

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VISUAL IMAGES: PREACHING IN POSTMODERN AND POST-CHRISTIAN MINISTRY CONTEXT**

**by**

**Eneyas Da Silva Freitas**

People immersed in postmodern culture are visually driven in the twenty-first century in the United States. Connection Point Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for the most part, attracted a postmodern, ethnically diverse, and de-churched population. As a glimpse of the postmodern and post-Christian culture, Connection Point became an assortment of people, ranging from those who know almost nothing about the Bible and are disconnected from the church to people who had been in a church their entire lives. One of the major challenges faced by a missional church such as Connection Point was to find out how effective the biblical messages that utilize visual images (e.g., pictures and video clips) are to such a diverse audience. Therefore, the purpose of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness of visual images to a postmodern, ethnically and biblically diverse audience in regard to their affective response, understanding, and application of a series of sermons preached over the period of six weeks at Connection Point Church during the primary worship experience. Based on the data collected through an online survey, focus groups, and pre- and post-questionnaires, the major findings of this study included the following:

Biblical facts and stories, theological and doctrinal points—The key factors generating knowledge and moving worship attendees to apply the message were biblical facts and stories and theological and doctrinal points applied during the message.

Visual images and knowledge—For most worship attendees who chose to participate in this survey, visual images did not seem to generate knowledge or move them to apply the message to their lives.

Visual images and real-life stories—Visual images were most helpful in generating affective responses and knowledge and in moving the participants into application of the message when real-life stories were involved.

Biblical characters and real-life stories—When biblical characters' stories were told as real-life stories, they caused affective responses, generated knowledge, and moved the participants of this study to apply the message to their lives.

Music—Music seemed to help the participants to be emotionally available to the message and make connections with biblical characters, passages, and the main point of the message.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled  
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A Dissertation  
Presented to the Faculty of  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
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by  
Eneyas Da Silva Freitas

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## CHAPTER 1

### PROBLEM

#### Introduction

During a regular Sunday worship experience at Connection Point Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I was preaching a series on spiritual disciplines based on the book *The Life You've Always Wanted* by John Ortberg. That particular Sunday, I was focusing on the spiritual discipline (i.e., practice) of joy. The band played very inspiring songs and the worship experience was proceeding very well. The message was a natural transition of the good flow of the whole worship experience. During the message I emphasized that joy was intrinsically part of God's essence and quoted Ortberg, saying, "We will not understand God until we understand this about him: 'God is the happiest being in the universe'" (63). After the worship experience was over, I headed to Connection Point Café as usual. A young lady in her late twenties approached me and congratulated me for preaching a great message. I thanked her for her kindness and, when I had almost finished my sentence, she interrupted me, "By the way pastor, I want to find in the Bible that passage you mentioned today that 'God is the happiest being in the universe.' Would you show me where it is?" Obviously, she felt a little embarrassed when I mentioned that the quote was from a book not from the Bible.

This incident might sound like an isolated episode of a young lady who did not know the Bible well. However, the more time I invested in a ministry that is intentionally trying to reach the culture surrounding the church, the more suspicious I became that this story was not an isolated episode. Instead, it seemed a *tiny* glimpse into the cultural reality of the United States in the twenty-first century. A number of contemporary

theologians and Christian writers who have been studying the culture surrounding the church have said that the United States has been immersed in an ethnically diverse, post-Christian, and postmodern culture for a while. Dan Kimball supports these findings:

We are living in an increasingly “post-Christian” culture. America once was more of a “Christian nation” whose influences and values aligned with Judeo-Christian values and ethics. Even most atheists had a good sense of the story line of the Bible and its main characters, and usually respected the Bible and Christian pastors. (35)

In fact, Kimball goes on to say, “The world around us has drastically changed over the past thirty years or so. Emerging generations don’t have a basic understanding of the story of the Bible, and they don’t have one God as the predominant God to worship” (36). Based on Kimball’s assertion, the dominant culture in the United States in the twenty-first century, generally known as postmodern, seems averse to anything that resembles *organized (Christian) religion*. Furthermore, people immersed in postmodern culture are not necessarily searching for a denomination to which they can belong and are no longer going to church. More precisely, the dominant (postmodern) culture has rebelled against everything modernity has overly emphasized.

Postmodern culture rebelled against order, regulation, stability, singularity, fixity, and one possibility of constructing a single correct worldview. Postmodern culture is about uncertainty, otherness, openness, multiplicity, and constant change (Sweet, *AquaChurch* 24). As a result, postmodern culture rebelled against some of the longtime practices established by the church shaped by modernity, such as going to church and Sunday school on Sunday mornings. Therefore, as mentioned by Kimball, people immersed in postmodern culture have not acquired a basic knowledge of the Bible. Kenneth H. Carter, Jr. describes postmodern culture as pilgrims who are suspicious of

institutions and are trying to discover their own place in the midst of the sinking sand of modernity (38-39).

People immersed in postmodern culture have rebelled against traditional, organized, Christian religion but are open to a religious (i.e., spiritual) experience. They are not necessarily searching for a building but for a space that they can call sacred, mysterious, and supernatural. In *EnlightenNext* magazine, Elizabeth Debold writes an article where she describes how people's interest in spirituality on the mystical dimension has increased tremendously for the last several decades. In fact, she states that between 1962 and 1994 the number of US adults who report having had *a religious or mystical experience* grew from 22 to 40 percent. This *mystical-religious* interest, however, has not translated into growth of Christian religious groups. On the contrary, she says that those who check *none* when asked for a religious affiliation have doubled in the last decade and are possibly the third largest group in the country (twenty-nine million people). She goes on to say that two-thirds of the *nones* believe in God; more than one-third consider themselves religious. They buy many books on spirituality:

Looking at the rise in numbers of people having spiritual experiences and the decline in traditional religious affiliation, it seems very likely that many of those who are now having mystical experiences are doing so on their own, or in unorthodox ways.

The fact is people immersed in postmodern culture are searching for a *religious experience* that not only identifies with their day-to-day lives and struggles but also with the struggles of people in their communities and across the globe as stated by Leonard Sweet, Brian D. McLaren, and Jerry Haselmayer—*tireless students* of postmodern culture:

The emerging culture may identify more with the suffering Jesus than the glorified Jesus—the Jesus who was part of a single-parent household; the Jesus who was single long past what was normal; the Jesus who shunned the fast-track of building a mega-following for the slow lane of investing in a small community of tremendous diversity; a Jesus who had no real place to call home but was always on the move; a Jesus who was accused of choosing the wrong friends and embraced his critics as a badge of distinction; a Jesus who could not get along with the established authorities and hierarchies of his day. (196)

Michael Frost complements the idea to which Sweet, McLaren, and Haselmayer refer concerning postmodern culture and church. He says that postmodern culture is an informal, fluid relationship with others through communion with Christ, flexible to the needs of community, not about a building but about spiritual activity (154).

Adding to the uniqueness of the postmodern culture was the fact that it happened during the *explosion* of different means of communication, especially visual media. Postmodern culture became visually driven and people became engaged by what they saw and felt more than by what they heard. Michael Slaughter, back in 1998, anticipated the cultural tendency in the United States to be visually driven. He mentions that a national study was done at that time and tried to determine the impact TV has had on the way college students learn. He affirms that people were already immersed in a culture where people expected to be entertained; were visually oriented; were not attentive to lecture—formal presentations often lack motion, color, rapid changes, sound effects, visual effects, music, and drama; became bored easily, unless information was fragmented and packaged according to TV formula; disliked history; and, disliked reading (24). Furthermore, he goes on to say that the generation born after 1960 was raised in a culture that was visually dominated. This generation placed a far greater emphasis on sight, sound, and sensations. Slaughter emphasizes that churches fail in

communicating Jesus to this generation with sixty minutes of literate-linear worship (36; 62). Len Wilson and Jason Moore complement the idea to which Slaughter alluded concerning postmoderns being visually driven and effectively communicating with people immersed in this culture. Wilson and Moore say that people in postmodern culture are so visually engaged these days that the best way to communicate with them is to research what they are seeing at home on TV and in magazines and create messages that relate to their daily lives (19).

Slaughter and Wilson and Moore, along and others, have argued how effective visual communication can be for churches communicating with people immersed in postmodern culture. Truly, the effectiveness of visual aids in communication goes beyond churches within the twenty-first century communicating with postmodern audiences. In a report produced in 2006, Dustin Supa affirms in his abstract, “Research shows that visual images may intersect with cognitive and affective brain functions. Visuals have the potential to have a faster processing and reaction time than other modes of communication” (1). Furthermore, Supa goes on to describe a rather interesting sequence of facts of how visual communication have been considered the most effective means of communication throughout history. He says that Plato was the first one to identify how powerful and persuasive visual aids are in his *Republic*. In fact, Supa indicates in his description that Plato wanted to ban painters because of their impact on people’s mood and attitude (2). More precisely, according to Supa, Plato wanted to ban painters, believing that visual images were a distraction to *true speech*. Supa points out, however, when discussing visual images and speech, that Aristotle argued for parallelism (*paradeigmata*) in Book II of his *Rhetoric*. Supa says that Aristotle supported the idea

that speech strength is increased through use of a visual image. The *historical tour* on the impact of visual communication described by Supa highlights also that ancient Egyptians were credited with being the first people to use words and pictures in combination to communicate information (3). Furthermore, the church in medieval Europe used the same approach as the ancient Egyptians concerning visual images and information. Supa says that the church used stained glass to communicate its message effectively:

Beyond art, this was also meant to tell the stories of the Bible to the masses who could not read, similar to many frescoes and paintings of the Renaissance movement. These pieces of art (as we view them today) were once used to warn people of the dangers of sin, the goodness of the Church, and why they were to be steadfast in their God-fearing faith. Particularly, images of Hell and Purgatory in early art may have been the earliest example of the use of fear appeals. (3)

The use of visual images in stained glass windows to communicate a message can be considered *prophetic*. In the sense that, later in the twenty first-century, society and culture are visually driven. Truly, the use of stained glass windows in medieval times was one more confirmation that images transcend time, society, and culture. The fact is the context of postmodern culture in the twenty-first century is quite distant and different from Plato, Aristotle, and the medieval church. However, as pointed out by Supa's report, people throughout history were particularly impacted and better informed when visual images were involved. Though Supa recognizes that a lot more research needs to be done on the different aspects of the power of images, he also emphasizes throughout his report how persuasive and influential messages can be when utilizing visual images (16).

The persuasiveness of visual images mentioned in Supa's report is very evident in today's culture. Furthermore, the Milwaukee-metro area is a representative example of this culture. A church building exists on almost every corner in Milwaukee. People,

however, are not necessarily looking for a church building to visit or a denomination to which they can belong. In a rather traditionally religious geographic area, a number of people go to the movies instead of church on Sunday mornings. Therefore, an initially market place ministry such as Connection Point Church attracted, for the most part, this postmodern, ethnically diverse, and de-churched population. Pastor Batterson from National Community Church located in Washington, DC, says that in a postmodern era, movie theater screens have become stained glass. He goes on to say that churches in movie-theaters are using moving pictures to tell the gospel to a post-literate culture (Moon 16). As a glimpse of the postmodern and post-Christian culture, Connection Point became an assortment of people, ranging from those who know almost nothing about the Bible and are disconnected from church to people who had been in church their entire lives. Therefore, one of the major challenges to preaching and teaching in such a diverse environment was to find out how effective the biblical messages that utilize visual images were to such a diverse audience.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness of visual images to a postmodern, ethnically and biblically diverse audience in regard to their affective response, understanding, and application of a series of sermons preached over the period of six weeks at Connection Point Church during the primary worship experience.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions provided the framework for this dissertation.

### **Research Question #1**

What were the participants' affective responses to the use of images in a sermon series?

### **Research Question #2**

How was the participants' cognition impacted by the use of images in the sermon series?

### **Research Question #3**

How was the participants' application of the sermon content and behavioral change impacted by the use of visual images?

### **Research Question #4**

What other intervening variable(s) might account for the changes observed in the participants over the course of the study?

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms are used throughout the project. The working definitions indicate how they were understood in the context of this study.

#### **Postmodern**

Postmodern theologians such as Sweet, McLaren, and Haselmayer assert that postmodernity is an umbrella term for an attitude and approach to life, not a single identifiable philosophy or style (239). My view of postmodernity in this study was as a movement that is against anything that represents organized religion (structure).

#### **Ethnically Diverse**

The United States is becoming an ethnic diverse nation, that is ethnic diversity is no longer restricted to European and African descendents. Individuals immigrating from

Middle-Eastern, Asian, North American (Mexican), Central, and South American countries are becoming part of the ethnic diversity of the United States. According to an article published by Tom Tolan and Bill Glauber, Milwaukee was considered one of the most ethnically segregated cities in the United States. Despite segregation, ethnic diversity continued to occur within the Milwaukee metro area. Connection Point is a glimpse of what is happening within the Milwaukee metro area and other areas of the United States. More precisely, *ethnically diverse* in this study means a group composed of South Americans, mostly Brazilians, African-Americans, Europeans such as Dutch, German, and Polish descendants, and North Americans such as Mexican and Canadian descendants.

### **Biblically Diverse**

Postmodernity has caused individuals immersed in postmodern culture to question and choose not to participate formally in organized religion. Furthermore, whenever individuals immersed in postmodern culture participate in any organization resembling organized religion such as Christian churches, they do not have any consistency or sense of weekly commitment. As a result, a number of individuals immersed in postmodern culture have not acquired a lot of knowledge of the Bible. Therefore, intentionally missional churches such as Connection Point were composed of a number of these individuals. For the purpose of this study, I define *biblically diverse* as a group of individuals immersed in postmodern culture ranging from very basic and almost no knowledge of the Bible to a few individuals with knowledge of different passages, books, and a particular theological understanding of the Bible.

## **Affective Response**

According to Art Silverblatt and Nicholai Zlobin, *an affective response* “refers to people’s emotional reactions to what they hear and see through media. Visual and aural media initially touch you on an emotional level” (81). Visual images appeal to imagination and emotions. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, I define *affective response* as a way to measure an individual’s *emotional* response or preference to the use of visual images in Sunday morning messages in an intentionally missional church such as Connection Point.

## **Emerging**

Some of the *buzz* words in the Christian church today, especially among church planters, are the words *emerging church*. Those words certainly produce a myriad of possible ideas and definitions. One of them is given by Bruce Sanguin who defines emerging churches *as the congregations [that] are meeting the challenges of the Postmodern world with creativity and vitality* (23). Though Sanguin’s definition can be considered broad, it is a good base for my definition of an emerging church. For the purpose of this project, I define emerging as congregations that are not attached to *traditional* methods of being church, that is, people meeting in specific church buildings and doing things out of religious traditionalism. Instead, I define emerging churches as congregations that meet wherever a place that will meet the challenges of the community (e.g., coffee house, movie theater, and traditional church building) is located. Furthermore, I define an emerging church as a congregation that is not afraid to use creatively whatever method necessary to meet the challenge of today’s culture.

## **De-Churched**

Kevin Martin describes two important categories of people for today's church. One is the unchurched defined by Martin as the ones with very little experience with church (57). They have minimal or almost no knowledge of the Bible, theology, and the Christian church in general. The other category is the so-called de-churched defined by Martin as those who have previously been members of a church but have a reason for leaving (57). The Milwaukee-metro area can be considered as highly de-churched due to the dominant presence of the Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches and the high number of people who have left those churches at some point in their lives. Therefore, I defined de-churched for this project, as individuals who have some church experience in the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, or some other mainline Christian church organization. However, something caused those individuals to de-church or no longer to attend a Christian church (e.g., some since childhood).

## **Missional**

According to Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, the word missional was created in 1998 and, since then, has been overly used. Furthermore, they argue that when the word missional is placed with church, possible definitions are countless but unnecessary. In fact, the closest Roxburgh and Boren come to a *definition* is to say that missional is basically anything that happens outside of a group of Christian believers who call themselves a church. Moreover, the very essence of the word missional is mission and mission is to be *sent to*. Therefore, missional is not necessarily about a particular model, program, or definition. For the purpose of this project, I define a missional church as a congregation whose main priority is to be sent; that is, to be where people are

without necessarily being restricted by building and denominational boundaries. A missional church is a congregation who is not necessarily about inviting people to *come to church* (e.g., Sunday morning worship) but to be a place or space where people feel safe to expose their brokenness and experience healing, reconciliation, and deep understanding of God. A missional church is also a congregation who is willing to walk alongside people without necessarily *trying to fix* them, knowing that God is the One doing the work. A missional church is a congregation that chooses to serve one another and the community around them intentionally.

### **Visual Images**

For the purpose of this research, I define visual images as the use of still photos and motion pictures such as videoclips, movies, TV shows, and musicvideos as visual aids that help reinforce a point during an oral and/or written presentation. Moreover, I define visual images as tools that help to engage an audience present in a church worship setting.

### **Ministry Intervention**

The purpose of the ministry intervention was carried out through the use of a variety of visual images over a period of six weeks during the worship experience at 10:30 a.m. at Connection Point. During those six weeks, the regular attendees of Connection Point—an average of fifty individuals per Sunday—were encouraged to answer an online survey and participate in a focus group evaluating the effectiveness of the visual images in regard to their affective response, understanding, and application of the message preached each Sunday.

## Context

In September 2008, Connection Point was launched at AMC Theater—Mayfair Mall located in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. Since its launch, Connection Point has attracted a diverse group of people. People have come from different social economic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. One of the reasons is that the Milwaukee metro area is a glimpse of what is happening in a number of other metro areas in the United States:

[T]he racial and ethnic composition of Milwaukee continues to change. Milwaukee's White population has declined in each of the last three census years (1980, 1990, and 2000), though it has since stabilized and started to rise. The population of African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians have [sic] all steadily increased. (Milwaukee Department of City Development 15)

Furthermore, prior to my arrival in Milwaukee in 2007, a core group of people, who eventually became part of my launch team, conducted research through the Percept Group, Inc. The research revealed some significant ethnic projections within a two-mile radius of the location where the church originally launched in 2008 in the Mayfair Mall area:

[B]etween 2003 and 2008, the white population is projected to decrease by 722 persons and to decrease from 91.8% to 90.2% of the total population. The Black population is projected to increase by 168 persons and to increase from 1.8% to 2.1% of the total. The Hispanic/Latino is projected to increase by 255 persons and to increase from 2.5% to 3.0% of the total. The Asian/Other population is projected to increase 391 persons and to increase from 3.9% to 4.7% of the populations. (2)

Connection Point became a glimpse of what was projected and became a small but ethnically diverse group of people composed of approximately 45 percent Caucasians of Dutch, Polish, and German descent, 45 percent South Americans of Brazilian descent, and 10 percent African-Americans/others. Furthermore, Connection Point reflected the transition of age group, family structure, and life style happening in the population of the

Milwaukee-metro area. The metro area of Milwaukee had 377,729 households of which 29.5 percent had children under the age of 18 living with them; 39 percent were married couples living together; 16.3 percent had a female householder with no husband present; 40.4 percent were non-families; 33 percent of all households were made up of individuals; and, 10.7 percent had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older (United States). Connection Point indeed reflects what was happening within the Milwaukee metro area. About 80 percent of the people who came consistently to Connection Point had already been divorced and/or were involved with someone without being officially married. The Milwaukee metro area was highly influenced by the Roman Catholic Church. A number of individuals who did not fit in the Roman Catholic Church requirement either left the church altogether or searched for alternatives such as Connection Point. The vast majority of individuals who came to Connection Point were considered *de-churched*. Furthermore, a number of them came with *broken lives* (e.g., divorced), searching for a meaningful relationship and a sense of community. They were also searching for preaching that was participatory and appealed to their imagination. Therefore, Connection Point was a great ministry context in which to explore further the effectiveness of visual images and to communicate biblical messages to an audience experiencing major transitions in life and immersed in a post-Christian and postmodern culture.

