches. Eloquence,

charisma, and organization are not enough in preaching. Pastors have to determine whether the messages they preach are faithful to the text of the Scriptures (proper exegesis), relevant to the people in the urban setting (pertinent and relatable), and able to transform their lives (powerful and anointed).

Sermon preparation is a tedious yet crucial part of effective preaching:

Preachers ought to be more like great reservoirs than mere water pipes. For a pipe spreads abroad water as it receives it, but a reservoir waits till it is filled to overflowing, and thus communicates without loss to itself its superabundance of water. Preachers should operate out of the fullness of God's presence in their lives rather than operating on the margin. (Mawhinney 133)

This guideline is similar to the iceberg principle, which says that by the laws of physics 84 percent of an iceberg is below the water and 16 percent is above the water. The message being preached is the 16 percent that should be borne out of the 84 percent of our study, research, and preparation.

A faithful exegesis of the sermon text should bring out the original meaning of the biblical writer and a relevant, appropriate application for the hearers today. Richard C.

White offers this insight:

A biblical sermon engages a unit of scripture so that we encounter its reality and enter into its life as a central and pervasive concern of the sermon. At the same time a biblical sermon engages modern life at precisely the specific point indicated by the text, so that the text seems almost to have been written for us here now, as if the text were for all time, all places, and all circumstances. (11)

If a preacher fails to faithfully exegete the Bible text, the tendency is to conduct eisegesis, or put one's own ideas and concepts into the text, which oftentimes leads to a wrong or an extreme interpretation. A solid Bible exegesis leads to a correct interpretation that will lead to a proper application of the message of the Bible.

John Fullerton MacArthur, Jr. (1939-) is an evangelical writer, minister, and Bible teacher noted for his radio program entitled *Grace to You*. MacArthur was interviewed on how should the preacher measure effectiveness in the pulpit:

Well, I think there is only one genuine measuring standard. First, I must measure my own life before God. I must first of all be a man of God. What I say is the overflow of who I am. I will never be powerful in the pulpit if I am not speaking out of the vortex of a dynamic relationship with the living God. That is where it starts. (qtd. in Dudit 129)

I totally agree with MacArthur. Preachers cannot speak with authority unless they have received a message from the Lord. The LORD spoke to Jeremiah to declare to Israel to not listen to those lying prophets who speak out of their own minds (Jer. 23:16).

Contrariwise, those preachers who stand in God's presence and hear what the Lord is saying will be able to proclaim God's words to the people and that will turn sinners from their evil ways and evil deeds (Jer. 23:18, 22).

In his book, MacArthur offers this insight: "Thorough exegesis and clear organization are crucial to an effective message. But a good sermon poorly preached is no better than a poor sermon properly preached. One has light but no heat; the other heat with no light" (262). I have heard properly expounded sermons without the power and anointing of the Spirit. They are true and deep but dry and boring. I have also heard passionate and fervent preachers preach sermons without the proper exegesis. They are zealous and intense but lacking in depth, accuracy, and wisdom. An effective sermon is characterized by both truth and power, by light and heat, with proper exegesis and powerful anointing.

I believe that heat, zeal, passion, or spiritual fervor is a key element of effective preaching (Rom. 12:11; John 2:17; 1 Thess. 5:19). Preachers must have a burning passion

in their hearts because it brings dynamic power to their sermons:

Passion can never be genuine unless the preacher owns a burning need for a God-relationship. Zeal must own the herald before the herald can preach it into others. I believe that preachers who have no God-hunger may have some good things to say but they lack the passion that is essential to create the kingdom of God and transform the world. (C. Miller, *Preaching* 16)

In his epistles, Paul exhorted the church to never lack in zeal but keep their fervency in the spirit (Rom. 12:11) and not put out the Spirit's fire (1 Thess. 5:19).

Sermon evaluation is a key to improvement in sermon delivery. Pastors should be open and willing for their peers and their audience to evaluate their sermons.

Improvements come by asking honest questions about each sermon event, and preachers have a significant vantage point from which to identify its strengths and weaknesses. Even while they preach, preachers know when something is connecting well or hearers are becoming fidgety. Some preachers take this step to another level and review audio or video recordings. Honest evaluation by others is essential for a preacher to grow. (Quicke 198)

Preachers have to honestly evaluate their sermons. Craig A. Loscalzo offers several questions that pastors should ask concerning their preaching: "Does my preaching accomplish anything? Do my sermons do anything in the lives of my hearers? Does my preaching have any impact on the behavior and attitudes of my congregation?" (104)

When pastors critique their own sermons and discover the particular areas they need to improve, they will elevate the effectiveness of their sermons.

Eldon Weisheit proposes that the hearers should evaluate the effectiveness of the preachers' sermons:

If your sermons are going to be effective, they must affect those who hear them. How do you think your parishioners would rate the sermons they hear? How would that compare to the rating you gave the sermon you preached? (16)

An honest evaluation of the pastors' preaching by their congregations would indicate how much the message is affecting their lives.

John S. McClure, Ronald J. Allen, Dale P. Andrews, L. Susan Bond, Dan P. Moseley, and G. Lee Ramsey, Jr. lay out specific questions for listeners evaluating the sermon of a pastor:

Tell me about a pastor you have had who was also a good preacher. What did you like about that person?

Tell me about a sermon that did not interest you. What left you cold?

When the pastor stands up to preach, what do you hope will happen to you as a result of listening to that sermon?

Describe a sermon that seemed to move the congregation as a whole, as a community.

Would you please describe for me a preacher whose physical presence in the pulpit was really good—whose delivery was really engaging?

What are some physical things a preacher does (while delivering the sermon) that help you to want to pay attention? (10, 12-14)

These are analytical questions that would serve as diagnostic tools in measuring the effectiveness of the pastors' preaching.

Nothing is more exciting for preachers than to sense that God himself is speaking through them as they deliver weekly sermons. To sense the anointing of the Holy Spirit on their words and then hear that people received the message as the word of the Lord is one of the greatest delights a pastor can experience. Spirit-led preaching is not just contingent on hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit while speaking, but also during sermon preparation. If prayer and study times are Spirit-filled and Spirit-led, pastors can be confident that their deliveries will be as well (C. Jackson 30). As preachers hear the voice

of the Spirit of God in the secret place of prayer, they will be able to proclaim the message boldly to the public (Matt. 10:27).

Effective communication of preachers hinges on two factors: what pastors say and how they say it. Both are important. Apart from life-related, biblical content preachers have nothing worth communicating; but without skillful delivery, they will not get their content across to the congregation. In order of significance the elements making up a sermon are thought, arrangement, language, voice, and gesture. In priority of impressions, however, the order reverses. Not only do the speakers' voice and gestures first strike the audience's senses, but their inflections and actions transmit their feelings and attitudes do so more accurately than their words. Psychologist Albert Mehrabian calculates that only 7 percent of the impact of a speaker's message comes through words, 38 percent springs from the voice, and 55 percent from facial expressions (Robinson 191-93).

I believe that modern preachers can learn a lot on effective communication from Steve Jobs, Apple's visionary CEO. Jobs has been considered as one of the most captivating communicators in the world today. His secret of effective communication presentation is like a theatrical play that is divided into three acts (Gallo 16):

- Act 1—create the story. Jobs gives practical tools in crafting an exciting story behind the brand. A strong story will give speakers the confidence and ability to win over their audience.
- Act 2—deliver the experience. In this section, preachers can learn practical tips to turn their presentations into visually appealing and *must-have* experiences.
- Act 3—refine and rehearse. In this last segment, Jobs tackles topics such as

body language, verbal delivery, and making *scripted* presentations sound natural and conversational.

Steve Jobs is an effective communicator because he argues first the reason for his presentation, builds up the case for his subject like a drama, and delivers his points in a succinct and captivating manner. Jobs frequently uses images, pictures, charts, and videos integrated into his slideshow presentation to communicate to his audience.

Having a reservoir of knowledge, insight, research, character, and integrity is vital in effective preaching. Doug Pagitt discovered that as he talked with some pastors about the ineffectiveness of preaching, the conversation often came around to the preacher's heart. If the preacher is not passionately engaged with the Lord, then the preaching will be flat. Since this view tells pastors cannot take people any further than they themselves have gone, pastors must make sure they are continually growing in their faith to have a deep well from which to preach (78).

Teaching preachers how to properly deliver a sermon is of utmost importance because the message that they speak will not have its maximum effect on the lives of people if they lack in communication skills. For this reason, Victory church leaders have advocated continuing ministry training for pastors, especially for those who have been graduates of the Schools of Ministry, and those who have been serving in full-time ministry for some time. Included in the continuing education are preaching classes, seminars, conferences, coaching sessions, and pastors' meetings in which books on preaching are discussed.



Dr. Nomer Bernardino, a pastor and homiletician in the Philippines (and my professor in homiletics at Asian Theological Seminary) wrote that the way pastors deliver their sermons affects their effectivity:

The manner of delivery is very important in preaching. It determines whether our message is effectively driven home or its impact is weakened before our audience. Our audience does not see the depth of our prayer and sermon preparations, but the results will be reflected in our delivery. (165)

To be an effective preacher the pastor must work and continually progress in his sermon delivery.

The most consistently effective sermon delivery is by re-experiencing the message as being spoken. By trusting the message completely, the preacher is carried by the sermon and the sermon preaches itself through the minister. By re-experiencing the material, gestures and emotions appropriate to that material are genuine, not manufactured for purpose of persuasion or manipulation (Craddock 218-19). Preachers must absorb the message that they are going to preach. They should attempt to memorize the content and the flow of their sermons so that they can deliver it naturally. David wrote, "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue" (Ps. 39:3, NKJV). The more pastors ponder, meditate, and internalize the message, the more effective the sermon will be. The homiletics professors in Asian Theological Seminary advise students first to practice preaching sermons at home or in the office before preaching in public so that they will know the flow of the message. As pastors practice their preaching, they will be able to know the message by heart.

Actors spend hours of rehearsal just to capture a mannerism or an accent used in the role they have been assigned to portray. Preachers also must ever be rehearsing,

taking up new roles, and doing daring new things before their audiences. Preaching—particularly precept preaching—will become predictable, unless the preacher intentionally takes arms against predictability (C. Miller, *Sermon Maker* 76). Sometimes people become nonchalant or apathetic listeners just because they can anticipate what the pastor is going to say at a certain point of his message. Familiarity can bring contempt and indifference in the attitude of the listeners.