### **The Use of Visual Images at Connection Point Church**

Connection Point was launched in 2008 and considered an emerging church. For a couple of years, Connection Point met in a movie theater with a big screen and comfortable seats. For financial and strategic reasons, Connection Point moved to a

fellowship hall of a local Methodist church not too far from the movie theater. The fellowship hall was transformed into a café/performance space. Strategically, the initial idea was to create an environment somewhere between a movie theater and a coffee shop. The space included tables, chairs, and décor resembling a coffee shop along with a large screen projection system and a stage conducive to the use of visual images (see Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1. Connection Point café and worship space.**

The creation process at Connection Point involved brainstorming sessions with a creative arts team, pictures utilized on the Web site, slides—announcements and clips used as teasers for a new series, an introductory clip of the series played every Sunday just before the message starts, and a background slide to be used during the message. In addition, during the message, I used clips related to the topic preached. During the creation process of a new series of messages, important conversations happened with the arts team composed of some of the creative minds from the church. They were the people to whom I would preach the message. Therefore, to listen to their ideas for a new series and graphic themes was very helpful. Calvin Miller says, “It is high time that the church



Figure 2.3). Dutch Reformed theologian Abraham Kuyper says, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, ‘Mine!’” (qtd. in Bratt 488). John Piper audaciously rephrases Kuyper’s theological perspective of God and the world when he says:

There is not one inch of creation, one culture or subculture of people, one life style or orientation, one religion or philosophical system, that he does not possess full authority over and command to turn from sin and glorify him. (132)

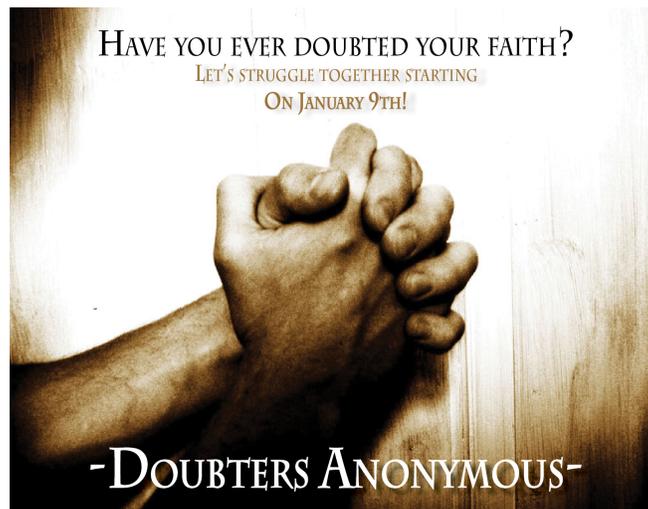
Even more audacious and thought provoking was pastor John Van Sloten who brought Kuyper’s thought on God’s sovereignty, omnipresence, and supremacy to a whole new level—the level that people on the street can understand. Therefore, the series was structured around asking people very practical questions, such as whether God can indeed be everywhere and in everything, such as in sports, and in movies, and if any type of music can glorify God.



**Figure 2.3.** Connection Point series, *The Day Metallica Came to Church.*

One last example of a series created along with the creative arts team was *Doubters Anonymous* (see Figure 2.4). At the beginning of the year, people make promises to change something in their lives—physically, emotionally, and, obviously,

spiritually. However, as people are about to face the challenges in the new year, they might hear phrases such as, “You just need to have more faith.” The problem is people quite often *fail* when facing some of the challenges life brings their way. The first thought that comes to mind is, “I didn’t have enough *faith*.” One of the main theological ideas explored in this series was *faith is a gift from God*.



**Figure 2.4.** Connection Point series, *Doubters Anonymous*.

One of the goals was to continue the use of visual images while moving towards the Aristotelian method of persuasion. Moreover, the missional desire was to go deeper in what the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:22: “To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (NIV). Certainly, the apostle Paul was not necessarily referring to the use of visual images in the Sunday morning sermons in 1 Corinthians 9:22. However, being a church planter of a number of churches of his time, Paul knew well the difficult task of striving to be missional and relevant to the culture. Visual images were utilized as persuasive tools at Connection Point. However, they were not to be taken for granted as to helping

the teaching effectively and causing an affective response, cognition, application, and promoting behavior change based on a series of sermons preached. Therefore, research was necessary in order to evaluate the persuasiveness of visual images in sermons.

### **Methodology**

Given the need for research in churches such as Connection Point, a methodology was developed accordingly. Therefore, this dissertation used an explanatory, quasi-experimental, mixed-methods design evaluating the effectiveness of visual images to a postmodern, ethnically and biblically diverse audience in regard to their affective response, understanding, and application of a series of sermons preached over the period of six weeks at Connection Point Church during the primary worship experience. The research project was an evaluative study utilizing researcher-designed quantitative questionnaires, qualitative questions, and focus group sessions.

### **Participants**

The whole congregation (approximately fifty worship attendees) were invited to participate in the survey and this research and represented the diversity of Connection Point. They were ethnically diverse individuals (male and female) representing African-American, Caucasian (i.e., Dutch, Polish, and German decent), and South American (i.e., Brazilian) communities. Though Connection Point was considered a small emerging church, it included a wide range of ages: infants 10 percent, children (ages 5 to 11) 5 percent, teenagers (ages 13 to 21) 15 percent, young adults (ages 22 to 39) 30 percent, middle-aged adults (ages 40 to 55) 35 percent, and older adults (ages 56 to 65) 5 percent. Due to the wide age range, worship attendees at Connection Point were also very educationally diverse. Therefore, the worship attendees invited to participate were

composed of middle schoolers (15 percent), high school level (5 percent), undergraduate level (45 percent), bachelor's level (30 percent), and post-graduate level (5 percent). Lastly, worship attendees invited to participate reflected a theologically diverse background: Roman Catholic (30 percent), Christian Reformed (20 percent), Pentecostal (5 percent), Presbyterian (5 percent), Baptist (5 percent), Lutheran (30 percent), and some with no Christian backgrounds (5 percent). Approximately 70 percent of the attendees invited to participate in the survey had been coming to Connection Point for the last three years and attended worship services at least three times a month. In addition, they were economically diverse, ranging from low to high-income families. Low and high-income families represented 40 percent of the church, but the vast majority of the people, about 60 percent, fell somewhere in the middle. As previously mentioned, despite being a small emerging church, Connection Point was considered very diverse in a number of ways and represented a small glimpse of what was happening in other areas of the United States. Therefore, Connection Point was a *fertile environment* for this research and worthy of surveying.

### **Instrumentation**

I asked approximately fifty attendees of the worship experience at Connection Point at 10:30 a.m. to respond to the online survey and pre-post sermon series questionnaires, and participate in the focus group sessions held after worship. Since the use of different visual images at Connection Point was not unusual, I requested that the approximately fifty worship attendees invited to participate evaluate what helped them to relate to the message in worship. More precisely, I structured the online survey, questionnaires, and focus group questions to evaluate which form of visual images, if

any, was most effective in helping them learn from the messages preached over a period of six weeks.

Given the demographics of the participants of this research, the questions for the online survey and focus group were developed by uniquely tailoring them to help evaluate the use of visual images for each message over the period of six weeks. By doing so, the responses acquired gave unique insight into the ways the worship attendees interacted with specific visual images.

To achieve my goal to evaluate the interaction of worship attendees with visual images during Sunday morning messages, an online survey using a questionnaire involving demographic questions and media statements—framed by the Likert scale with follow-up questions—was uniquely tailored using *Survey Monkey*. A link through Connection Point's Web site and *Facebook* page connected participants to the survey conducted through *Survey Monkey*. Furthermore, during three weeks in December 2011 and January 2012, a focus group (ichat) was held after each worship service to discuss the participants' affective response, cognition, and possible application of the message. In addition, a pre- and post-questionnaire was applied before and after each sermon series to help understand the respondents' cognition in the December 2011 and January 2012 sermon series. In December and January, I encouraged all worship attendees to answer the weekly online survey, participate in the focus group, and respond to the questionnaires applied before and after each series.

### **Variables**

The *independent* variables were visual images utilized during Sunday morning messages. The *dependent* variables were the participants' affective response to the use of

visual images in worship, their cognitive response to the use of images in worship, and their ability to apply the message represented by the images used in worship to their lives.

The *intervening* variables for this study were the busyness of the holidays in December and a very slow start of a new year in January causing potential worship attendees not to participate simply not or not to respond adequately to the online survey, be part of focus group, and answer pre-post sermon series questionnaires.

### **Data Collection**

As previously mentioned, over the period of three weeks in December 2011 and January 2012, I encouraged regular worship attendees of Connection Point to answer the online survey and participate in the focus group via a slide announcement shown fifteen minutes prior to the beginning of worship and during announcements time. Additionally, at the end of worship, I reminded attendees to answer the online survey via link found on Connection Point's Web site and *Facebook* page. Finally, I invited their participation in the focus group after worship each Sunday. I uniquely tailored both the online survey and focus group with questions about the effectiveness of the visual images in regard to the affective response, cognition, and potential behavioral changes of the respondents in the application of the message(s) preached each Sunday during the six-week period. I conducted the online survey utilizing statements (Likert scale) and follow-up questions collected through *Survey Monkey*. I recorded all the focus group sessions and collected the recordings in separate folders of a digital recorder. In addition, members of the research team manually distributed and collected the pre-questionnaires on the first Sunday before each series started. Likewise, they manually distributed and collected the post-questionnaires on the last Sunday each series ended.

In addition, I produced sermon series cards and manually distributed them in December and January encouraging all worship attendees to answer the online survey and be part of the focus group. Furthermore, I encouraged all worship attendees to be part of Connection Point's e-mail list via a link on Connection Point's Web page. Both, sermon series cards and e-mail sent to worship attendees who chose to sign up for the e-mail list, served as weekly reminders of the online survey and encouraged participation in the focus group sessions every Sunday.

### **Data Analysis**

I formatted the questions present in the online survey as quantitative statements (Likert scale) and follow-up qualitative questions. The answers to the survey quantitative statements by participants were collected and preliminarily analyzed via *Survey Monkey*. Likewise, the answers to the follow-up questions were collected and preliminarily analyzed via *Survey Monkey*. As previously mentioned, I digitally recorded the focus group sessions and filed the recordings in separate folders of a digital recorder. I listened to each focus group session individually multiple times and manually transcribed the recordings into separate word document files. Then I made an individual analysis of each session in order to find recurring themes or patterns in the participants' discussions. Lastly, the purpose for the pre- and post-questionnaires was to evaluate the worship attendees' cognition regarding biblical knowledge before and after each sermon series. Therefore, I analyzed the pre- and post-questionnaires by comparing and contrasting the answers before and after the series ended.

## **Generalizability**

People immersed in this twenty-first century culture are *bombarded* by multiple images every day, ranging from cell phones with interactive functions at the touch of the screen to large three-dimensional screens in movie theaters. Churches cannot help but be immersed in the same visual images. The vast majority of the churches, especially *emerging* ones, have been using visual images as a way to engage and communicate with an image-driven culture.

Based on the definition of terms, I consider Connection Point an *emerging* church and intentionally utilized visual images as an important tool to engage and communicate with an ethnically, economically, and biblically diverse audience. This project presumed that visual images are crucial tools for engaging and communicating with such a diverse and image-driven audience. Therefore, the number one purpose for this project was to understand how effective these visual images were in helping this diverse and image-driven audience to respond affectively, learn, and apply the message. The generalization of this study might be helpful to other *emerging* churches utilizing visual images in the attempt to communicate with people immersed in a postmodern, post-Christian, and, more importantly, an image-driven culture. However, given the limitation of this study to fifty worship attendees of a diverse congregation in the Milwaukee metro area, the findings of this study can only be generalized to other congregations to the degree they are similar to Connection Point. I believe, though, if this study had been applied to a broader spectrum of churches across the United States, the findings might have been more accurate or perhaps even surprising when reviewed, considering the effectiveness of

visual images and the affective response, learning, and application of Sunday messages by a visually driven audience.

### **Theological Foundation**

God is clearly interested in communicating with his creation through images in both the Old and New Testaments. More precisely, God revealing himself through Jesus Christ to an intellectually, economically, theologically, and culturally diverse audience was the climax of God communicating with human beings through visual images. In Colossians 1:15, the apostle Paul asserts, “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation.” A number of authors classify Colossians 1:15 within the category of an *early Church Christian hymn* along with Philippians 2:5-11, Ephesians 2:14-16, 1 Timothy 3:16, Titus 3:4-7, 1 Peter 3:18-22, and 2 Timothy 2:11-13. In other words, the apostle Paul intentionally chose poetic language to express powerful theological and biblical truths. The church in Colossae had not been planted directly by Paul as had the church in Galatia. Therefore, Paul did not know the people in Colossae as well as he knew the people in Galatia. However, the one thing of which Paul was probably very aware was that the core of the gospel, the doctrine of Christ, was being threatened by false teachings. Interestingly enough, Paul did not get *defensive* when talking about the doctrine of Christ to a new church plant in Colossae. Paul started by making a positive statement on the doctrine of Christ through a *hymn*. F. F. Bruce says that *the hymn* follows neither Hebrew nor Greek poetry. Instead, it is *rhythmical prose* (99). The fact is Paul might have chosen to communicate the doctrine of Christ utilizing a *hymn in rhythmical prose* because, being a church planter, he knew that he needed to be relevant to his audience. Colossae was a

strategic commercial city attracting a diverse group of people from different racial ethnic and religious backgrounds. More precisely, the community (society) in Colossae was filled with *Greek cults that appealed to people* (Christensen 318). Being a church planter of a number of churches, Paul wanted to communicate *the doctrine of Christ* in a way that was truthful and relevant to the local community. Paul used a *hymn in rhythmical prose* because it might have been more appealing to the culture in Colossae, which was accustomed to *Greek cults*. In fact, their cults involved lots of *mystery* and *imageries* (e.g., cult to Cybele, Isis, Apollo, and cult of Mithraism). Therefore, Paul used not only poetic language but specific words to describe his Christology.

One crucial Greek word Paul used in Colossians 1:15 is *Εικον*, which can be translated either as *icon* or *image*. Some authors say that Paul intentionally used *image* because his first experience in understanding who Christ was had to do with *image*—Damascus Road (Bruce 100). Paul's experience in Damascus could very well have been the foundational reason why Paul used the word *image* referring to Christ as the image of God. By emphasizing the word *image*, Paul might have been missionally sensitive in order to appeal to the culture in Colossae immersed in *imageries*. More precisely, Paul emphasizes a discrepancy of a sense of *mystery* when talking about *the invisible God* and a sense of tangibility when saying that Christ was the *image of the invisible God*. Using the *visible* with the *invisible* side by side is an appealing contrast. The Colossian church was probably *blown away* by the possibility of the *invisible God who is visible, tangible, incarnate, and relational*. David H. Johnson states, "The 'image of God' is now Christ, who is the new or second Adam. And it is in Christ, who is before all things, that all things cohere" (11). The fact is Paul builds his Christology using a language that seemed

appealing to a culture immersed and attracted to imageries. Therefore, Colossians 1:15 was the theological and biblical foundation to help me explore the different visual images God used to communicate with human beings in both the Old and New Testaments. My ultimate goal was to improve the means of communication of the gospel to an ethnically diverse, postmodern, post-Christian, and, in many ways, image-driven culture in the twenty first-century in the United States.

### **Overview**

The God who revealed himself through Jesus Christ to an intellectually, economically, theologically, and culturally diverse audience will be more fully discussed in Chapter 2. This revelation was the climax of God communicating with human beings through visual images. Furthermore, Chapter 2 establishes the foundational review of literature in the areas of the history of persuasion utilizing visual images (pre-modernity, modernity, and postmodernity), social science that includes researches and instruments utilized to measure persuasiveness of visual images, and emerging churches utilizing visual images as persuasive tools to help communicate the gospel effectively. Chapter 3 presents a detailed discussion of the methodology based on an explanatory, quasi-experimental, mixed-methods design. The presentation explains the instrumentation, data collection, and analysis based on the gathered data from the participants of a qualitative and quantitative survey. Chapter 4 reports the findings of the study. Chapter 5 provides the results and a discussion of the study as a whole.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

People immersed in postmodern culture are visually driven in the twenty-first century in the United States. Connection Point Church, for the most part, attracted a postmodern, ethnically diverse, and de-churched population. One of the major challenges to preaching and teaching in such a diverse environment was to find out how effective the biblical messages that utilize visual images were to such a diverse audience. Therefore, the purpose of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness of visual images to a postmodern, ethnically, and biblically diverse audience in regard to their affective response, understanding, and application of a series of sermons preached over the period of six weeks at Connection Point Church during the primary worship experience.

#### **Theological Framework**

Images are powerful and a constant means of communication between God and human beings. God is clearly interested in communicating with his creation through images in both the Old and New Testaments. As previously stated in Chapter 1, God revealing himself through Jesus Christ to an intellectually, economically, theologically, and culturally diverse audience was the climax of God communicating with human beings through visual images. Therefore, as a way to point to his climax of visual communication fully revealed in Jesus Christ, God seems to have artistically and creatively to have utilized different visual images from Genesis to Revelation. Winn Griffin states, “The Story told from Genesis to Revelation is God’s story and it is theological. However, different readings of the Story present one of the many colored hues of the Story, so it is with the Kingdom of God” (181). Sweet seems to complement

Griffin's perspective concerning visual imageries and other forms of communication present in the Bible. He says, "The Bible 'thinks,' not in propositions and bullet points, but in images, metaphors, narratives, symbols, and songs" (*Gospel* 113). Based on perspectives such as Griffin's and Sweet's, the Bible should be read from Genesis to Revelation as one Story that God chose to tell using different visual imageries.

### **Images of God in the Old Testament**

Jacob—a cheater, a deceiver, and homeless wanderer in the middle of nowhere—fled from his brother Esau and went to an unknown land. God used images in dreams to reveal himself to Jacob:

As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway. At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, "I am the Lord, the God of your grand-father Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac." Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it." (Gen. 28:12-13; 16)

In fact, until Genesis 28, God did not seem to be part of Jacob's life. When Jacob deceived his father Isaac, pretending to be Esau in order to receive the blessing as the first-born son, Isaac became suspicious and questioned if the one who got the goats and prepared the food so quickly was truly Esau: "Isaac asked, 'How did you find it [the young goats to prepare the food] so quickly, my son?' 'The Lord your God put it in my path!' Jacob replied" (Gen. 27:20). The phrase *the Lord your God* gives an indication that Jacob did not recognize God as his God. Furthermore, Victor P. Hamilton says that Jacob, a liar by nature, would do anything to cover up *the duplicity* of his character. He was even willing to appeal to a *deity* he might not even believe existed (220). The fact is, when God met Jacob in *the middle of nowhere (Luz-Bethel)*, he seemed to introduce himself intentionally through visual images. Michael D. Oblath argues that Jacob's response in recognizing *God's presence in the place* was due to the strong visual imagery

present in the dream, such as *the gate or stairway of heaven and God standing on top of it*. Cornelis Houtman diverges from Oblath's perspective. He says that Jacob's response in recognizing God's presence had to do with the *nowhere place of Luz-Bethel* becoming a special place. According to Cornelis Houtman, *Luz-Bethel* was a place where heaven literally touched earth or "where heaven and earth melted into one" (345). Walter Brueggemann leans towards a balance among the place, visual, and audio involved in God's encounter with Jacob. He argues that, although the *non-place* became a *crucial place*, Jacob's response cannot be exclusively attributed to the physical presence of heaven on earth nor can it be attributed exclusively to powerful visual imagery:

In such encounters as this one (vv. 12-15), there are often two elements, the visual and the auditory. While the former may fascinate us, the point of exposition must be the speech. God commits himself to the empty-handed fugitive. It is a promise of royal dimension. (244-45)

Once again, Brueggemann's analysis of Jacob's response leans towards the audio. He certainly does not downplay the value of the visual imagery in this situation. In fact, Brueggemann says that the visual imagery present in Jacob's dream made God and his promises clear to Jacob: "The appearance of God leads Jacob to make deep commitments and overriding decisions. The appearance presents a word of promise which demands a decision" (248). If Brueggemann's argument is right, a physical presence of heaven on earth, God's speech making a covenant, and powerful visual imageries were necessary for Jacob to recognize God's presence in *Luz-Bethel*.

Powerful visual imageries, physical presence, and covenantal words in a dream seem to be the right formula for God's self-revelation and communication with Jacob. In the case of Moses, however, visual imageries that *feel like a dream* seemed to be the key communication tools:

There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it." (Exod. 3:2-3)

An initial glance at the story of Exodus 3:2-3 might lead one to believe that an angel in the middle of a bush on fire but not burning up is the key communication tool between God and Moses. More precisely, it might lead one to believe that the visual imageries involved were responsible for Moses to feel attracted to, to listen to, and to respond to God's calling for his life. Kathy Beach-Verhey says that the visual imageries play a very significant role in this story. More precisely, she says that human beings are naturally attracted to fire, gravitating between awe and fear. Therefore, argues Beach-Verhey, the text is clear in that God first utilized the burning bush as visual imagery to get Moses' attention before he started speaking (181). Etan Levine not only seems to agree but also to complement Beach-Verhey's perspective. He says that, from a Midrash's perspective, a lowly burning bush was a powerful symbol of God's care for Israel's situation of oppression and depression. He chose to communicate through an image representing his anguish and how he related to Israel's sense of humiliation. According to Levine, the visual imagery of the burning bush was so crucial in this process that he goes as far as to say, "God showed Moses the bush, and then the light, and then the glow of the angel, and then the presence of God. And only at that point did He call to him from the bush" (28). Beach-Verhey and especially Levine might not be downplaying God's presence as an important factor in his communication with Moses. However, they seem to be avid defenders of God, not imposing but appealing to human beings' imaginations in order to communicate and reveal himself. Carol L. Meyers recognizes that the burning bush was an important aspect of God's self-revelation and calling in Moses' life. However, she says that God's presence in the bush must be recognized as the crucial factor in the

situation. Actually, she argues that the mentioning of the angel instead of God in the story was due to the biblical narrator feeling uncomfortable with the idea of mentioning a *physical manifestation of God* (52). Furthermore, Meyers goes on to say, “Moses’ amazement at the visual impact of the intact fiery bush is intensified by the sound of God’s voice calling his name” (53). Meyers proposes a more balanced perspective of Moses and the burning bush episode. For Meyers, the combination of a visual image, God’s presence, and God’s voice that causes Moses to be impacted by God’s self-revelation and to listen to God’s calling for his life.

For Moses, God’s self-revelation and calling is initiated through unusual visual imagery of a burning bush that might have looked like a dream. The prophet Isaiah seemed to have a similar experience when he heard his calling:

I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they flew. Their voices shook the Temple and its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke. (Isa. 6:1-4)

The impact of the visual imageries and God’s presence are such in Isaiah’s situation that his response seems different than Moses’. More precisely, the text indicates that Isaiah spontaneously confesses and, almost immediately, accepts God’s calling. In fact, both Moses and Isaiah received very difficult callings after being impacted by the vision and presence of God. In the case of Isaiah, he was to preach to people who were not necessarily going to listen to him (vv. 9-10). John Calvin seems to lean toward this perspective of the impact of the visual imagery and God’s presence on Isaiah. He argues that Isaiah 6 was not Isaiah’s first call from God. Calvin says that Isaiah already had been a prophet and now was *overpowered by this extraordinary vision as to forget that he was a prophet*:

For there was no feeling in him which was not overpowered by the presence of God, so that, like one who had lost his senses, he willingly plunged himself in darkness, or rather, like one who despaired of life, he of his own accord chose to die. (*Calvin's Bible Commentaries: Isaiah 177*)

For Calvin, the combination of the visual imageries and God's overwhelming presence impacted Isaiah—someone already called to prophetic ministry. George A. Buttrick agreed with Calvin's perspective: "The vision came to Isaiah apparently when he was participating as an official prophet in the ceremonies of the cult..." (5: 207). If both Calvin's and Buttrick's perspectives are right, the overwhelming imageries and presence of God caused Isaiah's second response to prophetic ministry.

Visual imageries and God's presence seem to walk with God's self-revelation and calling of individuals such as Jacob, Moses, and Isaiah. However, in some situations in the Old Testament, God's overwhelming presence does not necessarily imply a calling of specific individuals even when visual imageries are involved. One of these situations is found in Exodus 40:34-35: "Then the cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. Moses could no longer enter the Tabernacle because the cloud had settled down over it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle." Meredith G. Kline argues that the imagery and the overwhelming and visible presence of God in the tabernacle were meant to be symbols signifying a replica of the invisible temple:

The motif of the heavenly angelic court found in the two golden cherubim above the ark was repeated in the cherubim figures portrayed on the inside covering of the tabernacle. And the fiery radiance of the Glory-court was mirrored by the use of flame-colored linen for that inner, cherubim-filled covering. (44)

Marc Vervenne gives a slightly different perspective when he entertains the possibility that Exodus 40 is part of a sequence of theophanies that unfolds throughout the book of Exodus. He says that this overarching theme makes its first appearance in the revelation

to Moses at the burning bush, reaches its climax in the Sinai, and comes to its final completion in the revelation to Moses in chapters 33-34. Then, he says, “The book closes with the descent of the cloud on the ‘Tent of Meeting,’ as the radiance of the *kabod* fills the tabernacle (40, 34-35)” (113). Vervenne does not believe the passage focuses so much on visual imageries impacting individual lives or a group of people. Instead, Exodus 40:34-35 is about God’s presence that impacts and serves different purposes.

The diversity of visual imageries God utilized in the Old Testament goes beyond the purpose of self-revelation and the call of individuals such as Jacob. It goes beyond his physical presence in the form of a burning bush, smoke filling the room, blazing fire, and angels ascending and descending, *linking heaven and earth*. God’s communication also occurred through signs such as the rainbow:

I am giving you a sign as evidence of my eternal covenant with you and all living creatures. I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my permanent promise to you and to all the earth. (Gen. 9:12)

W. Sibley Towner entertains the possibility that the rainbow was not simply a symbol as a reminder of God’s promise to Noah. Instead, it was a visual image for both human beings and God, reminding God of his covenant. The rainbow was a visual image powerful enough to prevent God from getting angry again: “Even when God is justifiably enraged at human behavior the rainbow says to God’s self, ‘Self, don’t do it!’ ‘I will remember’” (170). Yair Lorberbaum shares a similar view, saying that rainbows was are “not only expressions of Divine love but also, to the contrary, tools for control of His anger and fury, lest He be unable to prevent His anger from bursting forth again” (539). For Towner and Lorberbaum, the rainbow was simply a sign to control an angry God. K. A. Matthews moves in a different direction, inferring that the rainbow was a visual image

God created and chose to use to reveal himself as a God of hope and second chances. Furthermore, Matthews says that the rainbow must be seen first and foremost as a visible token of God's invisible grace. It is a sign of the Lord's majestic presence and self-revelation to Noah and all human beings (409). The rainbow is "a testimony of the presence of the Lord, who has revealed himself through both destruction and preservation of all that has life on the earth" (409). Therefore, based on Matthews' perspective, the rainbow can be seen as powerful visual imagery that is a constant reminder of God's presence and grace.

The diversity of visual imagery God utilized to reveal himself and communicate with human beings in the Old Testament is extensive. God's revelation and communication utilizing visual images also happened indirectly in the Old Testament. More precisely, Psalms is one of the books of the Old Testament where God inspired individuals to write about him through a wide range of visual imageries (e.g., rock, mountain, fortress, light, shepherd). William P. Brown says, "The Psalms must be regarded as the font of scriptural imagination, for there is no better place to find rhythm, metaphor, and imagery in the Scripture than in the Psalter" (12). One of the most well-known images portrayed by the psalmist is God as the shepherd found in Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need." Hosia Lee Henley, Sr. and Garnett Lee Henley entertain the idea that the psalmist creatively places himself in the position of a sheep when writing Psalm 23:

Sheep are some of the most helpless animals that God created. They can't protect themselves from any predator, and they lack the mental abilities to find food and shelter on their own. So David declared, "I shall not want" as a testimony to the faithfulness of God as a "provider" shepherd. (182)

Though difficult to be sure what the psalmist's real intent was in portraying God as the shepherd, Henley and Henley seem to present a plausible perspective. Buttrick presents a similar approach, saying that, unlike some other psalms, Psalm 23 does not present images of complaints, pains, sickness, or treachery of enemies. Instead, the psalmist begins and ends Psalm 23 with "words of grateful acknowledgment of the never-failing goodness of the Lord" (4: 123). Calvin seems to agree with Buttrick and actually goes further, saying that Psalm 23 is not simply a psalm about thanksgiving and recognition of God—the shepherd's ever-present faithfulness. Instead, Psalm 23 should be seen as occurring when King David experienced a time of prosperity in his kingdom, which adds greater value to the psalm:

Jehovah is my shepherd. Although God, by his benefits, allures us to himself, as it were by a taste of his fatherly sweetness, yet there is nothing into which we more easily fall than into a forgetfulness of him, when we are in the enjoyment of peace and comfort. (*Calvin's Bible Commentaries: Psalms* 340)

Therefore, when Calvin's perspective is taken into consideration, the primary intent of the psalmist might have been to challenge everyone to remember God the shepherd at all times, even in times of prosperity.

Despite using a wide range of visual imagery to reveal himself and to communicate throughout the Old Testament, God states through Moses in Exodus 20:4, "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea." This verse can be interpreted in a number of ways. Perhaps, one of the most popular ideas can be simply stated as God was prohibiting idolatry. Clyde A. Holbrook argues that God was not simply prohibiting idolatry for the sake of prohibiting it. Instead, he says, "If graven images lead to the idolatry of the

senses, so also the images of the mind can lead to the deeper idolatry of the spirit” (19). Based on Holbrook’s perspective, God’s prohibition of images is not simply a legalistic statement about idolatry of images. More precisely, God—who revealed himself multiple times through visual imageries—knows more than anyone the power of visual imagery. Thomas B. Dozeman argues that the rationale behind Exodus 20:4 cannot and should not be oversimplified. Instead, God’s statement in Exodus 20:4 should be seen as a tridimensional statement. He says that three *rationales* should be considered in Exodus 20:4. The prohibition in Exodus 20:4 is about idols as it refers to all visual and representational art (484). In addition, it has to do with *bowing down* and *worshipping* idols. Interestingly enough, Dozeman also argues that Exodus 20:4 has to do with Yahweh being a jealous God *with the passion of an offended lover in the account of the wife suspected of adultery* (Num. 5:11-3; 485). For Dozeman, the combination of these three rationales resulted in God’s prohibition of visual imagery in Exodus 20:4. Buttrick takes a slightly different approach. He says that God is Spirit and as such cannot be reproduced through images. Furthermore, he goes on to say, “When one penetrates to the most secret heart of the tabernacle, to ark of the testimony in the holy of holies, one finds that it is empty” (1: 982). He argues that God’s prohibition relates to the impossibility of representing what is intangible. In fact, the literature reviews on Exodus 20:4 lean towards God’s prohibition of visual imagery as something to do with human beings’ tendency to worship many things other than God.

The general perception when doing Bible surveys and literature reviews on different passages in the Old Testament is that God intentionally seems to utilize a diverse range of visual imageries to communicate with human beings. As mentioned

earlier, if the Bible is read as God's story, he has chosen progressively creative ways to communicate and to reveal himself to human beings. Therefore, the richness and diversity of visual images and other means of communication in the Bible should not be considered as exclusive to the Old Testament but is also present in the New Testament.

### **Images of God in the New Testament**

In the New Testament, God intentionally continues to communicate through visual imageries. However, the images in the New Testament occurred through unique genres. One of the well-known genres in the New Testament is parables—stories. More precisely, God tells stories in the Old Testament through a number of individuals. In the New Testament, God chose to tell powerful stories himself. Griffin explains the long history of storytelling:

God chose to give us his Story through many different authors, media, and centuries. The Story comes through many books written over a 1500-year period with no fewer than forty authors. These individuals included kings, prophets, shepherds, philosophers, the educated, and the unlearned. Together they all have historical context and together deliver HIStory.  
(16)

For Griffin, the Bible is a natural progression of God's story. Furthermore, Jesus, God incarnate, chose stories over and above any other form of communication as stated by Matthew 13:1-3, 34:

Later that same day Jesus left the house and sat beside the lake. A large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat there and taught as the people stood on the shore. He told many stories in the form of parables. Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables.

Thomas E. Boomershine says that Jesus chose to tell stories because that was part of an Israel tradition and helped to build community. He elaborates on the importance of telling stories in Jesus' time, saying, "In telling and listening to the stories of Jesus, early

Christians made connections with their own lives that made clear to them how God was present” (19). Griffin and Boomershine share a similar perspective. For Griffin, the tradition of telling stories around the campfires of Israel was as much “Bible” for them as the “written” word is a “Bible” for people today (15). Based on Boomershine’s and Griffin’s views, oral communication was the key ingredient to engaging the audience in Jesus’ time affectively. Matthew 13 specifically says that Jesus told *stories in the form of parables* and *he never spoke to them without using such parables*.

Mark Miller says that the parables were not simple illustrations. They were the message itself through visual images. He goes on to say, “The stories themselves revealed the hidden mysteries of God” (39). Furthermore, Paul Mark Achtemier shares Miller’s perspective concerning Jesus’ parables. He says that the effectiveness of the parables was directly related to powerful and familiar images: “The parables were an especially effective means of teaching, engaging the hearts and minds of the common people with memorable stories and vivid images drawn from their everyday experiences” (61). In Matthew 13, Jesus used everyday situations and images well-known to his audience—agriculture. Therefore, for Miller and Achtemier, every time Jesus described a scene of a seed falling on different kinds of soil, his audience knew, and could visually identify with, what he was saying. Furthermore, the parables created a mental picture powerful enough to help Jesus teach his audience. In fact, Sweet says that Jesus utilized parables as his communication style because they were great images and animations. He goes on to say that Jesus’ communication style was “dominated by mental pictures that conveyed more than words. Jesus taught in parables, analogies, figures of speech, and startling metaphors to stir the sediment of people’s hearts and open their eyes to the

deeper meanings of life” (*SoulTsunami* 203). Sweet’s goes deeper than Miller’s and Achtemier’s views of Jesus’ parables. He indicates that the mental pictures present in Jesus’ parables impacted his audience deeply. Furthermore, Sweet attempts to shed some light on Jesus’ response to people’s reactions, including his disciples’, to the parables. More precisely, for Sweet, Jesus’ parables caused his audience to think and wrestle with a number of things in their own lives. Perhaps, some things were not comfortable for them to deal and, therefore, classified as difficult to be understood. Buttrick gives a different spin on the impact of Jesus’ parables and the need for explanation. He points out the fact that the early Church created the doctrine of election based on passages such as Matthew 13:13, 36 (7: 410). According to Buttrick, the images present in Jesus’ parables were not necessarily powerful mental pictures for the early Church. Instead, the parables should be primarily seen as Jesus saying that some were already elected to understand while others were not. The fact is, even if the doctrine of election is taken into consideration in Matthew 13, Jesus’ communication style is undeniable. He utilized a wide variety of parables and metaphors and is registered by all four Gospels.

The Gospels of John, Luke, and Mark, but especially Matthew, is filled with Jesus’ parables (e.g., farmer scattering seed, the wheat and weeds, mustard seed, yeast, hidden treasure and pearl, fishing net, lost sheep, and unforgiving debtor). Boomershine summarizes the idea of the New Testament being filled with so many stories in an interesting manner. He says that the word *gospel* is a shortened form of an Old English word *godspell*, which means *good tale*. He goes on to say, “In the Old English, therefore, the word that was the best equivalent for the Latin word, *evangelium*, was a tale whose telling had power” (16). Based on Boomershine’s proposition, parables were powerful.

Joel B. Green, Scott McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall place a slightly different emphasis on the impact and purpose of the parables registered by the four Gospel writers. They say that Jesus' parables were both *works of art* and *weapons* he used in situations of conflict with his opponents (see Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1. Jesus' Parables from the Gospels**

<b>Occasion</b>	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
Lesson on salt and light	5:13-16			
Lesson on treasures	6:19-24			
Lesson on the narrow gate	7:13-14			
Lesson on a tree and its fruit	7:15-20			
Lesson on a strong foundation	7:21-29			
Jesus as yokefellow	11:28-30			
Parable of the four soils	13:1-9	4:1-9	8:4-8	
Parable of the growing seed		4:26-29		
Parable of the weeds	13:24-30			
Lesson on the light of the body			11:33-36	
Parable of the mustard seed	13:31-32	4:30-34	13:18-19	
Parable of the yeast	13:33-35		13:20-21	
Parable of the hidden treasure	13:44			
Parable of the pearl merchant	13:45-46			
Parable of the dragnet	13:47-52			
Lesson on the inner defilement	15:1-20	7:1-23		
Lesson on self-denial	16:24-28	8:31-9:1	9:21-27	
Parable of the lost sheep	18:12-14		15:1-7	
Parable of the lost coin			15:8-10	
Lesson on the gate for the sheep				10:7-10

Source: Akkerman 41.

Furthermore, Green, McKnight, and Marshall say that the parables were methods Jesus chose to “explain the kingdom of God and to show the character of God and the expectations God has for people” (59). They try to keep a balance between the undeniable richness of images and deep theological/biblical truths present in Jesus’ parables. In some ways, Green, McKnight, and Marshall’s approach is very similar to what Sweet said about Jesus’ parables and metaphors.

Though parables can be considered Jesus' preferred communication style, they were not the only situations involving powerful images in Jesus' ministry. More precisely, miraculous signs and wonders could be perceived as the four dimensional version of visual imageries Jesus utilized to reveal himself and communicate his message concerning God's kingdom, as discussed by Horace Bushnell:

He that trod the sea, and raised the dead, and burst the bars of death Himself, can tame the passions, sweeten the bitter affections, regenerate the inbred diseases, and rollback all the storms of the mind. Assured in this manner by His miracles, they become arguments of trust, a storehouse of powerful images.... (254)

Although Bushnell's approach seems more a poetic manner to talk about Jesus' miracles, it points to an important aspect of Jesus' ministry: All four Gospels report Jesus' miraculous signs and wonders with the Gospels of Luke and Mark being filled throughout with their stories. In Mark 2:12, after Jesus healed the paralyzed man, Mark reports the crowd's reaction: "They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, 'We've never seen anything like this before!'" Green, McKnight, and Marshall propose that miracles such as the one registered in Mark 2:12 is not necessarily about God utilizing visual imageries to reveal himself. Instead, Jesus' miracles should be analyzed first and foremost from the perspective of the proclamation of the kingdom of God. More precisely, they argued that, for Mark, Jesus' miracles should be primarily viewed as "episodic manifestations of the advent of the kingdom of God" (552). Jeffrey J. Davis is more in line with Bushnell's view on Jesus miracles. He says that almost all of the miracles of Jesus registered in the Gospels either illustrate the power of the Messiah or *they were picture lessons of spiritual truth*. He goes on to say, "Miracles were powerful signs and powerful pictures. They were carefully chosen to compliment [sic] the teachings of Jesus" (58). Davis' perspective is not the only way to look at Jesus'

miracles. However, the richness of the images present in a number of Jesus' miracles seems undeniable. Some of the miracles where the richness of the images can be identified are *the feeding of the five (four) thousand*, *walking on water*, *the raising of Lazarus (unique to the Gospel of John)*, and *the Transfiguration*. In fact, the Transfiguration found in Mark 9:2-3 could be called God's snapshot of self-revelation: "As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed, and his clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them." David J. Lose argues that during the Transfiguration, "[i]n essence, the disciples witness a preview of Jesus' resurrected state. His glimpse of glory confirms the necessity of their following him down that road" (89). For Lose, the disciples were impacted by the glimpse of the glory they saw and positively responded by choosing to continue to follow Jesus. Morna D. Hooker offers a different approach, saying that the Transfiguration is a symbolic writing of the resurrection of Jesus. She also says that it could be understood as a *heavenly confirmation of Jesus' identity* (214). Hooker focuses on the possible meaning instead of the impact of the visual imageries on the disciples. Buttrick offers a more balanced approach, arguing that the event was indeed a validation of Jesus as the Messiah and *a symbol* of his coming glorified state. He goes on to say that the Transfiguration "was a high hour of vision which the disciples could trust" (7: 775). Buttrick sees a balance between the meaning and the impact of the visual imageries of the Transfiguration on the disciples.

In addition to Jesus' parables and miraculous signs, other circumstances involving visual imageries in the Gospels were appearances by angels. Angels' appearances were registered in details in the Gospel of Luke and with lesser details in the Gospel of

Matthew. However, the response from those who experienced such visual imageries seemed to be the same—fear:

As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit.” (Matt. 1:20)

Verlyn D. Verbrugge understands that the response of fear to the visual imagery of angels had nothing to do with a nostalgic Christmas image of a heavenly choir, complete with long robes, *arranged in neat rows with sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses and singing a song of victory* (310). Rather, says Verbrugge, “These spiritual soldiers are ready to serve, to do battle on behalf of the Song of God. They are ready to fight against the spiritual hosts of wickedness that are gearing up to destroy Jesus” (310). For Verbrugge, the visual imagery of the angel who appeared to Joseph was intimidating enough to cause him to fear and to listen and obey. John Nolland takes a different approach about the angel’s appearance in Joseph’s situation and his response. He says that the angel’s appearance to Joseph should be looked at as the angel giving Joseph the right information. Therefore, the right information caused Joseph to redirect his decision and choose to marry Mary. Nolland goes on to say, “Matthew’s angel of God is, in line with later Jewish thought, a messenger of God rather than, as in Genesis, a way of speaking about the presence of God himself” (97). Nolland focuses on how God’s purpose was being accomplished instead of on the impact of visual imageries. R. T. France also looked at Matthew 1:20 from the perspective that the angel was fulfilling his function as a messenger. However, he also brings up the fact that God communicates with Joseph four times in dreams with the last one being through an angel as a messenger. Furthermore, France says that divine guidance by dreams and angels emphasized “the

initiative of God in guiding actions through [Joseph's] crucial period" (52). Like Nolland, France does not seem to focus too much on the impact of visual imageries through angels. Instead, he recognizes the richness and importance of dreams as one of God's communication strategies present in both the Old and New Testaments.