James Braga offers pointers on effective preaching. Preachers must be able to relate the Bible to the present. They must apply the truth effectively to their congregations. They can do it by being diligent students of the Word of God and by having an understanding of the human nature and the basic needs of various age groups in their congregations. Preachers should be able to relate the truths of Scripture to the problems and circumstances of their people by being acquainted with the peoples' conditions and involvements (208-09). By being faithful students of the Word and students of their audiences, pastors can be effective preachers of the Word of God.

The apostle Paul preached in the meeting of the Areopagus, the intellectual center of Athens (Acts 17:18-34). He preached about the *unknown God* whom the people worshiped. Athens was filled with statues dedicated to the unknown God. Six hundred years before Paul came to Athens, a terrible plague came on the city and the people became desperate. The Greeks supposed that they must have offended one of their gods, so they started offering sacrifices on altars to their various false gods. When nothing worked they deduced that a god whom they did not know must somehow be appeased. So Epimenides, the Greek philosopher-poet devised a plan. He released hungry sheep into the countryside and instructed men to follow the sheep to see where they would lie down.

He believed that since hungry sheep would not naturally lie down but continue to graze, if the sheep were to lie down it would be a sign from God that this place was sacred. At each spot where the sheep got tired and laid down the Athenians erected an altar and sacrificed the sheep on it. Afterward, the Greeks believed that the plague stopped, which they attributed to this unknown God accepting the sacrifice (“Acts 17” 3-4). Paul quoted from the Greek philosophers and preached in reference to their religious understanding. He spoke about the God who created the universe, who sent his Son who will one day judge the world in righteousness. The Apostle Paul took the Athenians idolatrous inscription, “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD,” and rightfully applied it to the true and living God (Acts 17:23).

### **Preaching among the Megachurches in Metro Manila**

Filipinos are generally religious in nature whether they are Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, Protestants, or animists. The Philippines have been experiencing church growth since the 1970s. In the first seventy years after Protestant Christianity reached these islands in 1898, only five thousand churches were established. In the last twenty-five years, a further 22,000 have begun. While the average size of a church in Metro Manila is about one hundred members, a number of megachurches have sprung up with congregations numbering in the thousands.

The Hartford Institute for Religion Research defines the term *megachurch* as generally referring to any Protestant congregation with a sustained average weekly attendance of two thousand persons or more in its worship services (“Mega church”). A number of megachurches exist in Metro Manila such as Bread of Life Ministries International (BOL), Cathedral of Praise (COP), Christ’s Commission Fellowship (CCF),

Greenhills Christian Fellowship (GCF), Jesus Is Lord Church (JIL), Word of Hope Christian Family Church, and Victory Christian Fellowship (VCF). These churches have grown numerically because of their vision and mission, small-group discipleship, pastoral leadership, and preaching ministry. Following are some observations concerning the preaching of the megachurch pastors that I have read and heard from the mp3 podcasts on their churches' Web sites.

Cathedral of Praise is a megachurch in Manila founded by Dr. Lester Sumrall in the 1950s. The breakthrough began with one powerful miracle where God changed the course of the city of Manila. A seventeen-year-old girl by the name of Clarita Villanueva was delivered from demon possession through the ministry of Dr. Lester Sumrall. This much-publicized move of God opened doors for the ministry as the mayor of the city of Manila gave Dr. Sumrall an extended permit to hold crusades in the Sunken Garden right in front of the City Hall. In an intensive six-week crusade, Dr. Sumrall, together with Rev. Clifton Erickson and Dr. Oral Roberts, preached the message of salvation to hundreds of thousands who accepted Christ, received healing, and answers to prayers.

From the COP Web site, I learned that after concluding a series on the book of Acts, Pastor David Sumrall preached on hard work as the foundation stone of achievement and success. After listening to his preaching podcast, I would say that he is a passionate preacher and skillful teacher of the Bible. He knows how to connect with his Filipino hearers by asking questions and speaking conversationally.

Christ's Commission Fellowship (CCF) is a thriving church of approximately 25,000 believers. The church began in the early 1980s, when Pastor Peter Tan-Chi began an evangelistic home Bible study in Brookside Subdivision, Cainta. Only three

couples attended that first Bible study but as they began to invite their friends and families, the Bible study grew and became a huge church. Their vision statement is to see a movement of millions of committed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ meeting in small groups, transforming lives, families, communities, and nations. Pastor Tan-Chi's Chinese accent is noticeable, but his sermons are impressive. According to a worshipper church service analyst, the popularity of this church is due in large part to the pastor's sermons—that is why people keep coming back.

Brother Eddie C. Villanueva, the Spiritual Director and Founder of the Jesus Is Lord (JIL) church, had a life-changing encounter with the Lord in 1973 while at the forefront of a leftist movement fighting against the social injustice in the country. As professor of Economics and Finance at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), his alma mater, he seized every opportunity to proclaim the gospel to his students, who, in turn, responded with much fervor. Their lives were so touched that they urged their professor to teach them more about the Bible. Thus, the Jesus is Lord Church was born in 1978. Evolving from a Bible study of fifteen PUP students, the church is considered the largest in the Philippines today and one of the largest in the world. As of JIL's thirty-second anniversary celebration on 29 October 2010 in Manila, the movement now has seven million members in forty-four countries around the world. I would describe Villanueva's preaching as passionate, nationalistic, and scriptural. As a gifted evangelist, he usually gives an invitation for people to get saved after preaching the message.

Greenhills Christian Fellowship is a church located at the very heart of Ortigas Center, Pasig City—one of the fastest growing commercial centers in the Philippines

today. GCF has an overall constituency of more than seven thousand worshippers. GCF was birthed out of a vision sought after by missionaries of the Conservative Baptist Mission, aimed at reaching the emerging, self-reliant Filipinos who have the influence and the leadership to do a significant work in spreading the gospel throughout the Philippines and even to other nations. The church began on 14 February 1978 when sixty-seven people met at the Club Filipino, Greenhills, San Juan for a Valentine's Fellowship Dinner. GCF grew and transferred to Greenhills Sound Production, and then settled at Medecor Building along Ortigas Avenue on 22 October 1978. In June 1990, GCF moved into its own ten-story building at the corner of Garnet and Ruby Roads in Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

Under the leadership of Dr. Luis L. Pantoja, Jr., who just recently went to be with the Lord, GCF continues to pursue its vision to reach influencers to support missions oriented efforts here and abroad. The church established satellite churches in Metro Manila and in the provinces. Since the year 2007, GCF has established several satellite churches in Canada. The mission statement of GCF is, "For the Glory of God, we commit ourselves to evangelize and enlist people into our fellowship, to edify and equip them for spiritual maturity and service, and to exalt God together in worship." (GCF website)

As I listened to the mp3 podcast of the preaching by Pastor Keith Ebrahim on 12 December 2010 at GCF Ortigas, I observed that the message is theologically rich, God-centered, scripturally sound, and didactic in nature. The preacher lays out biblical truths and gives a general application for the congregation. He did a faithful exposition of 1 Timothy 6 as he talked about "Pursuing Godliness and Great Gain."

The El Shaddai Catholic Charismatic movement started in the Philippines in 1982 when Brother Mike Velarde, the spiritual leader, experienced a miraculous healing from a heart ailment. The church has grown phenomenally due to his charismatic and down-to-earth preaching. Velarde uses Bible promises in tackling the physical, material, emotional, financial, and family concerns of the people listening to him. His preaching themes are about health, wealth, success, and prosperity. As of 2005, the El Shaddai movement has a reported membership of eight million, half of which are in the Philippines, while half are abroad. I have met some members in Victory who are formerly Catholic Charismatics but now evangelical Christians. Though not all would agree with Velarde's style and ministry methods, at least the Word of God is being preached in his meetings and even broadcasted on television to millions of viewers (Phil. 1:18).

The Philippines has seen great growth among its churches, most particularly in Metro Manila. However, the task is not yet complete. The challenge of pastors in Metro Manila today is to have messages that will appeal to and reach the urban poor, the nominal Roman Catholics, the cults, the Muslims, and the young people. The Philippines is half urban, half youth, and half poor (to be more exact, 48.5 percent urban, 50.6 percent under twenty, and 50 percent with an income below the poverty line). As of 2010, Metro Manila had a population of 16,300,000, comprising 13 percent of the national population. A recent estimate places the real number of people living in the city at over sixteen million, ranking it as the world's eleventh most populous city.

## Research Design

This project is a qualitative research study employing the methods of interview, questionnaire, and field research observation. I conducted a qualitative research because I needed a complex, detailed understanding of what makes preaching effective. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, and allowing them to tell stories unencumbered by what I expect to find or have read in the literature (Creswell 40).

A thorough interview is a form of self-report that is a relatively simple approach to data collection. Although simple, a consultation can produce a wealth of information. An interview can cover any number of content areas and is a relatively inexpensive and efficient way to collect a wide variety of data that does not require formal testing. The effectiveness of an interview depends on how it is structured. In other words, the interview should be thought out beforehand and standardized so that all participants are asked the same questions in the same order (Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger 117).

Open-ended questionnaires are the significant instruments by which qualitative researchers seek to understand the perceptions, feelings, and knowledge of people. What people say is a major source of qualitative data, whether what they say is obtained verbally through an interview or in written form through document analysis or survey responses (Patton 21).

Many qualitative researchers prefer observation data—information that can be seen directly by the researcher or heard or felt—to other kinds. The eye sees a lot, simultaneously noting who, what, when, where, and why (as newspaper people are supposed to do) and particularly relating them to the story or the assertions forthcoming—that is, to the research question (Stake 90).



## Conclusion

Effective preaching includes a sermon based on sound biblical exegesis delivered in an engaging way so that it brings transformation to the lives of the people listening. Effective preachers are competent speakers, faithful exegetes of the Bible text, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and able to connect with their hearers. Effective sermons are messages delivered by preachers who speak with clarity, confidence, persuasiveness, and the power of the Holy Spirit. The sermon becomes effective when the people receive and understand it to the point that their lives are changed and they become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus said in Matthew 13:23, “But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” When people understand the Word, then they should respond to what they heard. The goal of effective preaching ministry is for people to receive, understand, and obey the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13; Jas. 1:22). Spiritual renewal does not come by listening to a TV preacher, by falling on the altar, or by being emotionally touched in a service. The goal is achieved when people hear the Word and respond to it by confessing their sins and making a resolve to change their lives.

Nehemiah chapter 8 is a model of an effective preaching ministry. An effective preaching ministry transforms the lives of the people. I believe that effective preaching will bring spiritual health and growth in the lives of the people. When peoples’ lives are changed, they will have an impact on their families, campuses, offices, and communities bringing opportunities for outreach and evangelism, which will lead to church growth.

A preacher can glean principles on effective preaching from the Scriptures, from church history, and from modern practices of growing churches. One of the most important principle to bear in mind is that pastors need to depend totally on the Holy Spirit as they prepare, study, and preach the Word of God. At the same time, they have to hone their skills continually in sermon preparation and delivery. They need to have a solid foundation of theology, hermeneutics, and homiletics so that they can faithfully exegete and deliver the message from the Scriptures in a relevant manner.

Ultimately, the anointing, the empowerment, and the manifest presence of God upon the preachers make them effective. If God does nothing, then the preachers can do nothing. Preaching is an act of faith on the part of the preachers as they rely upon the Holy Spirit to anoint them as they speak. Preachers must understand that they cannot create a program that guarantees effective preaching if they do it the right way because they do not control God. The Word of God is God's and not humanity's. As preachers make themselves available to the Lord and entrust themselves to the Holy Spirit in prayer, God works from beginning to end to transform the lives of the people as they hear the message of God's word.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Problem and Purpose**

The pastors of Victory churches in Metro Manila are facing a number of challenges in their sermon preparation and delivery, which impact the effectiveness of preaching weekly to their churches.

The purpose of this research was to identify the specific areas of sermon preparation and delivery in which the pastors of Victory churches in Metro Manila are encountering challenges in order to develop training that includes resources and plans for improving sermon preparation and delivery to enable continual church growth.

After receiving the results of the interviews, questionnaires, and field research observation, I recommended and developed a training program for the pastors that addressed how to overcome their challenges in sermon preparation and delivery. The results of this project were forwarded to the National Leadership Team of Victory Christian Fellowship and the School of Ministry directors so that they could include the specific areas in training the pastors and staff to develop an effective preaching ministry. The recommendation included a list of resources, courses, and plans for ongoing training and development. One natural by-product of the pastors' growth in the effectiveness of their preaching was a remarkable and continual growth of the churches in Metro Manila. By church growth, I refer to the growth not just in the number of people who attend the weekend services, but the number of disciples who are part of a discipleship small group.

## **Research Questions**

Three main research questions were included in the personal interview of the pastors, the questionnaire for lay leaders, and the field-researcher observation of the preaching of the pastors.

### **Research Question #1**

As perceived by the pastor, what are the present challenges that leaders in Metro Manila face in their sermon preparation and delivery that need to be overcome in order to make their preaching effective?

I employed personal interviews to find out the answers to this question. This instrument provided qualitative data on the pastors' ideas of effective preaching and their challenges regarding sermon preparation and delivery.

### **Research Question #2**

According to the perspective of the church lay leaders, what are the features in the pastors' preaching that make it effective?

The lay leaders questionnaire provided qualitative data for this question. The church leaders' opinions, perceptions, and observations of the preaching of their pastors led me to identify the challenges and areas where the pastors could improve their effectivity in preaching.

### **Research Question #3**

What elements were identified to be included in the training for sermon preparation and delivery to make their preaching effective?

The results of the pastoral interview, the lay leaders' questionnaire, and field-research observation were collected, tabulated, compared, and analyzed to bring about the specific areas where the pastors could improve in the effectivity of their preaching.

### **Population and Participants**

The participants of this research study were the pastors (two pastors per church) and key lay leaders (twenty lay leaders per church) of five Victory Churches in Metro Manila; namely Victory Pioneer, Victory Ortigas, Victory Fort, Victory Quezon City, and Victory Nova. The selection of the five churches was based upon the proximity of their location to each other and their significant church growth in terms of the total weekly attendance. The key leaders who answered the questionnaires were twenty small group leaders from each of the five churches. They shared their perceptions, opinions, and observations regarding the preaching of their pastors. Ten pastors and one hundred lay leaders from five Victory churches in Metro Manila participated in this study.

Table 3.1 presents a brief profile of the pastors that I interviewed and the five Victory churches where I conducted a study on the effectiveness of preaching.

**Table 3.1. Profile of the Pastors of Victory Metro Manila**

Pastors	Age	Educational Background and Ministry Training	Number of Years in the Ministry	Victory Church/ Location	Average Weekly Church Attendance
Pastor A1 (Senior Pastor)	40	B.S. Med Tech, CEU, 1993 MCL, VLI 3, 1999	14	Pioneer	4,500
Pastor A2 (Pastor)	43	B.S. Political Science, UC Berkeley, 1990 VLI -3, 2004	8	Pioneer	4,500
Pastor B1 (Lead Pastor)	36	B.S. Comp. Sci. School of Church Planting, 2009	9	Nova	1,100
Pastor B2 (Pastor)	39	B.S. Public Admin. School of Local Church Ministry, 2008	4	Nova	1,100
Pastor C1 (Executive Pastor)	45	BS.M.E, MIT, '87 M.Div., ATS Th.M. (candidate)	18	Ortigas	7,000
Pastor C2 (Lead Pastor)	44	B.S.B.A., UST, '86 MCL, ENLI, '99	16	Ortigas	7,000
Pastor D1 (Lead Pastor)	41	Medicine, UST School of Church Planting, 2011	6	Fort	12,000
Pastor D2 (Lead Pastor)	38	BS Comp Sci. School of Church Planting, 2009	4	Fort	12,000
Pastor E1 (Lead Pastor)	43	AB PublicAdmin, U.P. MCL, VLI, 2003	9	Quezon City	3,000
Pastor E2 (Lead Pastor)	43	BS P.E., U.P. MCL, VLI, 2004	7	Quezon City	3,000
Pastor E3 (Senior Pastor)	43	BS HRA, U.P. MCL, VLI, 2002	10	Quezon City	3,000

The small group leaders of Victory churches are students, single professionals, or marrieds (with a few single parents). The small group meetings are in various places such as restaurants, malls, college/high school campuses, offices, and homes. All Victory small group leaders have undergone the process of discipleship and leadership training.

The Victory congregations in Metro Manila are normally multi-sectoral and multi-generational. Church members come from various economic backgrounds (but mostly from the middle class) and ages. In a typical Sunday service are toddlers, children, big kids, teenagers, singles, married couples, old, and young people.

Victory Fort is the largest congregation among our Victory churches in Metro Manila today. The church is located in Fort Bonifacio Global City. Presently they have three Saturday services and six Sunday services in the 1,200-seat auditorium.

Victory Pioneer has one Friday night youth service and five Sunday services in the worship center inside the Robinsons Pioneer Mall in Mandaluyong City. The mall is located along EDSA, the busiest and most traversed highway in Metro Manila. Last December 2011 they moved into a 1,200-seat facility of the same mall.

Victory Ortigas has one Friday night youth service, two Saturday afternoon services, and seven Sunday services in a six hundred-seat worship facility inside Robinsons Galleria mall in Ortigas. The mall is also located along EDSA and is easily accessible to both private and public transportation. Victory has built most of its churches inside shopping malls because of the traffic of thousands of people. Inviting first-time visitors and friends to the services is relatively easy.

Victory Quezon City has two Friday night youth services in two different locations—one in a rented Toyota Center Auditorium and one at the Victory QC Center. Victory QC has five Sunday services inside the Toyota Center Auditorium. This auditorium is inside the University of the Philippines, the premier state university of the Philippines where we have a flourishing and active campus ministry.

Victory Nova currently has four Sunday services held at Cinema 8 of Robinsons' Novaliches Mall. This church is where I pastored from 2001 (the year it was planted) until 2005.

I conducted the pilot test of the lay leaders questionnaire in two services on January 30, 2011 in Victory Metro East (where I presently serve as a lead pastor). Victory Metro East is an answer to the prayers of people who lived in the eastern part of Metro Manila. For many years, people had been praying for Victory to start a church there. The church was birthed on 8 March 2009 in a cinema that can seat 320 people. Then on 19 September 2010, the church moved to its own worship facility on the fourth level of Robinsons Metro East Mall that can seat about eight hundred people. As of 20 March 2011, six weekend services are held (one Friday night youth service and five Sunday services), reaching out to the people who come from the cities of Marikina, Cainta, Pasig, Antipolo, and Taytay. The total weekly attendance of all services is about 4,600 people.

I would say that Spirit-anointed preaching, discipleship, leadership training, intercessory prayer, and passionate worship are the factors that have contributed to the growth of churches in Metro Manila.



**Figure 3.1. Seven days of prayer and fasting, January 2011, Victory Metro East.**



Figure 3.2 provides a map of Metro Manila and the location of the five Victory churches where I conducted this study.



Figure 3.2. Map of Metro Manila.

## **Design of the Study**

This project employed a qualitative multi-case design of study. It sought to know the experiences and practices of pastors in their sermon preparation and delivery. Moreover, the study explored the opinions of the key leaders of five churches concerning the effectiveness of the pastors' preaching. To gather the information, this research entailed the methods of questionnaire, interviews, and field-researcher observation.

This qualitative case study is an approach to research the effectiveness of preaching within the context of Metro Manila pastors using three sources of data. This research strategy ensures that the issue has been explored through a variety of avenues, which allows for several facets of the phenomenon to be understood. Qualitative research seeks to understand the experiences, beliefs, opinions, and views of the participants and to evaluate their responses.

Data collection took four months. From September to December of 2011, I went to five Victory churches and conducted all the three instruments for each church. I first visited Victory Pioneer (September), next is Victory Nova (October), followed by Victory Ortigas (November), and the last two churches—Victory Fort and Victory QC (December). The field research observation was done as I went to the weekend worship services of the five churches and took videos of the preaching of the pastors. Site visits of the worship services of the five churches gave the researcher a first-hand experience of the pastors' preaching.