The Gospels include a diverse spectrum of situations involving communication through visual imageries. However, several other books in the New Testament should be highlighted as containing some peculiar situations involving visual imageries. More precisely, in Acts 2:1-4, Luke describes a mighty wind filling the house where the believers (assuming the 120 in the upper room) were getting together: "Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them" (Acts 2:2-3). C. Peter Wagner holds that the sound was not the simple inner experience of a group dynamic. Instead, it was loud and unusual enough that *people who were in the Temple area of Jerusalem, or from other parts of the city as well, were drawn toward it* (67). C. K. Barrett presents a more theological and tangible approach of the presence of the wind. For Barrett, the wind graphically described in Acts 2, is a *theophany* that similarly occurs in other passages such as 1 Kings 19:11, Isaiah 66:15, and Ezra 13:10. It is a physical manifestation of the presence of God much as when he gave the law to his servant Moses. For Barrett, Acts 2 shows that God has a technicolor and tridimensional preference in his way of communicating. David G. Peterson takes a different approach saying that the episode in Acts 2:2-3 was about God's presence empowering individuals so that they can fulfill His purpose. Furthermore, he says that the visual imageries of the tongues of fire were meant to be the blessing of

God's Spirit resting upon each individual member of the believing community (133). Peterson indicates that Acts 2:2-3 should be primarily viewed as God's purpose for the community instead of the visual imageries as God's means of communication. Whether or not Acts 2:2-3 should be looked at from this perspective, Luke paints a rich visual picture of the situation that, in many ways, is similar to what John does in the book of Revelation.

The book of Revelation is another unique genre of communication through images that should be highlighted. In fact, Revelation can be considered a biblical book that is a mix of dream and vision. Moreover, God intentionally used intriguing images to impact and reveal himself. Gregory K. Beale starts by saying that people are usually not moved to help victims of tragedies until they see pictures. Only then, says Beale, are people moved to contribute to some relief aid being sent to the various ravaged areas. He goes on to say that human beings need something visually radical to get their attention so they can respond to a situation. Beale demonstrates a bridge between this basic human need to be visually driven and the book of Revelation: "The book of Revelation is a good place to see the radical way in which God gets our attention about these [sinful ways]" (54). Therefore, from Beale's perspective, the book of Revelation is God's *radical way* of revealing himself and getting people's attention through intriguing visual images.

Richard Bauckham shares a similar view, saying that readers in the great cities of the province of Asia *were constantly confronted with powerful images of the Roman vision of the world*. He goes on to say, "Civic and religious architecture, iconography, statues, rituals and festivals, even the visual wonder of cleverly engineered ... all provided powerful visual impressions of Roman imperial power..." (17). Authors such as

Bauckham argue that the richness of visual imageries in the book of Revelation served a historical purpose—to get the visual attention of the culture and society at the time. The fact is, theologically speaking, all the powerful visual images God utilized from Genesis to Revelation reached their climax in Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul is the one who perhaps best summarizes God’s image powerfully manifested in Jesus Christ in Colossians 1:15: “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation.” Johnson suggests that Colossians 1:15 should be looked at as a mirror of Genesis 1:26: “Let us make human beings in our own image, to be like us.” More precisely, Johnson goes on to say, “Colossians implies that in Christ the reversal is reversed. The ‘image of God’ is now Christ, who is the new or second Adam” (11). For Johnson, Colossians 1:15 is about Christ as the climax of a God who communicated through images. William Barclay has a different approach, saying that Colossians 1:15 must be looked at as Paul’s answer to the Gnostics. Barclay says that the Gnostics were a group of individuals frustrated with the *unrefined simplicity of Christianity*. Therefore, they wanted Christianity to be more *complex* and *philosophical*. According to Barclay, Gnostics started with the premise that everything that is matter is evil and everything that is spirit is good. Therefore, if *God is good*, Jesus Christ could not be revealed through matter and yet be God. Barclay goes on to say, “That is why Paul insists that God did create the world, and that his agent [image] in creation was ... Jesus Christ, his son” (133). For Buttrick, Colossians 1:15 should be seen as Paul writing about Christ’s title in terms of sovereignty and kingship. He explains that Paul probably drew his argument from the classic idea of kingship developed in Egypt; Pharaoh is called again and again *the living image* of the supreme god (9: 163).

Therefore, Paul took advantage of this classic and perhaps popular idea to state that only one supreme God exists and his living image is Jesus Christ.

Whether or not Colossians 1:15 should be seen as Paul taking advantage of a classic idea to talk about Christ as the image of the invisible God, Paul builds his Christology using a language that seemed appealing to a culture immersed and attracted to imageries. Therefore, Colossians 1:15 was the theological and biblical foundation that helped me explore the different visual images God seemed to have used to communicate with human beings in both the Old and New Testaments.

### **Historical Framework**

If asked, the average person might identify persuasion with a speech by someone who is a *tough-talking salesperson, strongly pushing to close the deal*. Persuasion, however, can be defined as a symbolic process. M. J. Smith says that one possible definition of persuasion is “a symbolic activity whose purpose is to effect the internalization or voluntary acceptance of new cognitive states or patterns of overt behavior through the exchanges of messages” (7). Visual images fall in the category of symbolic activity mentioned by Smith. As symbols, visual images have been *persuading* human beings throughout history.

### **Pre-Modernity**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Plato and Aristotle were some of the first individuals to recognize how persuasive the use of images could be. In the case of Plato, he did not positively recognize the power of image to the extent that he banned painters because of their impact on people’s mood and attitude. Plato’s aversion to visual images might have been directly related to his understanding of persuasion. J. L. Golden, G. F. Berquist, and

W. E. Coleman says that Plato had an ongoing criticism against the Sophists whom, according to Plato, *sacrificed truth at the altar of persuasion* (19). For Plato, persuasion was a way of deceiving people and, therefore, not true philosophy. True philosophy was directly related to *truth—a supreme value*. Richard M. Perloff says the fact that Plato associated persuasion, generally speaking, to what is not true. He is the friend of all those who hate advertisements because they *lie* or stretch the truth (21). He goes on to say that the Sophists, on the contrary, “address those practical persuaders—advertisers, politicians, salespeople—who have to make a living, need practical knowledge to promote their products...” (21). Though polarization over persuasion can be traced back thousands of years through Plato, reconciliation between knowledge and persuasion can also find its roots long ago through Aristotle. In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle seems to bring into reconciliation the polarization between Plato and the Sophists’ approach to persuasion. According to Perloff, Aristotle was the first one who scientifically studied persuasion, adopting the perspective that both Plato and the Sophists were right. Persuasion can be a truthful yet useful method of communication in very practical manners. More precisely, in his scientific approach, “Aristotle proposed that persuasion had three ingredients: *ethos* (the nature of the communicator), *pathos* (emotional state of the audience) and *logos* (message)” (22). Apparently, Aristotle’s scientific approach to persuasion does not directly refer to visual images. However, visual images typically cause some sort of emotional impact on the audience. More precisely, Philip Vassallo says that Aristotle proposed five ways through which the truth can be reached: *via art, science, prudence, wisdom, and intuition* (379). For Valerie J. Smith, when Aristotle’s method (Enthymeme)

is understood more broadly, visual communication can be classified as argumentation and enhances the creditability of visual persuasion:

Enthymemes [Aristotle's method on persuasion] consists not only of logical propositions, expressed or implied, but also of appeals to emotions and character. For Aristotle, these modes of appeal are very closely related because even an emotional response requires reasoned judgment. (120)

Once again, visual images include an emotional component for the audience, which, according to Smith, leads to reasoned judgment. Paul W. Miniard, Sunil Bhatla, Kenneth R. Lord, Peter R. Dickson, and H. Rao Unnava say that pictures play a major role in persuasive messages. They go on to say, "In many situations, particularly those involving 'real world' viewing environments, pictures can lead to greater message processing which would occur otherwise because they are an attention-getting device" (92). Aristotle might not have anticipated that his method of persuasion would have such significance in understanding the persuasiveness of visual images. More precisely, he did not quite anticipate that proposing *arts* as one of *the five ways to reach the truth* would be a great system to develop further research on visual images as persuasive tools. Human history, however, indicates that visual images seem to play a major role in persuasive messages and, in many cases, became the message itself.

### **Modernity**

The shift from pre-modernity to modernity can be understood as one of the key moments in human history when visual images were used to communicate persuasive messages. Many authors recognize the Renaissance as the birth of modernity that happened in the sixteenth century. However, no simple chronological framework can be imposed on the Renaissance. Art historians look back to the painters Giotto and Masaccio (1401-28), to architect Filippo Brunelleschi (1379-1446), or to the sculptors Ghuberti

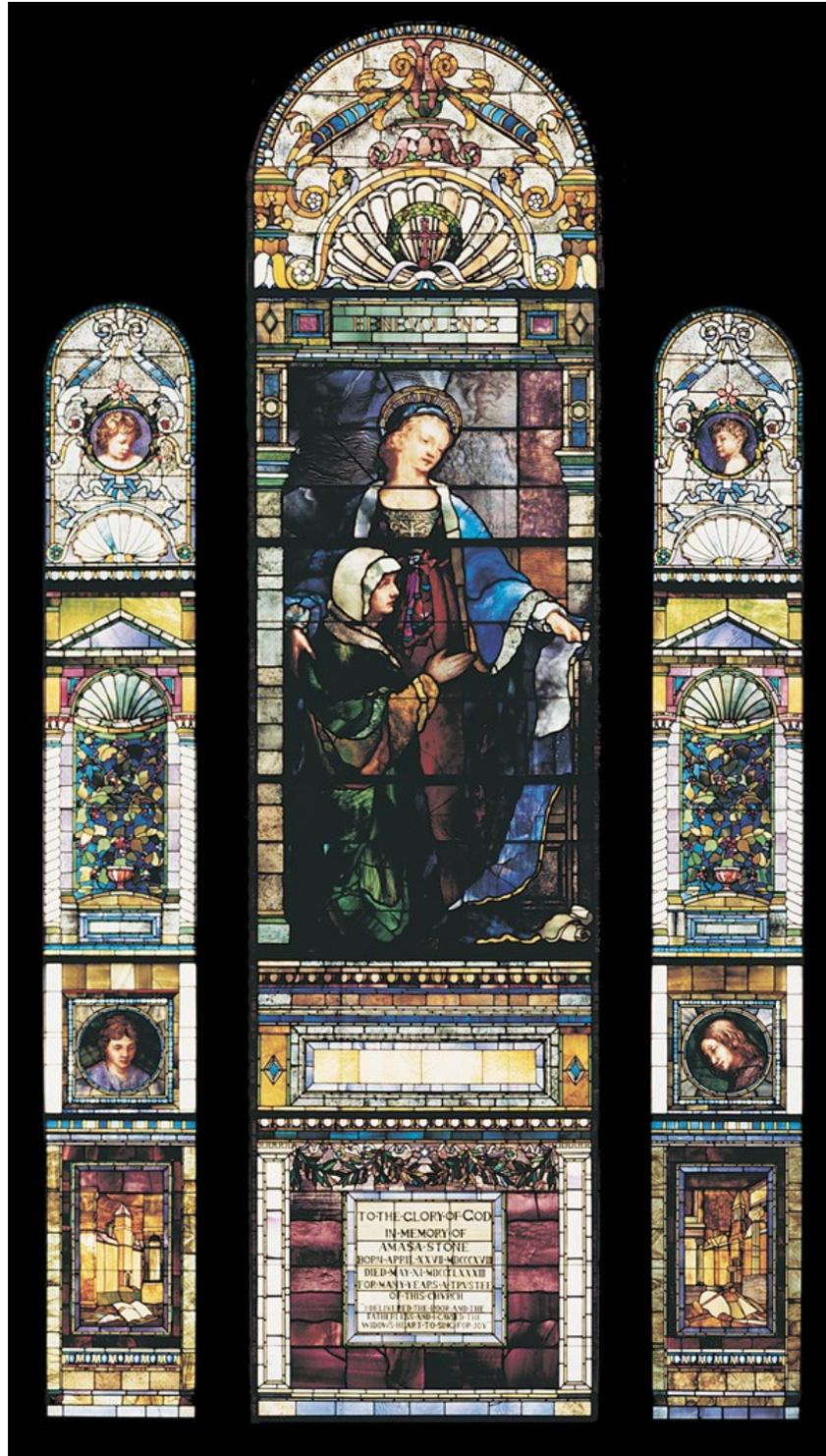
(1378-145) and Donatello (1386-1466; Leithert). The fact is the Renaissance marks the beginning of modernity and is denoted by the emphasis on the human being as the center of reality. It marked the emphasis on humanity's confidence in reason, rationality, and rejection of the supernatural as expressed by Slaughter:

Modernity is a term that goes by other labels: the Age of Enlightenment or the Age of Reason. The basic premise of modernity is that all truth has its basis in matter and can be determined or measured by the scientific method, which uses the five senses (taste, touch, smell, hearing, and sight) to test hypotheses about causes and effects. If an idea or hypothesis can't be proven by science, then it is not "true." (31)

Modernity is a long period that goes from mid-medieval times into the twentieth century. This time that emphasized reason, individualism, and humanism also emphasized taste, touch, smell, hearing, and sight. Furthermore, during this period, the idea of persuasion through visual images unfolded slowly but progressively in a number of directions.

In medieval Europe, the church was considered the most powerful government and a center for the wealthy and educated. Furthermore, anything considered *cutting edge* in communication was confined within the church. At the beginning of the twentieth century, historical indications point out that visual images were an important part of communication for both the educated and uneducated. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the church chose stained glass windows as their main medium to communicate to the masses. They were pieces of art used to communicate to people the dangers of sin, to convince them of the goodness of the church, and to explain why they were to be steadfast in their God-fearing faith. Patrick McCormick emphasizes the persuasiveness of stained glass windows as visual images utilized by the medieval church. He says that though the stained glass windows were often referred to as the *poor man's Bible*, they involved a complex visual vocabulary that identified saints, virtues, articles of faith, Old Testament

prophets and figures, gospel parables and lessons, Christian martyrs and virgins, images of creation, redemption, and the end of time. Furthermore, McCormick gives a fresh perspective on stained glass windows as persuasive visual images saying, “In a [time] before the printing press, stained glass windows were the eye’s visual literature, its movies, television, photo magazines, and billboards rolled into one” (45). Michael W. Michelsen, Jr. talks about a restoration of a stained glass window from the 1885 Old Stone Church in Cleveland, Ohio (see Figure 2.5). One of the artists who worked in the restoration process gives his testimony to Michelsen: “The art is how the stained glass manipulates the light passing through it. The direction the stained glass window faces the sun, the time of the year, and daily weather all affect the light and therefore the stained glass art” (34). Michelsen’s article on restoration offers important additional information to the fact that McCormick defined stained glass windows as the persuasive multimedia of its day.



Source: Breuer.

**Figure 2.5.** The 1885 Old Stone Church in Cleveland, Ohio.

The medieval church utilized the creative minds and skills of great artists to communicate persuasive visual messages. They invested in works of arts such as mosaic, icons, sculptures, and frescoes. A number of the great pictures painted during the Renaissance persuasively communicated the mind-set of the church at that time. One of them is found in the little church of San Zaccaria in Venice through the masterpiece of Giovanni Bellini called *Madonna with Child and Saints*. This piece shows the veneration of the church for the baby Jesus and his mother. It reflected the message that the church wanted communicated and persuaded people at the time. Frost says that the details of the painting of Mary, the mother of Jesus, sitting on a throne and holding the infant Jesus standing on her knee, are striking. Even more breathtaking, says Frost, is Bellini's use of color: "His canvas is infused with rich, mellow glow that conveys a marvelous sense of warmth. It fills the niche in which the Virgin sits enthroned with a gilded atmosphere, typical of the best Renaissance work" (32). In other words, *Madonna with Child and Saints* is the climax of the pure *Christendom* mind-set happening during the Renaissance (see Figure 2.6).



Source: Lubbock.

**Figure 2.6.** The masterpiece of Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna with Child and Saints*.

As mentioned by Frost, the visual attractiveness of the painting emotionally impacted the people. Bellini's work is definitely not alone in its visual attractiveness and, therefore, persuasiveness during the Renaissance. Among many others, the paintings produced by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio were controversial. In *Supper at Emmaus* (1601), Caravaggio paints biblical characters who looked like ordinary people

with faces animated by fear, anger, and compassion. In other words, Caravaggio paintings were visual images of biblical characters as real people dealing with real-life emotions and situations. Frost says, “[Caravaggio] brought the otherworldly realm of the Bible right into the streets and the meal tables of seventeenth-century Rome” (46). Based on Frost’s argument, Caravaggio’s painting *Supper at Emmaus* is probably one of the closest paintings to what Aristotle tried to say when he called art one of the five ways to the truth (see Figure 2.7).



Source: da Caravaggio.

**Figure 2.7.** Caravaggio’s painting, *Supper at Emmaus*.

The Renaissance marked the shift from focus on the supernatural to focus on humanity. Though the church had some importance and influence in society and was still a crucial center in society, its power was slowly but progressively fading away. James

MacCaffrey proposes that the fifteenth century was a period of transition from the ideals of the middle age to modern times, which included the church. He says that society was becoming more secular in its tendencies. Furthermore, he goes on to say, “[The Renaissance was] an age of unrest and of great intellectual activity, and at all such times the claims of the Church as the guardian and expounder of Divine Revelation are sure to be questioned...” (1). For MacCaffrey’s, as society moved forward and the church became no longer the center of authority, education, and *cutting edge* visual communication, persuasion utilizing visual images moved in a number of directions.

One of those directions was utilizing visual images in propaganda. The church can be recognized as the source from where the concept of propaganda may have started (e.g., symbols, stained glass windows, and painting). However, only in the early twentieth century was the modern concept of propaganda established. Martin Loiperdinger reminds how tumultuous the turn of the century was and how the German Navy effectively utilized nonverbal persuasive visual images to gain popularity and support. They promoted major events to display their torpedo boats. Audiences left with the feeling that the navy was an important aspect of German life after viewing films shown at large exhibitions. Furthermore, the films were a “technique [that] offered a vivid experience by presenting the navy itself, thus addressing all classes of the population by creating a special kind of sensation” (307). Unfortunately used for negative and destructive purposes, the propaganda utilized by the Nazi party showed the persuasion of visual images at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Nazi party applied the method of persuasion proposed by Aristotle well but for evil purposes. Perloff says that the US invested in the same method but to prevent Nazi threats. He says the US

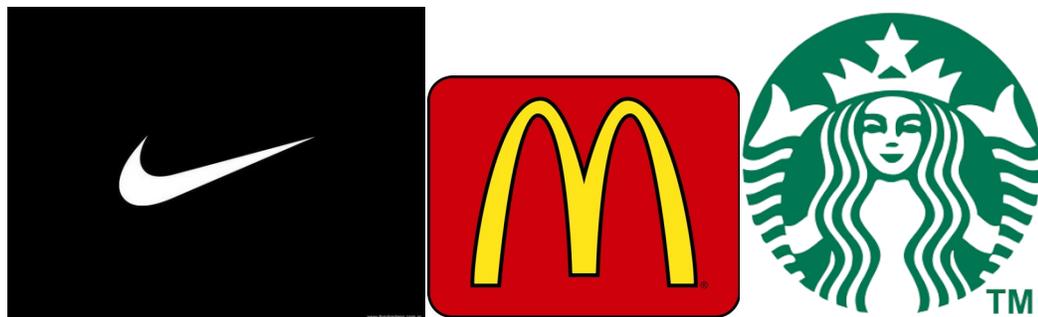
War Department invested in researchers to produce a film to educate Allied soldiers against the Nazi's forces. C. I. Hovland, A. A. Lumsdaine, and F. D. Sheffield speak of the result of this research saying that the studies were the first evidence that communications influenced attitudes. Hovland, Lumsdaine, and Sheffield's studies might not be the only perspective on persuasion utilizing visual images back in the 1940s. However, they recognized propaganda as a means of communication through visual images at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The main objective of this research was not to explore the power of visual images through propaganda fully. Propaganda took the scientific method of persuasion developed by Aristotle to a whole new level. More precisely, visual images as the tool of communication and persuasion especially gained a new level through the advent of television. As discussed in Chapter 1, the generation born after 1960 was raised in a culture that was visually dominated. This generation placed a far greater emphasis on sight, sound, and sensations (Slaughter 36). Therefore, the creation of the television and the onset of broadcasting beginning in the 1950s exponentially exposed the persuasiveness of visual images. Aristotle's scientific research and method of persuasion blossomed into a multidisciplinary field of study, including but not restricted to social psychologists, communication scholars, and marketing scholars. In different ways, these areas are intentionally engaged in research of everyday persuasion activities. Furthermore, the reason advertising companies spend millions of dollars in research is to understand how specific images will persuade people (Perloff 25). Perloff says, "When Nike plans campaigns geared to young people (with ads resembling music videos), company executives plug in facts gleaned from marketing research" (25). Basically,

advertisement research asks people in a number of different ways how they would be better persuaded by a specific product and/or idea and use the results to persuade them. Plato would probably be horrified and Aristotle would worry but generally be pleased with these developments (25). The fact is research on how visual images can persuasively be more effective have experienced major progress during this historic period called modernity. As mentioned earlier, the advent of television and diversification of research, advertisement have made a major contribution towards visual images becoming tools that are more persuasive.

In 1992, Charles E. Young and Michael Robinson analyzed the tendency of advertisements on TV and their persuasiveness. They actually analyzed some of the research and methodology used in the late 60s and 80s to measure the persuasiveness of TV commercials. Moreover, they did a study on the relationship between persuasiveness and how consumers processed the visual content of TV commercials between 1984 and 1989 (52). Some of their findings were quite interesting: (1) Persuasive commercials are neither less nor more visually complex than non-persuasive commercials; (2) viewers tend to process more of the visual information that is presented in persuasive commercials as compared to non-persuasive commercials; and (3) viewers of persuasive commercials tend to have more peak experiences of the visuals (53). The results of this research done in the late 1960s, 1980s, and early 1990s indicate that persuasive commercials are visually appealing to audience. The persuasion of visual images in advertisements in the modern era was measured through the audience's response to TV commercials. In addition, visual images were analyzed from the perspective of symbolism—*semiotic*.

Simply put, in social communication circles, *semiotic* is the study of signs and symbols. One of the important values of semiotic is to study symbols as signs with substance. Perloff actually defines symbols as *signs that burst with value and emotional signification* (288). Therefore, apart from advanced research of persuasion during the modern era, the history of humanity easily provides a number of very persuasive signs. Two of the symbols considered positively persuasive throughout human history are the cross or the star of David. Others, as mentioned earlier, are not only negative but also destructive signs, such as the swastika representing Nazi Germany. Truly, from the semiotics theory perspective, any sign has the potential to become a powerful symbol. Umberto Eco, one of the great thinkers of the theory of semiotics in modern times, says that everything can become a sign with *emotional significance* as long as an interpreter can explain the sign (16). Therefore, based on Eco's assumption, any visual image can become a persuasive tool of communication. Examples of proof that any sign can become a powerful symbol with almost immediate recognition are Nike, MacDonald's, and, most recently, Starbucks. Basically, no names are needed in order to associate the companies with the visual images (see Figure 2.8).



**Figure 2.8. Powerful symbols—Nike, McDonald's, and Starbucks.**

Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson observe, “Once upon a time, the Nike swoosh possessed no intrinsic value as a sign, but value was added to the sign by drawing on the name and image value of celebrity superstars like Michael Jordan...” (10). S. Chaiken, A. Liberman, and A. H. Eagly present a slightly different perspective about signs being immediately recognized. They say that recency and frequency play a really crucial role in order for signs to become persuasive symbols. For Chaiken, Liberman, Eagly, communication, marketing, and psychology fields, especially after the advent of TV in the 1950s, have invested so much in research in order to figure out the frequency a product needs to be exposed to transform an ordinary sign into a persuasive symbol.

### **Postmodernity**

One of the greatest marks from modernity to postmodernity is the intensification of society and culture to be even more image driven. Historically speaking, postmodernity started in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. In fact, a lot has been and can be said in the attempt to grasp postmodernity. Some authors say that postmodernity cannot and should not be simply understood as the natural flow as a *non-modern* or even an *anti-modern* culture. Rather, postmodernity should be seen as a movement that came through modernity. Chuck Smith, Jr. states that postmodernity is a movement that cannot be fully defined:

Postmodernity combines “the old and the new,” not in an attempt to produce a “wonderful blend” but rather in a playful irony that tends to flatten the chain of command, undermine power structures, and invent new realities. Unlike modernity, postmodernity rejects the integrity of a single style. (46)

On the verge of modernity to postmodernity in 1999, Sweet goes deeper than Smith’s attempt to define postmodernity:

If the Modern Era was a rage for order, regulation, stability, singularity, and fixity, the Post-Modern Era is a rage for chaos, uncertainty, otherness, openness, multiplicity, and change. Postmodern surfaces are not landscapes but wavescapes, with the waters always changing and the surface never the same. (*Aqua Church* 24)

One main characteristic of postmodernity is that society is becoming even more image driven and what Sweet refers to as *waters always changing* can be applied to what postmodernity did and is doing in many areas of society, which includes visual images.

In the very early stages of the postmodern era, television experienced a major shift. One of the well-known stories is Johnny Carson's replacement by Jay Leno and his talk show, *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, in 1992. After, unsuccessfully, trying to fit in Carson's shoes, in 1995 Leno dared to propose a major shift in the format and visuals of the show. For thirty years (1962-1992), Carson pretty much had the same visual, featuring a wide stage and billowing curtains, which, in many ways, represented the structure and look of modern times. Leno proposed a shallow platform flanked by a video wall that he used nightly to replay humorous clips from the news or take to the streets in one of his infamous *Jaywalking* features (Akkerman 7). Leno described the transformation to PBS's Charlie Rose:

People used to say, you know, "I listen to your monologue every night." And I said to myself, "You know, everyone's saying they listen to it. It's not radio. You're supposed to watch it." And I said, "You know, we need to give people something to watch, so let's put some drop-ins in. Let's show Dole falling off the platform and put a funny cap around it." You know, let's say, "Folks, do you see this—take a look at this piece of footage," cut to something happening, then come back with a joke about it, so people had to watch the set. ("Leading with His Chin"12)

Leno was offering *the waters always changing* (mentioned by Sweet) to the *Tonight Show*. He offered visual images that were quite *unpredictable*. Leno's show was a fast and always changing format in comparison to Carson's show. The same thing can be said

for the shift in TV journalism. Dominic Gates talks about the shift that occurred on *NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw*. He discusses how TV journalism moved from *talking heads* to becoming a multitask show. More precisely, he says, “Tom Brokaw invites viewers to go to MSNBC to vote in a poll or get more information. The network does the same thing with *Dateline*.” Leno and Brokaw can be considered the beginning stages of the shifting waters of postmodernism affecting the visual images of talk shows and TV journalism. They can be considered pioneers for talking shows such as Jimmy Fallon and Conan O’Brien to name a few. For that matter, TV journalism today not only includes a direct line for the audience to interact with anchor but with the advent of *Facebook* and *Twitter*, TV shows become more multitasked and multisensory than ever.

One of the tendencies in advertisement in the postmodern era is to follow the talk shows and TV journalism in their multitask tendencies. The so-called *pop-up commercials* have become more and more popular during a number of visual media events (e.g., during movies, TV shows). Jim Macnamara speaks about *pop-up commercials*, saying that once they were very common in Web sites but now are all over, including on TV. Despite some people’s perception of *pop-up commercials* as being annoying, they must be very persuasive visual images. Otherwise, why would Google agree to pay 900 million dollars over three years to *News Corporation* for advertising rights on MySpace in 2006 (258). Perhaps, the shifting waters of postmodernity have created a twenty first century audience with multitasking and multisensory needs. Furthermore, the ones who cannot adjust and do not like such multitasking advertisements are the ones whose modern view of the world has collided against the

*shifting waters* of postmodernity. Stella Proctor, Ioanna Papasolomou-Doukakis, and Tony Proctor speak of the tendency of advertisements in the twenty-first century:

Postmodern advertisements possess a number of representational features: anti-form, irrational appeal, destruction of linear narratives, image-centered ways of seeing. Postmodern advertisements appeal to the consumer by presenting little information about the utility of the goods, focusing instead on symbolic relationships in the context of consumption. (247)

For Proctor, Papasolomou-Doukakis, and Proctor, the more society advances into the shifting waters of postmodernity and the twenty-first century, the more image-driven and multitasking people will be. More precisely, postmodern messages will be more visually driven than rationally spoken and explained.

### **The Use of Visual Images in Church Context**

As mentioned earlier, the medieval church was the center of authority and education in society. The church was on the *cutting edge* of communication, utilizing visual images to advertise its biblical and theological ideas. Furthermore, the Reformation occurred and Martin Luther utilized the new technology of the Gutenberg press to impact and persuade the masses. Marshall McLuhan says, “The 16<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance was an age on the frontier between 2,000 years of alphabetic and manuscript culture, on the one hand, and the new mechanism of repeatability and quantification, on the other” (173). The printing press was not necessarily about the appeal of visual images or persuasiveness. However, it brought a sense of novelty and was on the edge of mass communication. In fact, Quentin J. Schultze dares to say, “The religious impact of the printing press was complex and unforeseen—much like the impact of the Internet” (16). Schultze sees the combination of Gutenberg’s invention of the *mass media machine* and Luther’s audacious use of such a media as an important contribution to mass media

today—radio, TV, films, and Web pages. Though Schultze’s view might be a stretch, in pre- or post-Reformation, the church seemed to be on the cutting edge of social communication.

**Modernity and the Reformation.** The beginning stages of modernity might not have initially affected the Roman Catholic Church. As previously mentioned, a number of artists were hired to use their creative minds to communicate the church’s message persuasively. In fact, some of the Reformed churches built after the Reformation used stained glass windows as icons to remind people of some of the biblical stories. However, the stories experienced a shift from the visual images present on stained glass windows, paintings, and other icons to the pulpit. Perhaps, in the desire to be completely separated from the church in Rome, Enlightenment indirectly caused the church to swing the pendulum of visual images to the other extreme. The fact is that the Renaissance gave birth to Enlightenment and Enlightenment gave birth to the era of reason. Stanley J. Grenz speaks on the correlation between modernity and enlightenment: “Modernity was born only after a lengthy gestation period. Perhaps, we could say that the Renaissance was a grandmother of modernity, and Enlightenment was its true mother” (60). The beginning stages of modernity damaged the church by elevating human status in the cosmos and requiring everything to be rationally proven in order to be accepted. As damaging as Enlightenment was for the church, the church indirectly embraced its mind-set. In other words, imagination and visual images did not seem valuable options to communicate with people. Instead, as far as sermons were concerned, everything needed to be rationally understood. Grenz, speaking on Anselm’s thesis, says, “We could characterize the resulting mind-set by turning Anselm’s thesis on its head: ‘I believe what

I can understand” (62). To a certain extent, this rational mind-set produced by modernity indirectly caused Reformation and reformers to focus almost exclusively on orality and reasoning. Communication with the people through preaching needed to make sense intellectually and be reasoned. In fact, the reformed churches left almost no room for imagination and visual images as part of the message. Andrew Pettegree speaks of sermons during the Reformation:

But we know that many preachers preached for as many as four or five hours at a time. In this case the printed epitome would have derived much of its impact from repetition and sheer endurance (on both sides, when we remember that for sermons the audience usually stood throughout). (15)

Based on Pettegree’s information, the Reformation formed good preachers with the skill to deliver a four or five hour sermon. Moreover, the length of the sermons was directly related to the culture and society that, perhaps, demanded lengthy sermons at the time. However, the Reformation might have been indirectly affected by rationalism and structure brought by the winds of modernity. In other words, in the beginning stages of modernity and Reformation, the pendulum swung more towards Plato’s than towards Aristotle’s approach to persuasion.

**Modernity and the church’s use of visual images.** Modernity infiltrated society and, more importantly, in the post-Reformation churches in the West came much reasoning and structure. As mentioned previously, the focal point of preaching was basically orality. Now, if the history of the modern post-Reformation church is fast forwarded to the electronic age after the advent of TV, the church made the effort to utilize visual images as persuasive tools, again. Interestingly enough, according to Wilson Casey, the very first televangelist was Fulton J. Sheen who was a Roman Catholic archbishop born in El Paso, Illinois. Wilson says that Sheen had a popular radio broadcast

program called *Life is Worth Living*, and, in 1951, he switched his program to a television network. Casey goes on to say, “[Sheen] often spoke on the theology of current topics, including the evils of communism, while occasionally using a chalkboard to stress key points” (202). A number of other televangelists followed the trail blazed by Sheen. Among them are the well-known televangelists in modern history such as Jimmy Swaggart, Jim Bakker, Oral Roberts, and, obviously, Billy Graham. Though they have had great impact on thousands of people, a number of them, except for Graham, have done so for deceiving reasons and failed morality.

Despite utilizing one of the major persuasive media tools, the greatest televangelists still used the same sermon format structured by the modern era, very much centered in orality. Generally speaking, in the modern era, post-Reformation churches more or less followed the same tools of persuasion. The post-Reformation churches seemed to have walked in parallel to everything else that was going on in terms of utilizing visual images as persuasive tools.

### **Postmodernity and the Use of Visual Images**

According to Grenz, the idea of postmodernity truly started with Frederick Nietzsche (1844-1900). He calls Nietzsche the *patron saint of postmodern philosophy* (88). Grenz says that Nietzsche “characterizes truth as a kind of error without which a certain species of life—humankind—could not live ... [O]ur world is a work of art that is continually being created and recreated” (91). However the origin of postmodernity truly came to be, society and culture in the Western world became even more visually driven at the turn of the century. The church that once was on the *cutting edge* of persuasive communication was not quite ready for the new wave of communication brought by

postmodernity. Sweet implies that the Protestant church in the US, generally speaking, was still immersed in modernity while everything else in the culture was already *surfing* in the waves of postmodernity. Sweet begins his example with someone driving out of Miami's airport after having been given a map. Suddenly, that person realizes that the date on the map says, "Copyright 1955." He goes on to say, "How would you like to get around a 2005 Miami using a 1895 map? Or, a 1955 map? Or, even a 1985 map?" (*Aqua Church* 12). When the wave of postmodernity hit the church, the church did not seem ready. For Sweet, the church was preaching the gospel but not necessarily being relevant to the culture. As previously mentioned, the culture was becoming image driven, multitasking, and connected. The culture seemed more engaged by what it saw and experienced than by the information it received. In 1998, Tex Sample predicted such a tendency: "The coming of visualization also seems to affect not only the ways younger people engage the world but also the ways in which they make judgments about what is convincing and true and how reality is perceived" (48). Again, based on authors such as Sample and Sweet, the shifting waves of postmodernity have taken not only the *young generations* but everyone else by storm. More precisely, a missional church in the twenty-first century, must indeed understand persuasion through visual images in order to reach people immersed in postmodern culture.

**The use of visual images in emerging churches.** A number of so-called *emerging churches* seem to be more engaged with the culture than *mainline churches*. Basically, emerging churches followed the cultural thought that *one model does not fit all*. Therefore, they meet in cafes, pubs, movie theaters, warehouses, homes, and even in traditional church buildings. They can be called a *marketplace ministry* in the sense that

the focus is not necessarily on the building but on the community. Jeannie Choi writes about an emerging church in Houston, Texas, that built a community through culture:

In a small art space in Houston, an eclectic mix of community members, artists and local business owners gather to gaze at the paintings on the walls, a multicultural church in Houston that seeks to create a community for people who struggle to find faith in a traditional setting. (40)

She goes on to say that the church was founded in 2007 and had grown to 120 people by November 2009. For that matter, an emerging church whose primary target group was college students launched within the Milwaukee metro area in 2005. One of the first thoughts that comes to mind in terms of a college student church is that location must be something cool and unconventional. However, they started worshipping and eventually purchased an old traditional Presbyterian building close to the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. Since then, they have grown to over five hundred people in attendance. Again, Choi discusses, in the waves of postmodernity, *one size does not fit all*.

Whether in an art gallery or in a traditional Presbyterian church building, emerging churches seem to have a particular concern to produce messages that are image driven and experiential and that explore different artistic expressions. More precisely, they seem to utilize visual images as one of their main persuasive tools in preaching.

Richard A. Jensen makes an interesting comparison between the fourth century and the twenty-first century:

Fourth-century pagans-becoming-Christians were drawn to the Christian faith by its visible splendor; they were instructed by its imagery. Mission today would do well to herald its witness to Jesus Christ in such a holistic fashion. Appeals to the eyes are as important as appeals to the ears in such a mission enterprise. (23)

For authors such as Jensen, the emerging church is paying close attention to and reading the culture as much as advertising companies. In other words, if the church wants to

continue to be relevant to this postmodern culture, the church needs to continue to produce visually engaging messages. Furthermore, in this imagery-driven, postmodern culture, the church must not take for granted that the simple use of visual images is engaging and persuading people. For that matter, the church needs to learn how to measure how the lack of visual images helps or does not help to communicate the message. Like advertising companies with the most important product ever, the church needs to keep on swinging the pendulum of communication towards the Aristotelian method of persuasion. The emerging churches need to keep measuring the persuasiveness of visual images during Sunday morning sermons. In 1993, Thom and Joanie Schultz shared their discoveries from a poll of adult church attendants:

- 12 percent say they usually remember the message.
- 87 percent say their mind wanders during sermons.
- 35 percent say the sermons they hear are too long.
- 11 percent of women and 5 percent of men credit sermons as their primary source of knowledge about God. (189)

The Schultzes go on to cite a study done by the University of California that indicates that words carry a minimal part (about 7 percent) of the message. However, the speaker's vocal variety, energy, and inflections carry 38 percent of the message. The remaining 55 percent of the message is carried by the speaker's appearance, gestures, movement, and *visual aids* (191). Though this study was done in 1993, people already considered the Sunday morning message as their primary source of knowledge of God. Furthermore, other factors such as appearance, gestures, and movement are equally important as visual images during the Sunday morning message. The fact is, persuasion is essential in communication and research. Therefore, the church of the twenty-first century cannot

afford to wait decades before measuring the persuasiveness of visual images in the Sunday morning messages.

### **Social Science Framework**

Understanding persuasion was crucial in helping design research to measure the effectiveness of visual images. More precisely, to understand how organizations such as advertising companies measure and utilize persuasion was crucial in helping to design research that measured the persuasiveness of visual images in Sunday morning messages.

As previously mentioned in the historical framework, one possible understanding of persuasion was the symbolic activity whose main purpose was to impact in such a way as to cause cognition and a change in behavior (M. Smith 7). *Symbolic activity* certainly provides room to think of visual images as intrinsic elements of persuasion. In other words, visual images can be understood as the message itself. *Semiotics*, as the study of symbols, has shown how persuasive and powerful symbols can be. Furthermore, advertising has thrived on semiotics. Actually, advertising companies have become experts in how to transform signs into symbols that give a product *its meaning or zip* (Goldman and Papson 5). Perloff supports this expertise:

Glance first at Coca-Cola, closing your eyes to gain a clearer fix on the image. Do the same for the Nike Swoosh and McDonald's. What comes to mind? Images, feelings, pictures, people? [Advertising] attempts to fill commodity signs with meaning, to give value to brands, and to stamp imagery onto products.... (288)

Persuasiveness via visual images has been the focus and, obviously, expertise of advertising companies. Furthermore, the expertise of advertising companies comes from numerous research on how visual images in commercials impact viewers. Young and Robinson, in their research on visual images and persuasion, say that highly persuasive

commercials tend to have more *peak visuals* than lower persuasive commercials. Additionally, they say that the visuals in highly persuasive commercials tend to be *better connected* to each other: When a viewer recognizes one picture he or she is more likely to pay attention to what comes next. Familiarity with images seems to be the key to highly persuasive commercials or symbols. The strategy of repeating visual image multiple times is crucial for corporations such as Nike and McDonald's. Jörg Matthes, Christian Schemer, and Werner Wirth, in research done on brand placement, affirm that repetition of visual images go beyond the viewers remembering the message or product. They argue that a frequently presented brand placement causes the viewers to like the brand even though they do not necessarily remember the brand itself (485).