### **Instrumentation**

In order to determine what makes the preaching of urban pastors effective, I used three methodologies—the pastoral interview, the lay leader's questionnaire, and onsite

field research. These three methods were meant to assess the effectivity of preaching from three different perspectives. I wanted to hear the views of the pastors and the church lay leaders and personally see the pastors preach.

**Pastoral interview.** I questioned the pastors regarding the present challenges that they encounter in sermon preparation and sermon delivery. The elements of effective preaching (solid Bible exegesis, engaging presentation, contextualization, and transforming power) were taken into consideration in these questions to the pastors. The questions used for the pastoral interview can be found in Appendix A.

**Lay leaders' questionnaire.** The lay leaders questionnaire was designed to answer this research question: According to the perspective of the church lay leaders, what are the challenges in the pastor's preaching to this congregation?

The questions that I used to explore listener perceptions on the different aspects of preaching that helped gauge the effectivity of the sermon are in Appendix B.

**Field-researcher observation.** For this research method, I went to the five Victory churches and video recorded the preaching of the pastors in the Sunday worship services. In the field-researcher observation, following are the criteria for evaluating the sermon of the pastor. These are the three areas that I used to rate and evaluate the effectivity of the sermons:

- Sermon exegesis (hermeneutics, sermon structure, sermon content);
- Sermon delivery (communication, clarity, gestures, voice, pacing, eye contact, grammar, pronunciation); and,
- Sermon impact (listenability, contextualization, audience rapport, response of the congregation).

Moreover, I secured the present profile of each church in terms of the following:

- The total weekly attendance,
- The number of discipleship groups,
- The number of discipleship group leaders,
- The percentage of people who are part of a discipleship group,
- The number of people who went to Victory Weekend retreat, and
- The number of people serving in the different church ministries.

I hoped that this information would tell how much of the preaching affects the lives of the people in terms of being a disciple of Christ and how they express their commitment to the Lord.

### **Pilot Test**

On 30 January 2011, I conducted a pilot test in Victory Metro East, the local church in which I am presently serving as a lead pastor. The Lay Leaders' questionnaire was given to twenty selected small group leaders of our church who listened to the sermons preached in two Sunday services. For the pastoral interview, I interviewed our pastors in Victory Alabang and Victory Makati. I used the questions as a pilot test in this church so that I might be able to modify or adjust some of the questions in the pastoral interview and the lay leaders' questionnaire.

### **Variables**

This project sought to understand what makes urban pastors in the Philippines effective preachers. The measured variables of qualitative design study were the perspective and beliefs of the pastors concerning effective preaching and the perceptions, observations, and opinions of church leaders concerning the pastors' preaching.

The control variables were the gender, status, and the lay leaders' number of years in the church. The intervening variables were the willingness, honesty, and fairness of the lay leaders in assessing the preaching of their pastors.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The first week of September 2011, I shared the research questions and the instruments with two of my former professors in Asian Theological Seminary in Quezon City, Philippines for their review, comments, and suggestions. I shared with them the three instruments that I used to measure what I needed for my research questions and asked for their feedback. Their input and suggestions helped me in tweaking some of the questions in the pastoral interview and lay leaders questionnaire.

### **Data Collection**

Here is the procedure for the data collection of this project. I took the following steps to find out the answers to my research questions.

I set an appointment to interview the pastors of the five Victory churches. I went to the offices of the five Victory churches and interviewed the pastors concerning their preaching. Before I met with the pastor, I sent an e-mail of the questions to him so that he would have an idea of the questions that I would ask and take time to prepare for the interview. I used the voice recorder of my Nokia X6 cell phone, which can record up to one hour of conversation. The first pastoral interview lasted for about thirty minutes. Afterwards, I transcribed the interview and printed copies for me and the pastors whom I had interviewed.

Regarding the lay leaders questionnaire, I asked the secretary/administrative staff of the five churches to recommend and gather twenty small group leaders from their

church to whom I gave the questionnaire for the sermon evaluation of their pastors.

About ten minutes before the service, I met with the twenty lay leaders, explained the research, and distributed the questionnaire. The lay leaders answered the questionnaire after they heard the sermon of their pastor in a Sunday service. After the questionnaires were completed, I collected and recorded the answers for evaluation and assessment.

I conducted the field research observation for four months (September to December 2012). I visited the Sunday services of the five Victory congregations—namely Victory Pioneer, Victory Nova, Victory Ortigas, Victory Fort, and Victory Quezon City. I first visited Victory Pioneer on 11 September 2011. I observed and evaluated the preaching of a pastor in five churches. I videotaped their preaching so that I could review their preaching afterwards. As I listened and watched the video of the sermon, I observed the strengths and weaknesses of the pastor in his preaching, thereby identifying specific areas for improvement. The videos of the preaching were used for the presentation of this project so that we could know how the pastors improved in their preaching within the six months of study. The field research observation gave me a firsthand experience of the preaching of the pastors.

### **Data Analysis**

The purpose of this project was to identify the present needs and challenges of urban pastors in the Philippines in order to develop a curriculum for training the pastors of Victory on how to be more effective in their preaching. The data gathered from the pastoral interviews, lay leaders' questionnaire, and field research observation were tabulated, compared, analyzed, and evaluated.

The pastoral interviews were analyzed by looking at common answers of how the pastors described the effectiveness of their preaching. As I gathered a text database, I divided it into groups of sentences or text segments and determined the meaning of each group of sentences. I analyzed the text segments as the pastors described the following:

- Their challenges in the preparation for a weekly sermon,
- The challenges that they encounter in sermon delivery,
- The practices and strategies utilized to make the sermon engaging and effective, and
- The most pressing areas in preaching for which they need further training and equipping in order to develop the effectivity of their sermons.

As for the lay leaders questionnaire, I sought to identify common patterns and levels of sermon effectivity with regards to the attitudes, opinions, and observations of the small group leaders concerning the preaching of the pastors such as

- Clarity of the pastors in communicating the message,
- Connectedness, relevance, and appeal of the sermon, and
- Compelling truth or principle leading to life transformation (that I understand the sermon and it causes me to do something with my life).

Data analysis of the field observation consists of listing the specific strengths and weaknesses of the ten pastors' preaching with regards to their sermon exegesis, sermon delivery, and sermon impact. These observations were shared with the pastor after he had preached his message for confirmation, validation, feedback, and encouragement. I looked for common patterns and areas where the pastors needed further improvement with regards to the way they communicated their message.

### **Ethical Procedures**

I informed the pastors of the purpose of this project so that they would not feel insecure, apprehensive, or defensive when the lay leaders of the church and I critiqued or evaluated their sermons. The names of the lay leaders were not written in the questionnaire so that their identities would not be disclosed to the pastor. This confidentiality enabled them to answer the questionnaire without fear, anxiety, or apprehension.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Problem**

The pastors of Victory churches in Metro Manila, Philippines, are facing a number of challenges in their sermon preparation and delivery that impact the effectiveness of their weekly preaching to their churches. Some of the major challenges that the urban pastors are facing are sermon preparation and delivery skills, exegesis of difficult Bible passages, and contextualization of the message to the multi-sectoral groups of people in their congregations.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to identify the specific areas in sermon preparation and delivery in which the pastors of Victory churches in Metro Manila are encountering challenges in order to develop training that includes resources and plans for improving sermon preparation and delivery that will lead to church growth.

#### **Participants**

This project involved eleven pastors from Metro Manila congregations. I have interviewed ten of these pastors concerning their challenges, needs, beliefs, and practices of preaching. I observed and took videos of the actual preaching of five pastors from the five Victory churches. I chose these pastors because they regularly preach in their respective congregations.

Out of fifteen Victory churches in Metro Manila, I chose these five churches because they are some of the largest and fastest growing churches at the present.

This project involved one hundred small group leaders from five churches (selected twenty leaders per church) of Victory Christian Fellowship in Metro Manila, Philippines. They participated by answering a questionnaire that critiques and evaluates the preaching of the pastors in the churches that I surveyed. Table 4.1 describes the location of the church and the demographics of the church leaders. A church staff randomly chose the leaders and the pastor that they evaluated did not know their identities.

**Table 4.1. Demographics of the Lay Leaders**

Church and Date of Survey	Gender		Status				Age				Number of Years as a Church Member		
	M	F	S	M	WAS	≥20	21-39	40-59	60+	1-3	4-6	6+	
Pioneer (9-11-11)	13	7	12	7	1	4	14	2	0	9	7	4	
Nova (10-16-11)	11	9	12	8	0	5	10	4	1	7	8	5	
Ortigas (10-20-11)	12	8	14	6	0	1	15	4	0	5	9	6	
Fort (12-3-11)	15	5	9	10	1	2	10	4	4	10	2	8	
Q.C. (12-18-11)	11	9	12	7	1	2	11	7	0	2	4	14	

Status: S (single), M (married), WAS (widowed, annulled, separated)

### Church Profiles

The following are current profiles of the five Victory churches surveyed.

#### 1. Victory Pioneer

Date: 23 November 2011

- The total weekly attendance: 4,437 (as of 18 December 2011)
- The number of discipleship groups: 340
- The number of Victory group leaders: 334

- The total number of people who are part of a Victory group: 2,000 plus and counting since the church is in the process of updating their records. About 34 percent of worship service attendees are in Victory Groups.
- The number of people who have been to Victory Weekend: 421
- The number of volunteers serving in the different church ministries: 981

## 2. Victory Nova

Date: 2 November 2011

- The total weekly attendance: October 2011: 1,863
- The number of discipleship groups: 172
- The number of Victory group leaders: 141
- The percentage of people who are part of a discipleship group (compared to Sunday attendance): 1,032
- The number of people who have been to Victory Weekend for 2011: 269
- The number of volunteers serving in the different church ministries: 405

## 3. Victory Ortigas

Date: 17 December 2011

- The total weekly attendance: 7,000 (average)
- The number of discipleship groups: 375
- The number of Victory group leaders: 520
- The number of people who are part of a discipleship group: 1,717
- The number of people who have been to Victory Weekend in 2011: 611

- The number of volunteers serving in the different church ministries: 680

#### 4. Victory Fort

Date: 12 January 2012

- Average total weekly attendance: 11,400 (average)
- The number of discipleship groups: 734
- The number of Victory group leaders: 688
- The number of people who have been to Victory Weekend: 1,045
- The number of volunteers serving in the different church ministries: 1,200

#### 5. Victory Quezon City

Date: 11 January 2012

- Average total weekly attendance (Adults:1,960, Kids 413) : 2,373
- Number of discipleship groups: 461
- Number of Victory group leaders: 417
- Total number of people who are part of a Victory group : minimum of 4 people per group
- Number of people who have been to Victory Weekend (2011): 270
- Number of volunteers serving in the different church ministries: Adult 372, Youth 156: Total: 528

Effective and Spirit-empowered preaching will bring transformation in the lives of people. Preaching of the Word should be complemented with a system or process of

discipleship so that the people will grow in their faith and in their relationship with God. Since Victory churches have prioritized discipleship and leadership training, it has seen steady growth in all of its churches in the Philippines. Appendix C shows the updated statistics of Victory churches in Metro Manila.