The liking of the brand but not necessarily the recalling of it might be due to the viewer's emotions. More precisely, visual images in advertising messages might first affect the viewer's emotions before they can reason about the brand. Paul Messaris does an in-depth analysis of the role of visual images in advertising. He argues that visual images utilized in advertisements impact the viewers because they are typically perceived as direct copies of reality. Messaris says that visual images play three major roles:

[T]hey can elicit emotions by simulating the appearance of a real person or object; they can serve as photographic proof that something really did happen; and they can establish an implicit link between the thing that is sold and some other image(s). (*Visual Persuasion* vii)

Based on Messaris' argument, visual images in ads work as a sort of *discrepancy* between a real person and the representation of the real person generated by visual images. Furthermore, the discrepancy between the real and not real produces an emotional response for the viewers.

One possible reason the discrepancy between the real and not real seems to be that a person's brain is not composed of *value-free data*. Rather, a person's brain is a collection of people's facial expressions, places, and situations that can become *a wealth of emotional associations* (Messaris, *Visual Persuasion* xiii). Actually, Ann Marie Seward Barry says that the visual world is an interpretation of the reality but not reality itself. She goes on to say, "[It] is an image created in the brain, formed by the integration of immediate multi-sensory information, prior experience, and cultural learning" (16). Barry specifically calls this process of accumulating images a mental map that will eventually result in what Messaris calls a wealth of emotional associations. Furthermore, Barry points out that *precognitive feelings* assist the *neocortex* of the brain in making decisions:

Without realizing it, emotional response can then influence attitudes, thinking, and behavior, allowing us to cognitively congratulate ourselves on our perceptive thinking, while all the while we are in fact being guided by emotionally laden perceptual judgments beneath the level of our awareness. (19)

Advertising primarily focuses on these *precognitive feelings* or *emotional associations* and, therefore, utilizes them well. When advertising reproduces—via visual images—the appearance of reality, they call forth a variety of *preprogrammed* emotional responses (Messaris, *Visual Persuasion* xiii). Arthur Asa Berger shares a similar view on visual images. He says when people look at a photograph, a film still, a shot of a television screen, and a print advertisement, they are connected to preestablished *values, beliefs, attitudes, and ideas* (45). These *precognitive feelings, emotional associations, and preestablished values, beliefs, attitudes, and ideas* are the *map* utilized by advertising to

engage viewers affectively. Once again, visual images used in advertising trigger a broad spectrum of affective responses.

According to Messaris, visual images in advertising trigger emotional responses because they *reproduce* and *violate reality*. Messaris gives an example of an advertising about a tomato sauce where Mona Lisa's familiar face is displayed as a before and after parody: "The chunky image is not the Mona Lisa as we know her, but on the other hand she is also not an entirely new person" (*Visual Persuasion* 20). In his book *Visual Literacy*, Messaris calls this reproduction and violation of reality *imitation of perceptual cues* that people use to interpret a raw and *unmediated reality* (120). *Mona Lisa* is part of the viewers' preestablished data. Therefore, the viewers know that *Mona Lisa* is not chubby and has nothing to do with tomato sauce. However, according to Messaris, the discrepancy of reality affectively impacts and engages the viewers. Researcher Martha J. Farah shares a similar perspective saying, "[T]he [mental] imagery system shares representations with perceptual process in the brain" (395-98). Barry follows up on Farah's approach and says that the *perceptual power of image* is capable of reaching the viewer's emotions before *it is cognitively understood* (78). The fact is the familiarity yet distortion of reality is part of the process utilized by advertising to engage the viewers affectively. However, *familiarity and distortion* are not the only elements that affectively engage the viewers in advertising.

Visual images utilized in advertising are capable of stimulating different aspects of the viewer's perspective of reality (e.g., degree of proximity, angle of view, presence or absence of subjective shots). In 1993, Joseph N. Cappella summarizes a number of research results demonstrating that human beings might have a predisposition to react

empathetically to emotional displays in other people's faces. Therefore, advertising intentionally utilizes what social communication calls *direct view*—characters looking into the viewers' eyes—in order to *enhance the likelihood of empathetic reactions* (Messaris, *Visual Literacy* 47). Barry says that visual language is more quickly processed than verbal language, which is why so much of the emphasis and research in advertising are on visual images. She goes on to say, “Advertising images thus act as condensed cultural symbols, visually reduced statements that suggest a storyline that targeted consumers complete in their own imagination ...” (279). Therefore, advertising companies invest a lot in research in order to get to know viewers' minds and how to affectively better engage them.

Advertising companies utilize a number of research methods in order to measure how visual images are affectively engaging viewers. One of the methods is called the *elaboration likelihood method* (ELM). The basic idea of ELM is based on the premises that “under different conditions, receivers, will vary in the degree to which they are likely to engage in elaboration of information relevant to the persuasive issue” (O’Keefe 138). In terms of visual images utilized in advertising, ELM basically analyzes how affectively engaged viewers are by a specific ad. If the *elaboration* is high, the ad leads the viewers to relevant thinking about that product, and “they will attend closely to a presented message, scrutinize the arguments it contains ...” (138). If the *elaboration* is low, however, something in the ad was not perceived as important enough to generate and lead the viewers to immediate relevant thinking. In fact, in high and low elaborations, ELM refers to two routes: *central and peripheral*. The central route is the ideal one where high elaboration occurs or “[persuasion] is achieved through the receiver’s thoughtful

examination of issue-relevant considerations” (139). Perloff argues that, in the central route, the elaboration is high because the viewers already see that product as very important to them. He goes on to say, “For most people, these products include cars, computers ... and clothing they wear to work” (280). The peripheral route, however, is a low elaboration route or way of processing information and will cause the receivers to evaluate whether or not they like the communicator or *whether they find the communicator credible* (139). Therefore, advertisers might use a number of peripheral cues to promote low-involvement products. The central route, however, creates high involvement and, therefore, people are more likely to scrutinize the message carefully and think about counter arguments, while with the peripheral route their defenses are lower so that the message can be accepted by the audience without the cognitive thought or analysis that accompanies the central route persuasion.

Some of the low-involvement products include but are not limited to soft drinks, countless grocery store products, and convenience goods such paper towels, tissue paper, and toothpaste (Perloff 280). At an initial glance at the situation of visual images showing these products, the low involvement products needed more exposure than high elaboration products (Borstein 106). However, an expectation must be made for products such as shoes that can be classified as high involvement products. Technically speaking, shoes are not low involvement products and, therefore, have no need to expose their image multiple times. However, as previously mentioned, shoe companies (e.g. Nike) constantly *bombard* viewers with their product. Perhaps, the reason why shoe companies promote their product multiple times is based on results generated by methods like the ELM. In other words, Nike might have found out through research these methods that

despite being considered a high elaboration product shoes require multiple exposures in order to communicate to and engage the audience effectively.

Since the idea of advertisements utilizing visual images has expanded in a number of directions, the ELM became an important tool that helps to measure a wide spectrum of possibilities in advertisement. For example, Eric J. Karson and Pradeep K. Korgaonkar did an experimental investigation of Internet advertising utilizing the ELM. Their rationale for this investigation was the many similarities and potential differences between the Internet and other mass media utilizing visual images. One of the differences between *traditional* and *Internet* advertisements is that they are processed differently by the viewers. More precisely, they came to the conclusion that for an advertisement on the Internet, “peripheral cues [routes] have little influence, regardless of involvement” (53). In order to come to this conclusion, Karson and Korgaonkar implemented different factors to measure the peripheral cues. In place of using a peripheral cue that was either present or absent (e.g., celebrity endorser), they employed a peripheral cue that was specifically related to the Internet and would be interpreted as positive or negative (e.g., motion, animation, wall paper; 56). Derek D. Rucker and Richard E. Petty also utilized the ELM to measure the effectiveness of visual images present in advertisements where peripheral cues are more prevalent. They utilized the ELM to figure out how to communicate low involvement products so as to change people’s specific beliefs, global attitudes about a particular product, or action (e.g., wearing seatbelts). Unlike the Internet, advertising on health and safety issues utilized traditional media. However, the involvement was low requiring, like on the Internet, with lots of peripheral cues. More precisely, they said that the ELM helped them realize that *warning messages* needed to

be constantly applied. Furthermore, the ELM helped them to determine an interesting factor: “[Warning messages] increase attitude certainty not only by alerting consumers to the potential health risks associated with the product but also by emphasizing *the lack of health benefits* [original emphasis]” (49). A general assumption can be made that, in advertising of *low-elaboration* products, repetition seems crucial.

Prashant Malaviya presents a slightly different perspective concerning repetition in advertising. In research on moderating influence of advertising context on ad repetition, Malaviya says, “When either type of elaboration dominates or when the message recipient spontaneously generates the impoverished type of elaboration, the effect of ad repetition is not observed” (32). Furthermore, based on the ELM, Malaviya says that if repetition is done beyond a certain level, the allocation of resources goes beyond what is required. Therefore, repetition can generate *idiosyncratic* thoughts in the viewers who tend to be *less positive than the arguments presented in the message*. In short, based on Malaviya research, advertisements dealing with *low-elaboration* products tend to utilize *peripheral routes*, repeatedly. However, the repetition factor for a *low-elaboration* product does not make commercials more effective. In fact, Miniard, Bhatla, Lord, Dickson, and Unnava, speaking on picture-based persuasion processes utilized in advertising, assert, “When pictures serve as arguments, their influence should grow as involvement increases. . . . Pictures lacking product-relevant information should exert less influence as involvement increases” (93). The research done by Miniard, Bhatla, Lord, Dickson, and Unnava seem to highlight that a product must have a high level of involvement for the visual images to engage the viewers affectively. Furthermore, though

visual images can be emotionally engaging, they must be filled with relevant information to the viewer(s).

Once again, advertising companies cannot rely on their preconceived ideas about a product expecting to engage the viewers affectively. They cannot assume that every low involvement product will require lots of peripheral routes to engage the viewers. Neither can they assume that high involvement products do not need as much exposure.

Companies who focus primarily on visual images must conduct constant research.

### **Research Design**

The dissertation was an explanatory, quasi-experimental, mixed-methods design evaluating the effectiveness of visual images within an ethnically, economically, and biblically diverse audience in regard to their affective response, understanding, and application of the Sunday morning sermons. Based on literature review, the *elaboration likelihood model* states that in high elaboration and/or central route the message is perceived as important and, therefore, will lead the audience to immediate relevant thinking. While in low elaboration and/or peripheral route, the message might not be considered as important and/or is highly challenging. Therefore, the audience might need a number of peripheral routes to be engaged by and process the message.

The expectation is to create two kinds of sermon series involving messages with high and low elaborations. More precisely, one sermon series would be easily accepted because it is perceived as central route. The second sermon series would be more challenging and would be heavily dependent on peripheral routes (visual images). Furthermore, the expectation is for the Elaboration Likelihood Method to help accomplish the goal of evaluating the persuasiveness of visual images and their help in

causing affective response, cognition, and application based on a series of sermons preached at Connection Point. More precisely, a special focus was made on qualitative data analyses. Questions were uniquely tailored as the follow-up to each statement of the online survey. The follow-up questions emphasized the same areas as the ones emphasized in the statements, that is, possible affective response, cognition, and behavioral change due to the use of visual images. Furthermore, the three twofold questions tailored and asked during the focus group sessions had similar emphasis on feelings, knowledge, and possible change generated by visual images. Though the emphasis of the pre-post questionnaires was on knowledge (cognition), the responses provided a good amount of qualitative data. Yan Zhang and Barbara M. Wildemuth stated that, when analyzing qualitative data, one of the possibilities is *inductive reasoning*; where, *themes and categories emerge from the data through the researcher's careful examination and constant comparison* (2). Furthermore, they say that *qualitative content analysis* will not necessarily produce counts and statistical significance. Instead, *it uncovers patterns, themes, and categories important to a social reality* (5). Therefore, the content analyses of online survey follow-up questions, focus group, and pre-post questionnaires focused on possible themes and patterns from the data collected.

### **Summary**

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness of visual images to a postmodern, ethnically, and biblically diverse audience in regard to their affective response, understanding, and application of a series of sermons. Therefore, Chapter 2 encompassed a broad literature review in order to explore and support the purpose of this research.

*The theological framework* began with the premise that images were a powerful and a constant means of communication between God and human beings. Furthermore, Jesus Christ was the climax of God communicating with human beings through images. As a way to point to his climax of visual communication, Jesus Christ, God artistically and creatively utilized different visual images from Genesis to Revelation. Throughout the Old Testament, powerful imageries, physical presence, and covenantal words seemed to be an ongoing formula for God's self-revelation. In the New Testament, God intentionally continues to communicate through visual imageries. The visual images in the New Testament, however, occurred through genres. One of the well-known genres in the New Testament is parables. Authors such as M. Miller hold that parables were messages through visual images. More precisely, Jesus' parables were powerful mental pictures that impacted his audience deeply. Miraculous signs and wonders could also be perceived as the four dimensional version of visual imageries Jesus utilized to reveal himself. In fact, Jesus' miraculous signs and wonders occupy a good portion of the Gospels. In addition to Jesus' parables and miraculous signs, the appearance of angels was explored as very significant visual imageries present in the Gospels and other books of the New Testament. In fact, several other books of the New Testament contain some peculiar situations involving visual imageries. The book of Acts is one of them where the violent wind occurring in Acts 2 and considered by authors such as Barrett as a *theophany* similarly occurred in Old Testament passages (e.g., Isa. 66:15). The book of Revelation is another unique genre of visual imageries—a mix of dream and vision—present in the New Testament. The theological foundation for this study was Jesus Christ

as the climax of God communicating through visual images and explored in this literature review through Colossians 1:15.

*The historical framework* was another important aspect of this literature review in exploring how visual images have been *persuading* human beings throughout history. In pre-modernity, Plato and Aristotle were some of the first individuals to recognize how persuasive the use of images could be. More precisely, Aristotle did not quite anticipate that proposing *arts* as one of the *five ways to reach the truth* would be a great system to develop further research on visual images as persuasive tools. However, Aristotle was one of the key pre-modern figures to think of visual images as persuasive tools. The shift from pre-modernity to modernity is viewed as one of the key moments when persuasive messages communicated visual images. In fact, this literature review explored how persuasion through visual images unfolded in a number of directions in modernity. Historical indications point out that visual images were an important part of communication of the medieval church. The church utilized the creative minds and skills of great artists to communicate persuasive visual images (e.g., stained glass windows). As society moved forward, the church was no longer the *cutting edge* of visual communication. Persuasion through visual images expanded in a number of directions, one of them being propaganda. A good portion of this literature review evaluated the evolution of persuasion through propaganda. Only in the twentieth century was the modern concept of propaganda established even though the church was a possible precursor of propaganda. Authors such as Slaughter propose that generations born after 1960 were raised in a visually dominated culture due to the rapid development of persuasion through visual images. Furthermore, research on how visual images can be

more effective experienced tremendous progress during modernity. If modernity opened the doors to a visual imagery-driven society, postmodernity marked the intensification of society and culture to be even more image driven. Television experienced major shifts and became more multitasked and multisensory than ever (e.g., *Facebook*, *Twitter*, etc.). Advertising followed hand-in-hand the postmodern, multitasking, and multisensory tendencies of television. This literature review explored the historical aspect that the more society advances into the shifting waters of postmodernity and the twenty-first century, the more image-driven multitasking people might be.

*The use of visual images in church context* was an important literature review in exploring the fact that the Reformation brought a sense of novelty and was on the edge of mass communication. In fact, authors such as Schultze hold that the combination of Gutenberg's invention of the mass media machine and Luther's audacious use of such a media as an important contribution to mass media today. Enlightenment (reason) indirectly influenced the Reformation. Consequently, imagination and visual images did not seem valuable options to communicate with people. Authors such Pettegree proposes that reason led the church to emphasize orality instead of image during the Reformation. If the history of the modern post-Reformation church is fast-forwarded to the electronic age, the church made the effort to utilize visual images as persuasive tools again (e.g., televangelists). However, this literature review points out that despite the church's effort to utilize media tools in modernity, they were not quite ready for the new wave of communication brought by postmodernity. In postmodernity, the culture seemed to be more engaged by what they saw and experienced than by the information it received. Therefore, the churches that seemed to be thriving in the waters of postmodernity were

the so-called emerging churches—churches that produced messages that were image driven and experiential, exploring different artistic expressions.

*The social-science framework* literature review explored how organizations such as advertising companies evaluate and utilize visual persuasion. More precisely, advertising companies have become experts in how to transform signs into symbols that give a product its meaning. Most of the expertise of advertising comes from numerous researches on how visual images in commercials impact viewers. Authors such as Paul Messaris argue that advertisements impact viewers because they are typically perceived as direct copies of reality. He goes on to say that a person's brain is a collection of people's facial expressions, places, and situations that can become a *wealth of emotional associations*. Therefore, advertising primarily focuses on these *precognitive feelings or emotional association* and, therefore, utilizes them well. This literature review unfolded the fact that familiarity yet distortion of reality is part of the process utilized by advertising to engage viewers affectively. Furthermore, advertising companies utilize a number of research methods in order to evaluate how visual images are affectively engaging viewers. The *Elaboration Likelihood Method* (ELM) is one of the methods utilized by advertising companies and basically analyzes how affectively engaged viewers are by a specific ad. The ELM basically focuses on two key components helping analyze the viewers' affective response—*central and peripheral* routes. I explored a number of examples of advertising and products in order to grasp how propaganda utilizes the ELM and, more precisely, central and peripheral routes. One of the examples explored in this literature review offered the perspective that though visual images can be emotionally engaging, they must be filled with information relevant to the viewers. The

fact is that advertising companies cannot rely on their preconceived ideas about a product expecting to engage the viewers affectively, and the ELM was considered a helpful tool for those companies whose primary focus is visual images. Therefore, the ELM was chosen as a tool to help frame the methodology in Chapter 3 and achieve the goal of this study, that is, evaluating the persuasiveness of visual images and their help in causing affective response, cognition, and behavioral change based on a series of sermons preached at Connection Point.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Problem and Purpose

People immersed in postmodern culture are visually driven in the twenty-first century in the United States. Connection Point Church, for the most part, was attracting a postmodern, ethnically diverse, and de-churched population. One of the major challenges to preaching and teaching in such a diverse environment was to find out how effective the biblical messages that utilize visual images were to such a diverse audience. Therefore, the purpose of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness of visual images to a postmodern, ethnically and biblically diverse audience in regard to their affective response, understanding, and application of a series of sermons preached over the period of six weeks at Connection Point Church during the primary worship experience.

#### Research Questions

Four primary research questions provided the framework for this dissertation.

##### Research Question #1

What were the participants' affective responses to the use of images in a sermon series?

As stated in Chapter 2, research done by Schultz and Schultz in 1993 shows that *11 percent of women and 5 percent of men credited sermons as their primary source of knowledge about God* (189). Furthermore, visual images were identified as one of the main elements of 55 percent of the messages. Therefore, visual images were crucial elements in determining how relevant the message was for the men and women attending Sunday morning service. Miniard, Bhatla, Lord, Dickson, and Unnava state in their

article on *picture-based persuasion* that pictures could lead to greater message processing because they were attention-getting devices (92). Visual images appeal to the audience's emotions and generate knowledge.

In the attempt to understand and evaluate if and how visual images produce an affective response and, consequently, knowledge in a ministry context such as Connection Point and to answer research question 1, I made two statements using the Likert scale along with two follow-up questions via *Survey Monkey*, an online survey tool. More precisely, the statements in the online survey intentionally focused on feelings and visual images. Furthermore, the two follow-up questions asked the respondents to identify and/or explain their feelings possibly caused by the use of specific visual images (see Appendix A). In addition, a focus group met for three Sundays in December and three Sundays in January. More precisely, two of the questions elaborated upon and asked during the focus groups were related to participants' feelings (affective response) and specific elements that might have generated those feelings during worship (see Appendix B).

### **Research Question #2**

How was the participants' cognition impacted by the use of images in the sermon series?

As previously stated, Connection Point's congregation was a very diverse group of people. The diversity included a wide spectrum of people from different age groups and different ethnic, theological, and biblical backgrounds. More precisely, people attending Connection Point possessed different biblical and theological knowledge, ranging from being born and raised in church to almost no existent theological and

biblical knowledge. In Chapter 2, an article from V. Smith mentions that Aristotle's method of persuasion should be understood more broadly to include visual images because *even an emotional response requires reasoned judgment* (120). Visual images primarily impact people's imagination/emotions. However, based on articles such as Smith's, visual images might also lead to knowledge.

In the attempt to verify if and how visual images generate knowledge in a ministry context such as Connection Point and to answer research question 2, I included two statements using the Likert scale along with two follow-up questions in the online survey to help identify the level of knowledge (cognition) acquired due to the usage of visual images (see Appendix A). In addition, the two first questions elaborated upon and asked the participants of the focus groups to identify possible knowledge (cognition) generated by visual images (see Appendix B). In addition to the online survey and the focus groups, I distributed pre-post series questionnaires before and after each sermon series in December 2011 and January 2012 (see Appendixes C, D, E, and F). The overall goal for the pre-post questionnaires was to understand and evaluate the worship attendees' biblical knowledge (cognition) before and after each sermon series preached in December and January.

### **Research Question #3**

How was the participants' application of the sermon content and behavioral change impacted by the use of visual images?

Television is recognized as one of the main media responsible for the exponential growth of communication utilizing visual images in the twenty-first century. Televisions have moved rapidly from black and white to flat screen three dimensional transmission.

The movie industry has followed the same tendency as the television industry hand-in-hand. Movie theaters have exponentially improved screens to communicate visual images better. Reeves, Lang, Kim, and Tatar, discuss the fact that the larger the screen the more the emotional impact on the audience. Therefore, the greater the emotional impact is the better the response. Based on the assumption of Tatar, Reeves, Lang, and Kim visual images impact emotions that lead to knowledge (cognition) and potential response.

In the attempt to verify if and how visual images generate a potential response in a ministry context such as Connection Point Church and to respond to research question 3, a statement using the Likert scale along with a follow-up question in the online survey intentionally focused on knowledge and possible behavioral change (see Appendix A). In addition, I asked the participants of the focus groups two questions regarding their intention to apply the message and, more importantly, factor(s) in worship that caused, if any, behavioral change (see Appendix B).

#### **Research Question #4**

What other intervening variable(s) might account for the changes observed in the participants over the course of the study?

Again, the primary purpose for this study was the investigation of the effectiveness of visual images to an audience in regard to their affective response, understanding, and application of a series of sermons preached over the period of six weeks at Connection Point Church during the primary worship experience. However, the elaboration likelihood method points out that, generally, persuasion occurs via two routes—*central and peripheral*. According to Daniel J. O’Keefe, persuasion happens through the *central route* due to the relevance of the issue being communicated to the

audience (139). Therefore, the audience will carefully examine the information because the message is important to them. O'Keefe goes on to say that in the *peripheral route* the product might not be as important for the audience. They might not carefully examine the information given. In the *peripheral route*, says O'Keefe, some of the factors that can interfere and cause the audience not to examine carefully the information are the receivers deciding whether or not they like the communicator and whether or not they find the communicator credible (139).

In the attempt to identify intervening variables, besides visual images, that might have caused a ministry context such as Connection Point to change and to respond to research question 4, a statement using the Likert scale along with a follow-up, focused on factors that were disturbing and/or helpful in understanding the message (see Appendix A). No questions were necessarily tailored and asked of the participants of the focus group regarding potential changes generated by intervening variables. However, the questions asked about feelings, knowledge, and possible behavioral change that gave the participants freedom during the focus group sessions to include possible intervening variables in their responses (see Appendix B).

### **Population and Participants**

The population and sample were identical for the purpose of this study. As mentioned in Chapter 1, they consisted of approximately fifty worship attendees representing the diversity of Connection Point. They were ethnically diverse individuals, both male and female, representing African-American, Caucasian (i.e., Dutch, Polish, and German descent), and South American (i.e., Brazilian) communities. Though Connection Point is considered a small emerging church, it included a wide range of ages. The

percentage of the total population of Connection Point who were invited to participate in this study broke down as follows: teenagers (ages 13 to 21) 15 percent, young adults (ages 22 to 39) 40 percent, middle-aged adults (ages 40 to 55) 40 percent, and older adults (ages 56 to 65) 5 percent. All worship attendees 13 years of age and older were invited to participate in this research and survey. Due to the wide age range, worship attendees at Connection Point were also very educationally diverse. Therefore, the group of worship attendees invited to participate in this study was composed of children in middle school (15 percent) and high school students (5 percent), adults who are either working on or have completed undergraduate level degrees (45 percent), bachelor's level degrees (30 percent), and post-graduate level degrees (5 percent). Lastly, worship attendees invited to participate reflected a theologically diverse background: Roman Catholic (30 percent), Christian Reformed (20 percent), Pentecostal (5 percent), Presbyterian (5 percent), Baptist (5 percent), Lutheran (30 percent), and some with no Christian background (5 percent). Approximately 70 percent of the attendees invited to participate in the survey had been coming to Connection Point for the last three years and attended worship services at least three times a month. In addition, they were economically diverse, ranging from low to high-income families. Low and high-income families represented 40 percent of the church and the vast majority, about 60 percent, somewhere in the middle.

### **Design of the Study**

Building on the literature review as outlined in the previous chapter, I framed the design of this study within the context of a missional church such as Connection Point located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The dissertation used an explanatory, quasi-experimental, mixed-methods design evaluating the effectiveness of visual images within

an ethnically, economically, and biblically diverse audience in regard to their affective response, cognition, and application based on the Sunday morning sermons.

### **Instrumentation**

This study utilized three instruments to research and analyze the responses of worship attendees to the use of visual images in regard to their affective response, cognition, and application based on the Sunday morning messages.

**Online survey.** To achieve the goal of understanding and evaluating the interaction of worship attendees with specific visual images, I developed a questionnaire involving demographic and media questions using the online tool, *Survey Monkey*. A link through Connection Point's Web site connected participants to the survey conducted through *Survey Monkey*. I encouraged approximately fifty worship attendees to answer the weekly survey over the period of three weeks in December 2011 and three weeks in January 2012. The questions were structured taking into consideration the following areas (see Appendix A).

**Demographic information.** The first section of the questionnaire gathered demographic information in the form of five selected-response questions. These multiple-choice items in the researcher-designed survey included details such as gender, age, ethnic background, relationship with God, and church attendance (see Appendix A).

**Elaboration likelihood model.** The online survey helped to determine how the receivers of the Sunday morning message felt engaged by the use of visual images. For the purpose of understanding and evaluating the elaboration of an audience in relation to Sunday morning messages utilizing visual images, a couple of factors were taken into consideration. ELM recognized that any given variable might influence the degree of

elaboration and have different effects on the outcome (O’Keefe 161). Therefore, visual images were treated as one of the variables that might influence the degree of elaboration. The ELM model helped formulate the demographic and media questionnaire. More precisely, it helped determine if and how visual images helped receivers to be engaged and potentially apply the message because they already considered the topic relevant to them. For that matter, it helped determine what other possible variables might have potentially led the audience to apply the message such as communicator’s credibility, appearance, and voice. More precisely, the main objective was to evaluate how visual images produced knowledge and how knowledge transpired into potential application of the message.

**Media.** Having used visual images in Sunday morning messages in a ministry context such as Connection Point for the last four years, the majority of the worship attendees were accustomed to and even expected to see visual images in messages. As previously mentioned, the demographic/media questionnaire was structured in such a way as to determine if and how effective visual images were in regard to affective response, cognition, and application based on the Sunday morning messages (see Appendix A).

**Focus group.** The second instrument, the focus group, was designed to determine how the worship attendees understood and evaluated specific images. Fatemeh Rabiee says, “Focus groups could provide information about a range of ideas and feelings that individuals have about certain issues, as well as illuminating the differences in perspective between groups of individuals” (656). Therefore, all worship attendees were invited to stay ten to fifteen minutes after the worship for three Sundays in December

2011 and three Sundays in January 2012. While enjoying coffee and bagels around a table, they answered specific questions about the message. During the focus group sessions, three twofold questions were asked of the participants every Sunday during the sermon series *Can You See Him* and *The Law*. The three twofold questions were the same every Sunday in order to understand and evaluate the affective response, cognition, and application caused by the use of visual images (see Appendix B).

**Pre-post questionnaires.** The third instruments were the pre-post questionnaires. Pre-post questionnaires were distributed before and after each sermon series in December 2011 and January 2012 to understand and evaluate if and how the worship attendees' essential biblical knowledge improved and/or changed (see Appendixes C, D, E, and F).

### **Pilot Test**

In mid-November 2011, five individuals were chosen to pilot test the online survey (see Appendix A) that was eventually set up, collected, and analyzed through *Survey Monkey*. The main criteria used to choose the five individuals tried to replicate the diversity of Connection Point's worship attendees. More precisely, I invited individuals who were part of my *friend network* on *Facebook* who live within the Milwaukee-metro area yet do not attend Connection Point. They were also diverse in age, education, economic background, and in terms of biblical knowledge. Those individuals were encouraged to consider layout, sentence structure, and overall readability. From the five individuals invited to pilot test the online survey, only three responded. Suggestions made were taken into consideration and the survey modified accordingly.

## Variables

The *independent* variables were visual images utilized during Sunday morning messages. The *dependent* variables were the participants' affective responses to the use of visual images in worship, their cognitive responses to the use of images in worship, and their ability to apply and experience behavioral changes based on the message represented by the images used in worship to their lives. The potential *intervening* variables included the busyness of the holidays in December and the anticlimax after the Christmas season that happens in January causing potential respondents not to adequately respond to the online survey, participate in focus group, and answer pre-post sermon series questionnaires.

## Validity

Test validity concerns the degree to which a test actually measures what it is designed to measure.

**Online survey.** The online survey of this study focused on six statements arranged on five-point Likert scales followed by open-ended questions (1, 1A, 2, 2B, 3, 3C, 4, 4D, 5, 5E, 6, 6F). More precisely, the six statements asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Since one of the main goals of this study was to evaluate how an audience can affectively respond, understand, and apply a message, the Likert scales helped capture the intensity of their feelings in relation to Sunday morning messages utilizing visual images. Furthermore, it helped capture possible patterns of when and how visual images were effectively utilized during Sunday morning messages. The open-ended questions following the Likert Scales

statements helped identify further how specific visual images or other variables contributed to the audience's affective responses to the messages.

**Focus group.** The focus group of this study was centered in three twofold questions (see Appendix B). The first twofold question focused on possible new insights participants might have gained during the worship service. Furthermore, they were asked to mention specifically variables in the worship service that might have generated a new insight (See Appendix B). The second twofold question focused on the feelings generated during the worship service. More precisely, the participants were asked to specify variables that might have caused those feelings in the worship service (see Appendix B). The third twofold question focused on possible behavioral change initiated during the worship service. Furthermore, participants were asked to mention specifically variables that might have moved them to change during the worship service (see Appendix B).

**Pre-post questionnaires.** The pre-post questionnaires of this study were centered in four one-question questionnaires applied before and after each sermon series—*Can You See Him* and *The Law*. The pre-questionnaire of the series *Can You See Him* preached in December 2011 asked about the worship attendees' knowledge of the biblical characters of Mary, Joseph, and the wise men (see Appendix C). The post-questionnaire of the series *Can You See Him* in December 2011 asked what the worship attendees had learned (see Appendix D). The pre-questionnaire for the series *The Law* preached in January 2012 asked about the worship attendees' knowledge of *the Sermon on the Mount* (see Appendix E). The post-questionnaire for the series *The Law* asked what knowledge the worship attendees acquired during the *Sermon on the Mount* (see Appendix F).

### **Data Collection**

At the end of November, I explained to the worship attendees of Connection Point that in December 2011 and January 2012 their special participation was needed. I emphasized that participation in both the online survey available on the church's Web site and ichat (focus group) after each worship service would help me to understand better how the worship attendees relate to worship and the message. Furthermore, I explained that the worship attendees' participation for three weeks in December 2011 and January 2012 was appreciated and completely voluntary including children 13 years old and older.

### **Slide Announcement**

Since the main objective of this study was to research the persuasiveness of visual images in regard to the audience's affective response, understanding, and application to Sunday morning messages, I used slides as visual images to invite Sunday morning attendees to participate in the online survey and focus group.

The slides shown during the December 2011 series were a vintage picture of *Jesus* along with the theme of the series, "Can You See Him?" At the top of the slide there were the following title and subtitle: "How Do We Relate to the Message in Worship? December 4, 11, 18." Next to the vintage picture of *Jesus* was a conversation balloon with the words, "Please, go to our Web site *connection-point.org* to answer a survey about our December Series" (see Appendix G). The slide of the December series encouraging attendees to participate in the focus group was basically identical to the one inviting them to the online survey except for the conversation balloon: "You are invited

to *ichat* after worship in December. Information: contact pastor Eneyas at [efreitas@wi.rr.com](mailto:efreitas@wi.rr.com)” (see Appendix H).

The slides shown during the January 2012 series were a *sepia* picture of an old, open Bible and the theme *The Law* written in the middle. At the top of the slides were the following titles and subtitles: “The challenging sayings of Jesus in the *Sermon on the Mount*—January 8, 15, and 22.” Both slides were basically identical except that the online survey one had the following text: “Don’t forget to answer our online survey—[www.connection-point.org](http://www.connection-point.org)” (see Appendix H). The slide inviting worship attendees’ participation in the focus group stated, “Participate in our *ichat* sessions (15 min.) right after worship” (see Appendix I).

Following the worship service at Connection Point, I reminded and encouraged worship attendees, once again, to complete the online survey and participate in the focus group (*ichat*) concerning the message(s) preached each Sunday during the six-week period. Furthermore, I emphasized confidentiality and the need for honest responses to the online survey

### **E-Mail and Card Reminders**

In addition to the slides previously mentioned, members of the research team distributed card reminders at the end of the messages during both series in December 2011 (see Appendix J) and January 2012 (see Appendix L). In addition, an e-mail message was sent weekly to Connection Point worship attendees as a reminder for them to participate in the online survey (see Appendix M).

Again, the online survey was conducted via a link on Connection Point’s Web site and *Facebook* page utilizing statements (Likert scale) and follow-up questions collected

through *Survey Monkey*. I recorded and collected all the focus group sessions in separate folders of a digital recorder. Members of the research team distributed and collected the pre-questionnaires the Sunday before each series started, 4 December and 8 January, respectively. Members of the research team also distributed and collected the post-questionnaires the last Sunday when each series ended, 18 December and 22 January, respectively.

### **Data Analysis**

The *Survey Monkey* generated a number of tables with the profile of the respondents who chose to answer the survey every week during the sermon series *Can You See Him* in December 2011 and *The Law* in January 2012. Based on the information supplied by *Survey Monkey*, I analyzed the profile tables considering the following variables: gender, age, relationship with God, and attendance at Connection Point. When I considered those variables, I noticed a particular trend of respondents for three weeks in December 2011 and three weeks in January 2012. More precisely, in separating the respondents by gender and the level they agreed or disagreed with each statement, *Survey Monkey* provided a significant trend of people more or less impacted by the use of visual images.

The follow-up questions to the online survey statements offered some themes and patterns that helped evaluate affective responses, cognition, and application of the message caused by the use of visual images. More precisely, the data collected from the follow-up questions focusing on affective responses took into consideration the video image the participants remembered the most from the worship and connection they might have made with the message. Then the responses were basically grouped by considering

gender and the kind of visual image remembered. The visual images mentioned most frequently offered a pattern of the ones that seemed most effective. I applied a similar idea to the follow up questions focusing on cognition except that I found themes instead of patterns in the data collected. As the participants answered the question about what caused cognition in the worship, themes naturally surfaced through their answers. I grouped the participants' answers according to those themes. By doing so, the themes revealed what caused the most cognition. The same idea was applied to the follow-up question that focused on possible behavioral change. However, the answers did not necessarily formed easily identifiable patterns and themes. The answers helped identify variables that caused possible behavioral change.

I listened to the recording of each focus group session multiple times and manually transcribed the recordings into separate word document files. As occurred in the follow up questions, the content analyses of the data collected from the focus group focused on recurring themes found during the sessions and possibly generated by the use of visual images. The respondent's answers were grouped according to the recurring themes. The recurring themes somehow highlighted variables in worship that caused affective response, cognition, and application of the message. By doing so, the effectiveness of the visual images could be better understood. The answers given to the pre-post questionnaires neither offered further identification of the respondent nor offered themes. However, they presented *patterns* of knowledge (cognition) that I analyzed by comparing and contrasting the answers before and after the sermon series in December 2011 and January 2012.

### **Ethical Procedures**

When I invited the worship attendees from the 10:30 a.m. service at Connection Point to participate in this research, I clearly stated that their participation was voluntary. I gave this statement verbally during the time when I made announcements at Connection Point. Furthermore, I guaranteed confidentiality by verbally promising that the data collected from the participants in the focus group and respondents of the online survey were not going to be shared with any organization. I explained that the exception would be the data collected and processed through the online survey conducted through *Survey Monkey*.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### **Problem and Purpose**

Connection Point Church, for the most part, attracted a postmodern, ethnically diverse, and de-churched population. One of the major challenges to preaching and teaching in such a diverse environment was to find out how effective the biblical messages that utilize visual images were to such a diverse audience. Therefore, the purpose of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness of visual images to a postmodern, ethnically and biblically diverse audience in regard to their affective response, understanding, and application of a series of sermons preached over the period of six weeks at Connection Point Church during the primary worship experience.

#### **Participants**

The entire congregation of approximately fifty worship attendees (N=50) representing the diversity of Connection Point were invited to be part of this study that included the following instrumentation: online survey, focus group, and pre-post questionnaires to three sermons preached in December 2011 and January 2012.

#### **December Series**

The first sermon series was called *Can You See Him*, and its main idea was to challenge the worship attendees to see Christ in the middle of such an emotionally and visually driven season. Moreover, they were challenged to think about seeing Christ everywhere, every day, and in every situation all year long.

The first message of the series *Can You See Him? In Moments of Fear* was about who Mary was and her fearful reality of pregnancy without being married to Joseph.

More precisely, the message placed a special emphasis on a teenage girl's unexpected pregnancy within a Jewish patriarchal society.

Twenty-one worship attendees chose to respond to the online survey about the first message, which was tailored, collected, and analyzed via *Survey Monkey* on 4 December 2011. From twenty-one respondents, twelve were male and nine were female (see Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1. Online Survey 4 December 2011 Participants' Gender (N=21)**

Gender	n	%
Male	12	57.1
Female	9	42.9

Eight worship attendees chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 4 December 2011. From eight participants, five were male and three were female, representing a racial ethnic range of South Americans (Brazilian) and Caucasians (German and Dutch; see Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2. Focus Group 4 December 2011 Participants' Gender and Race (N=8)**

Gender	Racial Ethnicity	n
Male	Caucasian (German and Dutch) and South Americans (Brazilian)	5
Female	Caucasian (Dutch) and South Americans (Brazilian)	3

The twenty-one respondents who chose to answer the online survey on 4 December 2011 also represented different age groups that were part of Connection Point (see Table 4.3). Furthermore, the vast majority of them (76.2 percent) considered themselves already committed to God (Christ) before coming to Connection Point (see Table 4.4).

**Table 4.3. Online Survey 4 December 2011 Participants' Ages (N=21)**

Age	n	%
Before 1925	0	
Between 1925-1944	1	4.8
Between 1945-1963	6	28.6
Between 1964-1980	9	42.9
After 1980	5	23.8

**Table 4.4. Online Survey 4 December 2011 Participants' Relationship with God (N=21)**

Relationship with God	n	%
Already committed before Connection Point	16	76.2
Committed after coming to Connection Point	3	14.3
Relationship with God but not affiliated to a church	2	9.5
No commitment	0	
Not sure about God	0	

From eight worship attendees who chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 4 December 2011, four males were born between 1945 and 1980, and one was born after 1980. For the three females, ages ranged from those born in the 1940s to one born after 1980 (see Table 4.5). Also, the majority of the participants (male and female) should be considered as *de-churched* (having previous church experience but disconnected from church for a while) and the minority was churched (were Christians or churched for a long time and choosing Connection Point as their new community of faith; see Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5. Focus Group 4 December 2011 Participants' Ages and Relationship with God (N=8)**

<b>Age/ Relationship with God</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Churched</b>	<b>De-Churched</b>
Between 1925-1944		1	1	
Between 1945-1963	1			1
Between 1964-1980	3		1	2
After 1980	1	2		3

Of the twenty-one participants who chose to respond to the online survey on 4 December 2011, the vast majority (81.0 percent) had been attending Connection Point weekly for over a year (see Tables 4.6 and 4.7).

**Table 4.6. Online Survey 4 December 2011 Participants' General Attendance (N=21)**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
First-time guest	0	
Less than a month	0	
One to six months	1	4.8
Six months to a year	3	14.3
One to four years	17	81.0

**Table 4.7. Online Survey 4 December 2011 Participants' Regular Attendance (N=21)**

<b>Last Six Months</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Weekly	19	90.5
Twice a month	0	
Once a month	1	4.8
On holidays and special occasions	1	4.8

In the group of eight worship attendees who chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 4 December 2011, two males had been attending Connection Point for four years or longer, one for two years, and two for one year. Furthermore, two attended Connection Point weekly, two twice a month, and one once a month (see Table 4.8). Of the three females who participated, one had been attending Connection Point for four years or longer and two for three years. Also, two females attended Connection Point weekly and one twice a month (see Table 4.9).