### **Research Question #1**

According to the pastors in Metro Manila, they face a number of challenges in their sermon preparation and delivery that need to be overcome in order to effectively deliver their sermons. Based on the interview of the ten pastors, here are their present challenges.

For Pastor A1, coming up with a contextualized message that will minister to the situation and identify with the experiences of the people is a great challenge for preachers.

Pastor A1:

As I prepare and study for the sermon, I get a lot of information and I need to filter only the necessary and right info that the audience would need to hear.

One of my present challenges is how to contextualize the message and make it simple to my target audience. I need to understand who are the people I am talking to so that I can relate a biblical truth to present day reality of the hearers.

The pastor who truly cares for his congregation should know the spiritual pulse of his flock so that he can preach the word with integrity and skill (Prov. 27:23; Psalm 78:71-72).

For Pastor A2, the sermon should stay consistent with the outcome-based objective so that it will not veer away from its intended goal for the people.

Pastor A2:

My challenge is how to make the sermon clear and focused with the outcome objective in mind. Since the text is so rich usually there are a lot of things I can talk about within 30 minutes. I am trying to make it relatable for our church composed of fairly young people and a lot of newly saved people.

For me in terms of delivery, I need to make sure that I am keeping their attention and because of that, sometimes I try to get their reaction or feedback unnecessarily.

Getting the feedback or response from the people during the course of preaching is one way for pastors to keep the attention of the hearers.

Having sufficient time to study for the sermon is a crucial ingredient in sermon preparation.

Pastor B1:

My challenge is the time to prepare and time to study because of the different church activities that I oversee. I am focused person, so it is hard for me to multi-task. If there is a prayer meeting, I focus on the prayer meeting. I do one task at a time.

Sometimes there is a language barrier because there are some people who want Tagalog (Filipino) more than English. When I preach in pure English, sometimes I have errors in my grammar, which makes me discouraged.

When I am not well prepared for the sermon, I look to the notes and lose connection with my audience. My goal is to learn how to lessen looking at the notes while preaching.

For preachers who would like to develop their skill of preaching without looking at their manuscript, I recommend the book “Preaching Without Notes” by Joseph M. Webb. Preaching without notes maximizes the connectedness between the preacher and those who hear the sermon. It creates and sustains the strongest bond between the speaker and his audience.

Meeting the demands of the pastoral ministry and at the same time finding quality time for sermon preparation is a hurdle to most of the urban pastors.

Pastor B2:

Physically my challenge in the preaching ministry is when we have our various meetings and events during the week because I stretch my study hours until late evening, which affects my physical condition. I need to attend to administration tasks, do pastoral services such as dedication, wedding, funeral, counseling, and hospital visitation.

There are lots of families coming to worship together in Victory Nova. Majority of the congregation comes from the class B & C (income bracket). In order to really make a connection with them, I use TagLish (a fusion of Tagalog and English) as a medium in preaching. It is a challenge whenever there are foreigners around listening because I also think of how to connect with the foreigners. We don't announce which service is English or TagLish/Filipino. Sometimes I feel I do not connect with my audience when I do that.

Pastor C1:

The biggest challenge I have in preaching is the other pastoral load like baby dedication, because it requires a lot of time also which affects the preparation for the Sunday sermon. Another challenge I have is my limitation in the mastery of the English and Filipino languages. I also recognize the need to sharpen my communication skills.

Pastor C2:

I am currently preaching at our Filipino service. It is quite a challenge to preach in the native language but I am coping up.

Our congregation varies in age, status, in educational background, and spiritual maturity. I need to deliver a message that would cater to everyone listening to me.

Urban pastors who are fluent or used to speaking in Taglish or Filipino need to be sensitive whenever there are foreigners among the audience so they need to speak in English. The ushers can help inform the pastor whenever there are foreigners who are attending the service.

For Pastor D1 knowing the original bible background is a paramount procedure in scriptural exegesis.

Pastor D1:

As I study and prepare for the sermon, my challenge is getting the context on the time when the Bible was written and how it relates to the original recipients given the consideration about their culture, ethnicity, and social status. Although there are good books about that and the Internet in itself is a wide resource, I need to verify the information that I am getting to make it accurate.

My present challenge as I deliver my message is getting abreast to what's in in communication. I have recently used the KeyNote program in my preaching when I saw Pastor D3 use it and saw its effectivity. I feel that I need to learn more about these ideas and innovations so that I can employ them during preaching.”

Being knowledgeable and skillful in using technology such as using PowerPoint, KeyNote, iPad, or a PC tablet can enhance the presentation of the message and make the sermon illustrations clearer.

For pastor D2, the initial challenge of crafting a sermon is the beginning, the introduction, the tension, the conflict, or the problem that requires a resolution in the message.

Pastor D2:

One specific challenge I face as I study and prepare for the sermon is how to build up a tension or the necessity of the sermon. It is because if the tension or problem is already given, then the Word of God is the solution to their problem. The challenge for me every week is to find that bright spot, wherein the hearers will agree with me, that they have a problem in this particular area that needs to be resolved with the Word of God, so “you better listen to what I’m about say in the next 40 minutes.”

One present challenge I encounter as I deliver my message is the ever shortening *attention span* of the congregation. Because they are so used to YouTube, they can easily *minimize* any screen that is not of their interest. And it is the same thing with preaching, the moment you go up there, they will give you a few minutes of their precious time and they will decide whether they will *minimize* your screen, or they will turn it to *full screen*. Young people today will check you out at the start if you are a good and engaging preacher so that they will listen. I need to have an engaging style of communicating to young people.



An effective sermon has an element of tension in the beginning that has been resolved at the end. We have to tell people that the answers to the problems that they are facing in their lives today are found in the Scriptures. As the preacher lays out the resolution to the tension, he will create and sustain interest among those who listen.

For Pastor E1, part of the challenge in sermon preparation is his relationship with his family and what happens at home:

My other responsibilities at work and home usually affects the time for sermon preparation. Sometimes another difficulty I encounter is how to understand the Scriptures especially the controversial passages that may have different and conflicting interpretation.

It is a challenge for me to try to limit the preaching into a 30-minute sermon given the voluminous insights I personally want to share at times.

Since the services I preach at are different from each other—one English service and one Tagalog, so sometimes I have to prepare two manuscripts. The crowds of the two services are different and so some illustrations or points may not be as relevant to both audiences.

The urban preacher needs to gauge the kind of crowd he is speaking to so he can speak the language of the people and be able to connect with them.

For Pastor E2, the flow or structure of a sermon is a hurdle that needs to be overcome to be able to write the whole message:

One specific challenge I face during my sermon preparation are having lots of input and detail but not having a basic framework on which I can connect a sermon flow.

At times, it can be a challenge to preach if I still don't have a firm grasp on the material that I am preaching on. Preaching can also be a challenge when I am speaking to a congregation that a) hardly knows me b) is set in a *slow* time schedule like 8 am or 1 pm or c) in an outreach setting that is not open to receiving the gospel message.

Knowing the flow of the sermon and having a good grasp of it will enable a preacher to preach without notes, which will result to better sermon delivery and rapport with the hearers.

### **Research Question #2**

According to the perspective of the church lay leaders, a number of features and factors in the preaching of the pastors of Victory churches make their sermons effective.

Based on the questionnaire that the one hundred leaders answered, Table 4.2 indicates the average rating (on a scale of 1-10) of the effectivity of the pastors' preaching in terms of exegesis (exposition and interpretation), relevance, or practical application to the present life situation of the hearers, and sermon delivery.

The overall rating of the pastors' sermon (on a scale of 1-10) was based on the average of the ratings in terms of the sermon's exegesis and exposition, relevance and application, and sermon delivery. According to the lay leaders' evaluation of the pastors' preaching, Pastor A1 of Victory Pioneer and Pastor C1 of Victory Ortigas garnered the highest overall rating in the effectivity of their sermons, getting 9.37 and 9.05 respectively. I concur with this assessment having personally observed how they preached in the Sunday worship services. Both of these pastors preached without notes, communicated clearly to their audience, and spoke the Word of God with fervency and conviction (see Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2. Rating of the Effectiveness of Pastors' Sermons According to Church Lay Leaders**

<b>Pastor</b>	<b>Church (Location)</b>	<b>Exegesis and Exposition</b>	<b>Relevance and Application</b>	<b>Sermon Delivery</b>	<b>Overall Rating</b>
A1	Pioneer	9.25	9.15	9.70	9.37
B1	Nova	8.75	9.25	8.58	8.86
C1	Ortigas	8.90	9.15	9.10	9.05
D2	Fort	8.21	8.10	8.17	8.16
E3	Quezon City	8.50	9.15	8.50	8.72

Table 4.3 is the tabulation of the perception and feedback of the leaders concerning whether the pastors preached an effective, engaging, powerful, and life-changing sermon. The findings are based on the questionnaire that the one hundred leaders answered. Included are specific steps that the pastors from the five churches undertook in their preaching and the percentage of the effectivity based on feedback of the people.

Based on the findings, the top concerns that people consider when hearing a sermon in order to deem it effective are sharing appropriate illustrations and the clarity of the points of a sermon. The leaders deem a sermon is effective if the preacher clearly stated the points of the sermon.

**Table 4.3. Pastors' Actions in Preaching That Were Effective according to Church Lay Leaders**

<b>What the Pastors Did in Their Preaching</b>	<b>% of Feedback</b>
Stated the purpose and intention of the sermon/ introduction	44
Clearly stated and explained the points of the sermon	70
Shared an appropriate illustration, quotation, analogy, or story	81
Stated the main point or theme of the message	66

Spoke a powerful and challenging conclusion	47
Used an object lesson or props	22
Used a video clip	11
Used a PowerPoint/KeyNote presentation	25
Use of humor	53

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### **The Impact of the Sermon on the People**

The overall results of the lay leaders' questionnaire in terms of the effect or impact of the sermon on the lives of those who heard the message are as follows:

- Sixty-four percent say the message will lead to a change of an attitude or way of thinking.
- Fifty-five percent say the message encouraged me and built up my faith in God and his word.
- Forty-nine percent say the message brought instruction and words of wisdom for my life.
- Thirty-eight percent say the message led me to commit my life to God in a greater way.
- Thirty percent say the message inspired me to do something for God and other people.
- Twenty-eight percent say the message brought conviction of sin that leads to repentance.

These statements reflect the transforming power of preaching of the word of God in the lives of the people.

### **Lay Leaders' Suggestions to the Pastors on their Preaching**

Following are comments and suggestions of some of the lay leaders who answered the questionnaire regarding how their pastors can further improve the content and delivery of their sermons.

For Pastor A1:

Give more practical examples and application for teenagers, not just single or married people.

Have a brief and more powerful conclusion that recaps the points and connect it to the last verse or main point.

Use more Filipino words.

For Pastor B1:

End with a powerful and challenging conclusion.

Interact more with the audience so people won't be idle and fall asleep.

Continue the humor and passion.

For Pastor C1:

Give more time to, and be particular about, the main point of the sermon.

Have a practical and lighter approach towards preaching so that the people will understand it in regard to their present situations.

For Pastor D2:

The pastor needs to elaborate more on his points so that they will be clear. He could present his outline in PowerPoint for clarity. He needs to have a more convincing conclusion, and share more values to remember.

For Pastor E3:

He needs to share more of the *now what?* How can we apply the lesson in our lives?

He needs to improve on the use of humor.

Give more biblical exposition, more clarity, and emphasize the points of the sermon.

Share more applicable illustrations in the message.

The introduction and the flow from one point to the next are effective; however, the pastor needs to give a more powerful conclusion so that the impact will linger in the people’s minds.

Sermon delivery is a bit dragging so he needs to pick up the pace.

I believe these comments of the lay leaders are honest and are meant to help the pastors improve their preaching ministry.

**Research Question #3**

Based on the personal interview with the ten pastors, the following topics are those in which pastors said they need further training in order to make their preaching effective.

**Table 4.4. Areas of Sermon Preparation in Which Pastors Need Further Training**

Pastor/ Topic	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2	D1	D2	E1	E2
Exegesis		x	x			x			x	x
Bible Background		x	x			x	x	x	x	x
Sermon Construction		x	x	x						
Sermon Delivery	x	x	x	x	x				x	
Using Technology		x	x			x	x			x
Spiritual Life		x	x	x					x	
Sermon Illustrations	x	x	x	x			x	x		

Hermeneutics		x	x			x	x	x		x
Sermon Application	x	x	x	x		x				
Sermon Contextualization		x	x	x		x		x		
Life-Changing Sermons		x	x	x	x	x		x		x
Others						x		x	x	

Other topics the pastors indicated as a need for further training are below:

For an urban church that is composed of people from different economic, social, religious, and educational backgrounds, the urban pastor has to know how to preach relevant and contextualized sermons.

Pastor C1:

I would like to learn the principles on preaching messages that will be relevant to the people.

One way to preach relevant sermons is to include current events and news that would be related to the message.

Pastor D2:

I need to learn how to find the right illustration, story, or analogy for the sermon. Sometimes we use Western illustrations that are not applicable or relevant to the Filipino audience.

I would like to learn how to use an object lesson for the people to remind them of the main truth of the sermon. It adds to the memory of the people.

For example: Taste and see that the Lord is good—use a donut as an object lesson.

I think I need to develop how to create the tension of the sermon (the necessity of the sermon) at the beginning. A salesman or a life insurance agent who has a paper document can convince a prospective buyer when he or she makes a pitch on the importance of the product.

Pastor E1:

“I would like to have a greater understanding of Christ-centered preaching.”

Effective and biblical preaching is Christocentric preaching. It becomes Christ-centered not just by mentioning the name of Jesus or some event in His life but by demonstrating that the reality of the human predicament requires a divine solution made possible through what our Lord Jesus Christ has done.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

In employing three research instruments—the pastoral interview, the lay leaders' questionnaire, and the field-research observation in this project, the major findings on developing an effective preaching ministry for urban pastors in the Philippines have been established.

Based on the pastoral interview of the ten pastors from the five Victory churches, I made a text analysis of the present challenges that they need to overcome in order to preach an effective and engaging sermon. The following is a summary of the common areas of their present challenges:

1. Time to prepare and study for the sermon;
2. Contextualization of the sermon to the hearers;
3. Connection with the audience/maintenance of their attention;
4. Development of communication skills; and,
5. a clear and organized sermon flow or structure.

According to the church lay leaders, the top two tasks that pastors should employ to make sermons effective are

1. Appropriate illustrations, and
2. Clarity of the points of a sermon.



Moreover, according to the feedback of the lay leaders, the pastors should further improve in the following areas of their preaching:

1. A brief, powerful, and challenging conclusion;
2. Interaction with the audience;
3. Use of humor; and,
4. Biblical exposition of the sermon text.

I agree with these observations of the lay leaders as I have personally witnessed the preaching of the pastors in the five Victory churches.

The top five topics in which the pastors said they need further training in order to develop the effectivity of their sermons are

1. Knowledge of the background of Bible texts;
2. Sermon delivery/communication;
3. The right illustration, story, analogy for the sermon;
4. The right interpretation (hermeneutics); and,
5. Knowledge of how to preach life-changing messages.

Effective preaching includes a sermon based on sound biblical exegesis delivered in an engaging way so that it brings transformation to the lives of the people. From this definition we can identify three vital ingredients of effective preaching—exegesis, engaging presentation, and life transformation.

To sum up the findings of the three instruments employed in this project, the results can be categorized or integrated into three topics or elements—biblical exegesis, engaging presentation, and life transformation.

Concerning biblical exegesis, preachers need to be trained further on how to do exposition of the biblical text, how to research the background of Bible texts, how to manage their time to study for the sermon, how to structure a sermon in a way that the points will be clear, and the principles of bible interpretation (hermeneutics).

With regards to the element of engaging presentation, pastors need further training on improving their communication skills. They need to learn the seemly use of humor in the sermon and how to share appropriate illustrations. The contextualization of the biblical message to the Filipino urban population is a paramount skill for effective preachers in the Philippines.

On the element of life transformation, the Metro Manila pastors need to develop their knowledge and skills on how to preach life-changing messages. They need to learn more on how end their sermons with a brief, powerful, and challenging conclusion that is centered on Christ. It is noteworthy that for the first two elements mentioned above the preacher has a direct control, in the element of life transformation it is the Sovereign God who moves in the lives of the people listening to the sermon. Therefore the pastors would have to discover certain things they can do in their preaching that would open the door for the Holy Spirit to touch the hearts and minds of the hearers.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### Major Findings

The pastors of Victory churches are facing a number of challenges in sermon preparation and delivery, which affects their weekly preaching. This research sought to identify the specific areas of sermon preparation and delivery in which the pastors are encountering challenges. The goal was then to develop training that includes resources and plans for improving sermon preparation and delivery to enable continual church growth. The findings of this project are based on the results of pastoral interviews, the lay leaders' questionnaire, and the field-researcher observation.

The summary of the major findings can be reduced into three major areas—exegesis, engaging presentation, and life transformation. These are three integral components of effective preaching.

#### **Biblical Exegesis**

The pastors need to continually develop their skills on biblical exegesis.

**Personal observation.** Based on the pastoral interview, foremost among the concerns and challenges among the urban pastors is the time to prepare and study for their weekly sermon. The average time per week that the ten pastors devote to study for their sermon is eleven hours and eighteen minutes. The time to study is very vital in completing the exegesis of the sermon text.

Concerning exegesis, the pastors acknowledged their need to be trained further in knowing the background of Bible texts and the principles of Bible interpretation or hermeneutics.

According to the lay leaders, these particular issues are reflected in the way the pastors conduct their exposition of the sermon text. The leaders commonly look for clarity of the pastor's sermon points.

I believe that some Victory pastors need to put forth more effort in giving the background and the context of the sermon text. A number of pastors need to develop the proper skills of exegesis. I recall one pastor who asked me (as I was seated on the front row) to verify the original Hebrew meaning of a key word in the middle of his preaching.

**Literature review.** An accurate exegesis of the biblical text is necessary for the faithful interpretation of the Scriptures. MacArthur maintains that thorough exegesis and clear organization are crucial to an effective message. White stresses that a biblical sermon should engage a unit of Scripture so that listeners encounter its reality and enter into its life as a central and pervasive concern of the sermon.

**Biblical.** A solid Bible exegesis leads to a correct interpretation that will lead to a proper application of the message of the Bible. Nehemiah 8:7-8 records that the thirteen Levites read from the Book of the Law of God and clearly explained the meaning of what was being read in order to help the people understand each passage.

**Informs practice.** The task and process of conducting proper exegesis will enable, motivate, and inspire the pastors to be disciplined and analytical in their study, to be prepared in their sermons, and be confident in what they will preach because the words they will speak are a fruit of faithful exegesis. Exegesis will prevent eisegesis, in which preachers try to force, or misuse, Bible passages just to support their points or ideas in their sermons.

## **Engaging Presentation**

The pastors need to be trained further on how to make an engaging presentations of their sermons.

**Personal observation.** Generally, I observed that Victory pastors are engaging and relevant in the way they communicate the Word of God to their congregations. The pastors are aware of the need to establish connection with the audience. One lay leader of a particular church commented that their pastor needs to improve on his interaction with the audience because his delivery is a bit dragging and needs to keep up the pace.

Most Victory pastors have a good sense of humor while some preachers still need to improve on using humor in order to connect with their congregation. The use of humor in preaching is appreciated among Filipinos and makes them interested in the sermon because Filipinos are some of the most cheerful people in the world.

The pastors recognized their need for training on improving their communication skills, sermon delivery, and finding the right illustrations for their sermons. Another primary concern of pastors is how to contextualize the sermon to their hearers who are very varied in economic standing (from affluent families to poor families) and age (from teenagers to grandparents). As an example, the congregation of Victory Pioneer consists of married couples (20 percent), singles (35 percent), youth/students (30 percent), and children (15 percent).

**Literature review.** Killinger stresses that boring and pedestrian preaching are inexcusable when we are talking about Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. Warren notes that Jesus was an effective preacher because he scratched where people itched. He

was always relevant and always on target concerning the people's needs, hurts, and interests.

**Biblical.** When Moses recited before the assembly of Israel, the words of his song that narrated what God had done for his people, he used familiar things to illustrate God's care for them such as eagles, apples, fruit, honey, oil, curds, milk, lambs, goats, wheat, and grapes (Deut. 32:9-14).

The Lord Jesus himself was an engaging preacher because he used parables, stories, current events, and illustrations that people are familiar with in order to communicate effectively the message of the kingdom of God (Matt. 13; Mark 4). The apostle Paul connected with the Athenians when he preached the gospel to them (Acts 17:16-34).

**Informs practice.** Some specific things that Victory pastors do to make their sermons engaging, effective, relevant, and powerful will set an example for urban pastors how to contextualize their sermons so that people will find them appealing, appropriate, and understandable to their situations:

Pastors A2, C1, and C2 said that they use personal stories and personal experiences relevant to the passage that make it relatable to their congregations. Pastor B2 uses humor, personal testimonies, illustrations, varying voice dynamics, and appropriate gestures in relation to the sermon. Pastor E2 paints a picture of the modern-day equivalent of ancient stories being told in the Word so that he can contextualize his sermon.

According to Pastor D1, “I constantly ask what’s *in* for each age group and social strata that helps me connect with them. Basically it’s researching what *language* these people are speaking” (original emphasis). For Pastors B1 and E1, asking questions, using object lessons, visual aids, showing videos, and photos to illustrate or amplify the points of the sermon will make it engaging to the people.

There are several ways for preacher to attract and sustain the attention of the congregation.

Pastor D2 said:

First I make it a point that I tell something or show pictures about something interesting, whether it’s the latest news or sometimes a personal matter like a date with my wife or our new kittens. I would say these words to catch their attention first, and to let them know that I’m also a normal human being, that I also watch TV and read the newspapers.

The generation which urban pastors preach to today can be described as a *sights and sounds* audience, which is why preachers should strive to present their sermons in a way that will hold the attention of their hearers so that they will not miss the important truths the pastors are saying.

### **Life Transformation**

The pastors need to be trained how to preach sermons that Christ can use to bring transformation into the lives of the people.

**Personal observation.** According to the lay leaders, the top three effects of preaching are a change in attitude or way of thinking (64 percent), encouragement and faith was built up (55 percent), and instruction and words of wisdom for my life (49 percent). From these figures I think people are longing for a truth encounter that will bring lasting change in their lives. The people are yearning for sermons that will uplift

and strengthen their faith in God. They need instruction that will direct them how to live to please God.

As an on-site field researcher, I remember how one of the pastors that I video recorded preached with a sound exegesis of the text in an engaging, relevant, and passionate way. However, I believe that the impact of the sermon could be further maximized if he would give time for people to make a decision based on the message that they have heard. They could have been asked to come forward if they needed prayers and counseling regarding the issues that were discussed in the message. Some newcomers or first-time visitors could be challenged to commit their lives to Christ by giving a brief altar call at the end of the sermon.

**Literature review.** Weisheit writes that if the pastor's sermons are going to be effective, they must affect those who hear them. Long reiterated that preachers are charged with the responsibility of developing a communicational strategy designed to provoke change in the hearers. Life transformation should be an end goal of what preachers need to accomplish as a result of their preaching.

**Biblical.** Jesus said that his real disciples are those who continue to follow his teaching and they will know the truth that will set them free (John 8:31-32). The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans that their behavior and thinking should not be like that of this world, but that they should be transformed by the renewing of their minds, so that they may discern and approve the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2). Preaching should lead to a changed mind that will lead to a changed lifestyle. Obedience to God's word brings freedom and the blessing of God (Deut. 28:1-11; Ps. 112:1-2; Jas. 1:22-25).



Effective preaching will produce conversion in the lives of those who hear the Word. Acts 14:1 records that Paul and Barnabas spoke so effectively at a Jewish synagogue in Iconium that a great number of Jews and Gentiles became believers.

**Informs practice.** Some sincere and passionate preachers are concerned about being creative and relevant but neglect the more important purpose of preaching, which is to bring transformation in the lives of people. Exegesis and engaging presentation are essential, but preachers should aim for the word that will bring repentance, healing, restoration, encouragement, enlightenment, and change in the lives of people.

Preachers should not be overzealous about creativity and forget that the power in preaching is in the proclamation of the gospel because the power of God is for the salvation of everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16).

### **Implications of the Findings**

I believe that a faithful, relevant, and powerful proclamation of the Word of God will result in church growth and church health. When preachers diligently study the Word of God and hear from the Holy Spirit what he wants to say to the churches they will be able to preach relevant and powerful sermons that will bring lasting change in the lives of the people.

Integrating the three components of effective preaching within a sermon can create implications. I will consider one component at a time and consider its implications.

If preachers' sermons have solid exegesis and engaging presentation but lack the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to change the lives of people, the effect of the sermons will be incomplete. The people will learn more, but their hearts and attitudes will not change.

If the preacher had studied hard to preach a sermon with faithful exegesis and has a desire to bring about change in the lives of the people but presents his or her sermon in a dull, deep, irrelevant, and boring manner, then the message could not be understood and appreciated fully and would elude its transforming power.

If the preachers' sermons are engaging, interactive, relevant, and powerful but lack the depth, truth, and veracity of a solid Bible exegesis, then the people who hear the sermons will miss the original intended message of the text. I believe that pastors who aim to preach effective sermons should bear in mind that the components of biblical exegesis, engaging presentation, and life transformation should be present whenever they study and preach their sermons. They should pray and ask for the enlightenment and illumination of the Holy Spirit as they exegete the word. They should implore God for anointing and power as they preach the Word. Most importantly, they should believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will transform the lives of the people as they preach the Word.

### **Limitations of the Study**

In this project, I surveyed only five out of the fourteen Victory churches in Metro Manila in four months (from September to December 2011). In a longer time frame of one year, I could have surveyed all of our Metro Manila churches and interviewed more pastors to have a wider coverage of statistical data.

If I would conduct this project again, here are some of the few things that I would do differently. I would slightly modify the order of questions in the lay leaders questionnaire. In that survey, I should have placed question # 9 after question #3 so that the lay leaders could follow the train of thought as they rate the effectiveness of the pastors' sermon. I would also take a survey among the other Metro Manila churches so

that this research could encompass the perspective of people from other cities and congregations.

I believe that some uncontrollable limitations are present concerning the instrumentation employed in this study. One of such is the varying degree of how lay leaders assess the preaching of their pastors. Table 4.2 (p. 102) shows how the lay leaders evaluated and rated the effectiveness of the preaching of their pastors. One factor that I noticed is the general predisposition or inclination of the people to give high or low ratings based on the kind of people or location of the church. For example, if pastor D2 would preach in Quezon City, I think he might get a higher rating; if pastor E3 preached at the Fort, he might get a lower rating.

The four months of data collection went smoothly. The pastors were very cooperative when I interviewed them. OMF LIT, a Christian publications and bookstore in the Philippines gave me three boxes of books for distribution to pastors. I gave some books on preaching to the pastors I interviewed.

I met the lay leaders several minutes before the service to explain the research project. The leaders evaluated the pastors' sermons and submitted the questionnaire right after the services.

As for the field research observation, I needed a companion to help me take photos and video of the service and pastors preaching, as well as to help me collect the questionnaires from the lay leaders. On three occasions one of the men in my singles small group assisted me, and on two occasions my eldest son accompanied me.

People can use the instruments employed in this study to evaluate the preaching ministry of their pastor honestly. The pastor of a church can use the questions in the lay

leaders' questionnaire to assess the effectiveness of his sermon without being offended by the people who will answer the questions. As the pastors get feedback from the people who listen to their sermons, they can work on those areas where they need to improve in their preaching. In this way, both the pastors and the church can benefit as the pastors develop and nurture their preaching ministry.

### **Unexpected Observations**

One surprising observation in the data is the similarity of the pastors' definitions of effective preaching to mine. Following are several definitions of effective preaching by the pastors I interviewed.

My idea of an effective preaching is ...

“A sermon where the people understood what God wants to say through the Scriptures, were motivated by the truths they learned, and were challenged to apply them in their lives.” (Pastor E2)

“A well-prepared sermon that is both spiritual and practical which penetrates into the lives of people and which results in changed lives. The spiritual side of the sermon entails that I am in the attitude of prayer, considering that God is my partner in my sermon. The practical side is the job of sermon preparation.” (Pastor B2)

“A very well prepared and eloquent preaching is really great to listen to, but in the end I believe a sermon is effective to the degree that it incites change in people's hearts.” (Pastor E1)

“An effective sermon is the declaration of God's word that is able to connect to the hearers in a way that they would readily understand where they stand apart from God and how Jesus bridges that gap and makes a relationship with God possible.” (Pastor D1)

“A sermon is effective when the Word of God is shared clearly and produces life change.” (Pastor A2)

“If I will be faithful to the Scripture I will be able to effectively communicate it to God’s people, expecting them to be encouraged and willing to apply what they’ve learned.” (Pastor C1)

“An effective, well-prepared sermon, where the Word of God is being preached, where there is a connection with the current situation of the hearers, being able to give biblical application resulting to a changed life.” (Pastor B1)

“A sermon is effective when you are able to explain the Scriptures properly and consider the biblical context and apply it to the context of your audience. It is a sermon simple enough to understand and apply so that people can go home with a changed life.” (Pastor A1)

These similar definitions on effective preaching somehow encouraged me by showing that I share the same view with most of the pastors in our movement.

An unexpected incident in one church happened at the beginning of my lay leaders interview wherein one leader asked another leader why this certain pastor was being singled out and evaluated on his preaching. The person probably thought that this pastor was the only one being surveyed. Another factor that could have contributed to this untoward observation is the lack of clear communication of the purpose of the lay leaders questionnaire due to the background noise or sounds in the church worship hall before the service.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations may help to develop an effective preaching ministry for urban pastors in the Philippines based on the results of the pastoral interview, lay leaders' questionnaire, and field-research observation.

### **Biblical Exegesis**

I recommend that pastors build a library of references for preaching that will include Bible commentaries, Bible encyclopedias, Bible dictionaries, and books on preaching such as those listed in the Works Cited section.

I recommend that pastors procure for themselves Bible software for their laptops such as Accordance, PC Study Bible, Logos, and BibleWorks to use for exegesis.

An equipping seminar or a course on how to do biblical exegesis should be incorporated into our schools of ministry so that our campus ministry staff, missionaries, and pastors will be equipped in this area.

### **Engaging Presentation**

The church should continue to conduct regular training of pastors on the subjects of homiletics, hermeneutics, and communication.

I recommend that pastors watch videos on YouTube or listen to podcasts of dynamic and engaging preachers such as Rice Broocks, William H. Willimon, Bill Hybels, Matthew Hagee, Francis Chan, Andy Stanley, John Osteen, Gregory Dickow, Reinhard Bonnke, Jerry Savelle, Rod Parsley, R.W. Schambach, Jentezen Franklin, Steven Furtick, and Chris Hodges.

They should also regularly collect sermon illustrations from newspapers, magazines, books, everyday experiences, and organize them according to topics or themes so they can be easily retrieved when needed.

### **Life Transformation**

I recommend that pastors should seek what the Lord wants to accomplish in the lives of the people so that at the end of their preaching they can speak the appropriate challenge, instruction, encouragement, and prayer. This spiritual posture would be possible if preachers spend a considerable amount of time in prayer, intercession, and time listening to the Holy Spirit throughout their preparation and before they preach the Word. Personally I believe that thirty minutes to an hour of prayer on Sunday morning is needed in order to minister the word with grace, wisdom, power, and anointing of the Spirit (Matt. 26:40; Acts 3:1).

Pastors should learn how to make the appropriate altar calls at the end of their sermon because oftentimes a number of unbelievers are in the church service who are ripe for harvest and ready to give their lives to God. Paul wrote to Timothy to do the work of an evangelist and discharge all the duties of his ministry (2 Tim. 4:5). Even if pastors are not evangelists by gifting, they should work at bringing lost people to Christ through their preaching.

### **Postscript**

One of the lay leaders in Victory Nova commented that the sermon he heard was written and preached just for him. God uses preachers to speak his message in a way that will minister to specific situations of the people. I feel a sense of awe and fear of the Lord

that I should do my best to study, prepare, and hear from the Holy Spirit so that I can be his instrument who will communicate what he wants to say to the church (Rev. 2:29).

The journey of my doctoral experience at Asbury Theological Seminary from September 2008 to May 2012 has been very instrumental in developing the spiritual, the leadership, and preaching aspects of my ministry. In relation to the ministry of preaching, I believe that having a strong spiritual life makes me fully dependent on the Lord for the insights, revelation, and ideas on crafting a sermon. Developing the gift of leadership is essential because a pastor has to know how to lead his people in terms of determining what topics the congregation needs to hear, learn, and apply in their lives.

This dissertation project has encouraged me to develop integrity in terms of my relationship with my family. Integrity in preaching means that whatever I am speaking in the pulpit is being practiced at home and seen by people closest to me.



## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONS FOR THE PASTORAL INTERVIEW

1. What is your idea of an effective sermon?
2. How do you prepare for your weekly sermon?
3. What is your procedure when doing exegesis of a Bible text?
4. How do the weekly study notes (discussion) affect your sermon preparation?
5. What Bible software, books, commentaries, and references do you use when you study and prepare for your sermons?
6. Normally, how many hours a week do you allocate in preparing for a sermon?
7. What role does prayer play in your sermon preparation? How long do you usually pray before preaching a sermon?
8. What are some specific challenges you face as you study and prepare for your sermon?
9. What are some present challenges that you encounter as you deliver your message to the congregation?
10. In your preaching, what are some specific things that make your sermon engaging, effective, and powerful?
11. What are the social demographics of your church congregation? What kind of people do you have in mind as you preach your sermon? What do you do to contextualize your sermon to your hearers?
12. In what way does the Holy Spirit help in your sermon preparation and preaching delivery? Do you sense the power of the Holy Spirit upon you as you preach? If so, in what way?

13. What areas in the preaching ministry do you need further training and equipping in order to develop the effectivity of your sermons?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Learning how to exegete a Bible text
- \_\_\_\_\_ Knowing the background of Bible texts
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sermon construction/structure/outlining
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sermon delivery/communication
- \_\_\_\_\_ Using technology to aid communication (PowerPoint, KeyNote, iPad)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spiritual life of a preacher (prayer, personal holiness, integrity)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Finding the right illustration, story, analogy for the sermon
- \_\_\_\_\_ Getting the right interpretation (hermeneutics)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sharing the appropriate application of the sermon
- \_\_\_\_\_ Principles of contextualizing the message to the people
- \_\_\_\_\_ How to preach life-transforming messages
- \_\_\_\_\_ Others (Please specify)

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14. How do you perceive your preaching as a tool to impact and transform the lives of people, and cause them to become disciples of Christ? In what way?

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**APPENDIX B**

**LAY LEADERS' QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. How would you rate the sermon of the pastor in terms of the exposition and interpretation of the Bible passage? (Please circle the number.)

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10 -----

Poor exegesis

Excellent exegesis

2. How would you rate the sermon you heard in terms of its relevance or practical application to your present life situation? (Please circle the number.)

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10 -----

Not relevant

Very relevant

3. In your opinion, what segment or part of the pastors' preaching was the most effective in terms of ministering to your needs, concerns, or current situation?

Check one to two choices:

\_\_\_ Introduction

\_\_\_ Stating and explaining the points of the sermon

\_\_\_ Giving an illustration or sharing a story

\_\_\_ Stating the main point or theme of the message

\_\_\_ Conclusion of the message

\_\_\_ Others \_\_\_\_\_

4. In your opinion, which segment/s of the sermon can still be improved in terms of clarity in communication and delivery? (Check the ones applicable.)

\_\_\_ Introduction of the sermon

\_\_\_ Stating and explaining the points of the sermon

- Sharing an illustration, quotation, analogy, or a story
- Stating the main point or theme of the message
- Conclusion of the message
- Others (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Did the pastor clearly communicate the main theme of the message?

- Yes, the main point was clear.
- The main point was somewhat vague and unclear.
- No, the main point was not clear.

6. Which part/s of the sermon did you find engaging, interesting, and powerful?

- Introduction of the sermon
- Stating and explaining the points of the sermon
- Sharing an illustration, quotation, analogy, or a story
- Stating the main point or theme of the message
- Conclusion of the message
- Others \_\_\_\_\_

7. What did the pastor do to make his sermons effective, engaging, interesting, and clear?

Check the ones applicable:

- Stated the purpose and intention of the sermon
- Clearly stated and explained the points of the sermon
- Shared an appropriate illustration, quotation, analogy, or story
- Stated the main point or theme of the message
- Had a powerful and challenging conclusion of the message

- \_\_\_ Used an object lesson or props
  - \_\_\_ Used a video clip
  - \_\_\_ Used a PowerPoint presentation
  - \_\_\_ Use of humor
  - \_\_\_ Others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

8. How do you think today's message will change or affect your life in any positive and concrete way? (Check the ones that are applicable)

- \_\_\_ The message brought conviction of sin that leads to repentance.
  - \_\_\_ The message will lead to a change of an attitude or way of thinking.
  - \_\_\_ The message inspired me to do something for God and other people.
  - \_\_\_ The message encouraged me and built up my faith in God and his word.
  - \_\_\_ The message brought instruction and words of wisdom for my life.
  - \_\_\_ The message led me to commit my life to God in a greater way.
  - \_\_\_ Others
- 
- 

9. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the pastor in terms of his effectivity (anointing, clarity, confidence, connectedness, preparedness, persuasiveness) in delivering the message you heard? (Please circle the number.)

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10 -----

Not effective

Very effective

10. If you could encourage the pastor one positive thing about his sermon, what

would it be?

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11. If you could give the pastor one suggestion about the sermon content or his sermon delivery, what would it be?

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12. Your Gender: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

13. Status:

\_\_\_\_\_ Single

\_\_\_\_\_ Married

\_\_\_\_\_ Separated/Widowed

14. Your age (please check):

\_\_\_\_\_ Under 20

\_\_\_\_\_ 21-39

\_\_\_\_\_ 40-59

\_\_\_\_\_ 60 and above

15. How long have you been a member of Victory church?

\_\_\_\_\_ 1-3 years

\_\_\_\_\_ 4-6 years

\_\_\_\_\_ More than 6 years

## APPENDIX C

## VICTORY METRO MANILA CHURCH STATISTICS (MAY 2012)

Church	Victory Group Leader	Pastors	Admin Staff	Worship Services	Weekly Attendance
Alabang	729	8	12	8	7,809
Caloocan	115	4	3	4	2,371
Fort Bonifacio	688	15	19	11	12,818
Greenhills	165	4	6	5	1,994
Makati	137	2	4	2	1,149
Malate	308	5	4	6	3,412
Metro East	360	5	7	7	5,700
Muntinlupa	74	2	-	4	664
Nova	167	3	4	5	2,243
Ortigas	520	7	14	12	7,162
Pasig	99	1	1	2	471
Pioneer	321	4	9	6	5,626
Quezon City	432	4	9	8	2,940
Sta. Rosa	35	2	2	4	578
University Belt	596	7	9	11	7,055
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,746</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>61,992</b>

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