**Table 4.8. Focus Group 4 December 2011 Participants' General Attendance (N=8)**

Gender	Six Months to a Year	One to over Four Years	n
Male	2	3	5
Female	1	2	3

**Table 4.9. Focus Group 4 December 2011 Participants' Regular Attendance (N=8)**

Gender	Weekly	Twice a Month	Once a Month	n
Male	2	2	1	5
Female	2	1		3

The second message of the series was *Can You See Him? In Moments of Crisis*. The focus of the message was to see Christ in the midst of an unexpected crisis. Special emphasis was focused on how Joseph was probably preparing everything to celebrate his wedding with Mary. When, unexpectedly, a *crisis* knocked on his door—Mary was pregnant. Worst of all, Joseph knew that the baby was not his and knew the Jewish law required any woman to be stoned in such circumstances. Only one male chose to respond to the online survey on 11 December 2011 (see Table 4.10).

**Table 4.10. Online Survey 11 December 2011 Participants' Gender (N=1)**

Gender	n	%
Male	1	100.0
Female	0	

Six worship attendees chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 11 December 2011. Of the six participants, three were male, three were female, and all were Caucasian (see Table 4.11).

**Table 4.11. Online Survey 11 December 2011 Participants' Gender and Race (N=6)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Racial Ethnicity</b>	<b>n</b>
Male	Caucasian (German and Dutch descendants)	3
Female	Caucasian (German and Dutch descendants)	3

The one respondent who chose to answer the online survey on 11 December 2011 was born between 1964 and 1980 (see Table 4.12) and considered himself to be in a relationship with God (Christ) before coming to Connection Point (see Table 4.13).

**Table 4.12. Online Survey 11 December 2011 Participants' Age (N=1)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Before 1925	0	
Between 1925-1944	0	
Between 1945-1963	0	
Between 1964-1980	1	100.0
After 1980	0	

**Table 4.13. Online Survey 11 December 2011 Participants' Relationship with God (N=1)**

<b>Relationship with God</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>
Already committed before Connection Point	100.0	1
Committed after coming to Connection Point		0
Relationship with God but not affiliated to a church		0
No commitment		0
Not sure about God		0

Of the six worship attendees who chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 11 December 2011, the three males and three females were born between 1950 and 1980 (see Table 4.14). In addition, the participants (male and female) were a mixed group of *churched* and *de-churched* individuals (see Table 4.14).

**Table 4.14. Focus Group 11 December 2011 Participants' Age and Relationship with God (N=6)**

<b>Age/ Relationship with God</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Churched</b>	<b>De-Churched</b>
Between 1925-1944				
Between 1945-1963	1	2	1	1
Between 1964-1980	2		1	2
After 1980		1	1	

Although I encouraged all church attendees to participate in the online survey, only one individual responded. The one participant who chose to respond to the online

survey on 11 December 2011 had been attending Connection Point weekly for over a year (see Tables 4.15 and 4.16).

**Table 4.15. Online Survey 11 December 2011 Participants' General Attendance (N=1)**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
First-time guest	0	
Less than a month	0	
One to six months	0	
Six months to a year	0	
One to four years	1	100.0

**Table 4.16. Online Survey 11 December 2011 Participants' Regular Attendance (N=1)**

<b>Last Six Months</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Weekly	1	100.0
Twice a month	0	
Once a month	0	
On holidays and special occasions	0	

From the group of six worship attendees who chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 11 December 2011, one male had been attending Connection Point for four years or longer, one for two years, and one for one year. Furthermore, two attended Connection Point weekly and one once a month (see Table 4.17). Of the three females, one had attended Connection Point for four years, one for three years, and one

for two years. In addition, two females attended Connection Point weekly and one twice a month (see Tables 4.17 and 4.18).

**Table 4.17. Focus Group 11 December 2011 Participants' General Attendance (N=6)**

Gender	Six Months to a Year	One to over Four Years	n
Male	1	2	3
Female		3	3

**Table 4.18. Focus Group 11 December 2011 Participants' Regular Attendance (N=6)**

Gender	Weekly	Twice a Month	Once a Month	n
Male	2		1	3
Female	2	1		3

The third message of the December series was *Can You See Him? In Moments of Joy*:

This sermon emphasized that throughout the holidays *joy* becomes a sort of *happy place* isolated from trials, tribulations, and troubles. As one of the traditional Christmas songs says, “*Have yourself a merry little Christmas, let your heart be light, from now on our troubles will be out of sight.*” (emphasis mine; Blane, Martin, Rose, and Garland)

However, to help explore the idea that *joy* is not exclusively about one season of the year or necessarily about *troubles being out of sight*, the focus of the message was on the story of *the wise men*. The story says that when they found the star where the child was, they were filled with *joy*. However, the *joy* did not mean that troubles, tribulation, and persecution were not present.

Seven of the worship attendees chose to respond to the online survey on 18 December 2011. Of the seven respondents, six were female and one was male (see Table 4.19).

**Table 4.19. Online Survey 18 December 2011 Participants' Gender (N=7)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>
Male	14.3	1
Female	85.7	6

Of the eight worship attendees who chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 18 December 2011, three were males and five were females. They represented the racial ethnic groups of South Americans (Brazilian), Caucasians (German and Dutch descendents), and African-Americans (see Table 4.20).

**Table 4.20. Focus Group 18 December 2011 Participants' Gender and Race (N=8)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Racial Ethnicity</b>	<b>n</b>
Male	Caucasian (German and Dutch), South Americans (Brazilian), and North American (Mexican)	3
Female	Caucasian (Dutch and German), South Americans (Brazilian), and African-American	5

From seven participants who chose to respond to the online survey on 18 December 2011, the majority was born between 1964 and 1980 (see Table 4.21). The majority also considered themselves to be in relationship with God (Christ) before coming to Connection Point (see Table 4.22).

**Table 4.21. Online Survey 18 December 2011 Participants' Ages (N=7)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Before 1925	0	
Between 1925-1944	0	
Between 1945-1963	2	28.6
Between 1964-1980	5	71.4
After 1980	0	

**Table 4.22. Online Survey 18 December 2011 Participants' Relationship with God (N=7)**

<b>Relationship with God</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Already committed before Connection Point	4	57.1
Committed after coming to Connection Point	2	28.6
Relationship with God but not affiliated to a church	1	14.3
No commitment	0	
Not sure about God	0	

Of the eight worship attendees who chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 18 December 2011, one male and one female were born between 1945 and 1963, two males and three females were born between 1964 and 1980, and one female was born after 1980. In addition, the participants' (male and female) were comprised of a mixed group of *churched* and *de-churched* individuals (see Table 4.23).

**Table 4.23. Focus Group 18 December 2011 Participants' Age and Relationship with God (N=8)**

<b>Age/ Relationship with God</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Churched</b>	<b>De- Churched</b>
Between 1925-1944				
Between 1945-1963	1	1		2
Between 1964-1980	2	3	3	2
After 1980		1	1	

From seven participants who chose to respond the online survey on 18 December 2011, one was a first-time guest and six had been attending Connection Point between one to four years (see Table 4.24). In addition, more than half of those who responded affirmed that they attended Connection Point twice a month (see Table 4.25).

**Table 4.24. Online Survey 18 December 2011 Participants' General Attendance (N=7)**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
First-time guest	1	14.3
Less than a month	0	
One to six months	0	
Six months to a year	0	
One to four years	6	85.7

**Table 4.25. Online Survey 18 December 2011 Participants' Regular Attendance (N=7)**

<b>Last Six Months</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Weekly	3	42.9
Twice a month	4	57.1
Once a month	0	
On holidays and special occasions	0	

Of the eight worship attendees who chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 18 December 2011, one male had attended Connection Point for four years or longer, one for three years, and one for a year. Furthermore, two attended Connection Point weekly and one twice a month. From the five females, two attended Connection

Point for four years, two for three years, and one for a year. In addition, two females attended Connection Point weekly, two twice a month, and one once a month. (see Tables 4.26 and 4.27).

**Table 4.26. Focus Group 18 December 2011 Participants' General Attendance (N=8)**

Gender	Six Months to a Year	One to over Four Years
Male	1	2
Female	1	4

**Table 4.27. Focus Group 18 December 2011 Participants' Regular Attendance (N=8)**

Gender	Weekly	Twice a Month	Once a Month
Male	2	1	
Female	3	1	1

### January Series

Tradition indicates that individuals make New Year's resolutions each year. Some of the resolutions for 2012 might have been to become more spiritual, pray more often, go to church, or read the Bible. When reading the Bible, people might already have in mind parts of the Bible that they consider to be challenging and not easy to understand. Therefore, if they indeed went on with their resolution to read the Bible, they might have the tendency to skip some of the challenging biblical texts. Some of the difficult passages are found in the *Sermon on the Mount* where Jesus addressed *the law*. Therefore, the main focus for this series in January was to explore some of Jesus' sayings about the law

found in the *Sermon on the Mount*. Furthermore, after the Christmas season was over, this series investigated how people were understanding, learning, and applying challenging messages about *the law*.

The first message of the January series was on 8 January 2012 and was called *The Law ... Anger Management*. A number of Jesus' sayings about the law in the Gospel of Matthew are difficult to understand and apply. One of these passages is Matthew 5:21-26 where Jesus draws a parallel between murdering someone and being angry with someone. A number of individuals struggle with unresolved anger towards someone and/or a group of people. One of the goals for this message was to show that the law, in Jesus Christ, was meant to be a blessing. It was meant to be a way to experience healing and reconciliation.

Four worship attendees chose to respond to the online survey on 8 January 2012. Three were male and one was female (see Table 4.28).

**Table 4.28. Online Survey 8 January 2012 Participants' Gender (N=4)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	3	75.0
Female	1	25.0

Five worship attendees chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 8 January 2012. Of the five participants, one was male and four were female. They represented the racial ethnic diversity of South Americans (Brazilian) and Caucasians (German and Dutch; see Table 4.29).

**Table 4.29. Focus Group 8 January 2012 Participants' Gender and Race (N=5)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Racial Ethnicity</b>	<b>n</b>
Male	Caucasian (German and Dutch)	1
Female	Caucasian (Dutch) and South American (Brazilian)	4

Of the four respondents who chose to answer the online survey on 8 January 2012, two were born between 1945 and 1963, one was born between 1964 and 1980, and one was born after 1980 (see Table 4.30). Furthermore, all of them considered themselves already committed to God (Christ) before coming to Connection Point (see Table 4.31).

**Table 4.30. Online Survey 8 January 2012 Participants' Ages (N=4)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Before 1925	0	
Between 1925-1944	0	
Between 1945-1963	2	50.0
Between 1964-1980	1	25.0
After 1980	1	25.0

**Table 4.31. Online Survey 8 January 2012 Participants' Relationship with God (N=4)**

<b>Relationship with God</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Already committed before Connection Point	4	100.0
Committed after coming to Connection Point	0	
Relationship with God but not affiliated to a church	0	
No commitment	0	
Not sure about God	0	

Of the five worship attendees who chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 8 January 2012, one male and one female were born between 1945 and 1963, two females were born between 1964 and 1980, and one female was born after 1980. Of the five participants, one male and three females were considered *churched* and one female *de-churched* (see Table 4.32).

**Table 4.32. Focus Group 8 January 2012 Participants' Ages and Relationship with God (N=5)**

<b>Age/ Relationship with God</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Churched</b>	<b>De-Churched</b>
Between 1925-1944				
Between 1945-1963	1	1	2	
Between 1964-1980		2	2	1
After 1980		1		

All participants who chose to respond to the online survey on 8 January 2012 had been attending Connection Point weekly for four years (see Tables 4.33 and 4.34).

**Table 4.33. Online Survey 8 January 2012 Participants' General Attendance (N=4)**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
First-time guest	0	
Less than a month	0	
One to six months	0	
Six months to a year	0	
One to four years	4	100.0

**Table 4.34. Online Survey 8 January 2012 Participants' Regular Attendance (N=4)**

<b>Last Six Months</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Weekly	4	100.0
Twice a month	0	
Once a month	0	
On holidays and special occasions	0	

Five worship attendees chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 8 January 2011. One male had been attending Connection Point twice a month for six months. Of the four females, one had been attending Connection Point for four years, two for three years, and one for six months. In addition, three females attended Connection Point weekly, one twice a month, and one once a month (see Tables 4.35 and 4.36).

**Table 4.35. Focus Group 8 January 2012 Participants' General Attendance (N=5)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Six Months to a Year</b>	<b>One to over Four Years</b>	<b>n</b>
Male	1		1
Female	1	3	4

**Table 4.36. Focus Group 8 January 2012 Participants' Regular Attendance (N=5)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Twice a month</b>	<b>Once a month</b>
Male		1	
Female	3	1	

The second message on 15 January 2012 was entitled *The Law ... Cut It Out*. Another passage that is quite challenging is Matthew 5:27-30 where Jesus addressed the issue of adultery by saying if someone looks at someone else lustfully, that person has already committed adultery. Then, Jesus went on to say that gouging someone's eye out and/or cutting the hand off is better than for the whole body to be thrown into hell. Jesus' sayings go beyond the Jewish law that restricted adultery to sexual intercourse. Jesus wanted to treat the sickness from within instead of treating merely the exterior appearance of the sin of adultery.

Eight worship attendees chose to respond to the online survey on 15 January 2012. Of the eight respondents, three were male and five were female (see Table 4.37).

**Table 4.37. Online Survey 15 January 2012 Participants' Gender (N=8)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	3	37.5
Female	5	62.5

Nine worship attendees chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 15 January 2012. Of the nine participants, two were male and seven were female, representing the racial ethnic groups of South Americans (Brazilians), North Americans (Mexicans), and Caucasians (Germans and Dutch; see Table 4.38).

**Table 4.38. Focus Group 15 January 2012 Participants' Gender and Race (N=9)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Racial Ethnicity</b>	<b>n</b>
Male	Caucasian (German and Dutch descendents) North American (Mexican descendents)	2
Female	Caucasian (Dutch descendents) and South Americans (Brazilian)	7

From eight respondents who chose to answer the online survey on 15 January 2012, one was born between 1945 and 1963, four were born between 1964 and 1980, and three were born after 1980 (see Table 4.39). Furthermore, from eight respondents, six considered themselves as already committed to God (Christ) before coming to Connection Point, one became committed to God (Christ) after attending Connection Point, and one was not sure about his or her relationship with God (see Table 4.40).

**Table 4.39. Online Survey 15 January 2012 Participants' Age (N=8)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Before 1925	0	
Between 1925-1944	0	
Between 1945-1963	1	12.5
Between 1964-1980	4	50.0
After 1980	3	37.5

**Table 4.40. Online Survey 15 January 2012 Participants' Relationship with God (N=8)**

<b>Relationship with God</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>
Already committed before Connection Point	75.0	6
Committed after coming to Connection Point	12.5	1
Relationship with God but not affiliated to a church		0
No commitment	12.5	1
Not sure about God		0

Of the nine worship attendees who chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 15 January 2012, one male and three females were born between 1945 and 1963, one male and three females between 1964 and 1980, and one female was born after 1980. Of nine participants, one male and three females were considered *churched* and the others *de-churched* (see Table 4.41).

**Table 4.41. Focus Group 15 January 2012 Participants' Ages and Relationship with God (N=9)**

<b>Age/ Relationship with God</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Churched</b>	<b>De-Churched</b>
Between 1925-1944				
Between 1945-1963	1	3	2	2
Between 1964-1980	1	3	1	3
After 1980		1	1	

Most of the participants who chose to respond the online survey on 15 January 2012 had been attending Connection Point from one to four years. The majority of the participants attended Connection Point weekly (see Tables 4.42 and 4.43).

**Table 4.42. Online Survey 15 January 2012 Participants' General Attendance (N=8)**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
First-time guest	0	
Less than a month	0	
One to six months	1	12.5
Six months to a year	1	12.5
One to four years	6	75.0

**Table 4.43. Online Survey 15 January 2012 Participants' Regular Attendance (N=8)**

<b>Last Six Months</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Weekly	6	75.0
Twice a month	2	25.0
Once a month	0	
On holidays and special occasions	0	

Of the nine worship attendees who chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 15 January 2012, two males had attended Connection Point for four years. Furthermore, one male attended Connection Point weekly and one twice a month. Of the seven females, two had been attending Connection Point for four years, four for three years, and one for six months. In addition, four females attended Connection Point weekly and three twice a month (see Tables 4.44 and 4.45).

**Table 4.44. Focus Group 15 January 2012 Participants' General Attendance (N=9)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Six Months to a Year</b>	<b>One to over Four Years</b>
Male		2
Female	2	5

**Table 4.45. Focus Group 15 January 2012 Participants' Regular Attendance (N=9)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Twice a Month</b>	<b>Once a Month</b>
Male	1	1	
Female	4	3	

The message on 22 January 2012 was entitled *The Law ... Good Foundation*. The focus of this message was Jesus' sayings (teachings) about the law as a firm foundation for life. Jesus seemed to summarize the idea of his sayings of the law in Matthew 7:24-29. Furthermore, one of the main goals for this message was to challenge everyone to go deeper into Jesus' teachings, to understand, to learn, to put them into practice, and to build a solid foundation for the house called *life*.

Unfortunately, worship attendees neither responded to the online survey tailored via *Survey Monkey* nor the post-questionnaire of the message on 22 January 2012 in the law series. However, four of the approximately fifty worship attendees chose to participate in the focus group (ichat).

From the four worship attendees, who chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 15 January 2012, two were male and two were female, representing the racial ethnic groups of South Americans (Brazilians) and Caucasians (Germans and Dutch; see Table 4.46).

**Table 4.46. Focus Group 22 January 2012 Participants' Gender and Race (N=4)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Racial Ethnicity</b>	<b>n</b>
Male	Caucasian (German and Dutch) South American (Brazilian)	2
Female	Caucasian (Dutch) and South American (Brazilian)	2

Of the four worship attendees who chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 22 January 2012, one male and one female were born between 1945 and 1963;

one male and one female were born between 1964 and 1980. Furthermore, from four participants, one male and two females were considered *churched* and one male *de-churched* (see Table 4.47).

**Table 4.47. Focus Group 22 January 2012 Participants' Age and Relationship with God (N=4)**

<b>Age/ Relationship with God</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Churched</b>	<b>De-Churched</b>
Between 1925-1944				
Between 1945-1963	1	1	2	
Between 1964-1980	1	1	1	1
After 1980				

Of the four worship attendees who chose to participate in the focus group session (ichat) on 22 January 2012, two males attended Connection Point twice a month for six months to a year. From two females, one had attended Connection Point for four years and one for the last six months. In addition, one female attended Connection Point weekly and one twice a month (see Tables 4.48 and 4.49).

**Table 4.48. Focus Group 22 January 2012 Participants' General Attendance (N=4)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Six Months to a Year</b>	<b>One to over Four Years</b>
Male	2	
Female	1	1

**Table 4.49. Focus Group 22 January 2012 Participants' Regular Attendance (N=4)**

Gender	Weekly	Twice a Month	Once a Month
Male		2	
Female	1	1	

### Research Question #1

What were the participants' affective responses to the use of visual images in a sermon series?

During the sermon series *Can You See Him* in December 2011 and *The Law* in January 2012, respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with statements related to the usage of visual images in the message. More precisely, the statements were intentionally tailored using a five-point Likert scale to help understand the affective responses of the respondents in relation to a specific visual image.

The first message on 4 December 2011 was *Can You See Him? In Moments of Fear*. The main focus was who Mary was and her fearful reality of pregnancy without being married to Joseph. The clip used in this message was the fearful and unforeseen reality of teen pregnancy: *Pregnancy and Surrendering to God*, where a girl tells her difficult story of becoming pregnant as a teenager. One statement explaining the affective responses to the clip—*a picture is worth a thousand words even in a sermon*—showed a significant number of females highly agreed (Likert scale 4—45.5 percent) while males somewhat agreed (Likert scale 3—45.5 percent) with this statement on 4 December 2011 (see Table 4.50). Another statement that helped describe the affective responses to the clip was *I have been emotionally moved by the use of visual images in the sermon today*.

Most females strongly agreed (Likert scale 5—57.1 percent) while males somewhat agreed with this statement on 4 December 2011 (see Table 4.51).

**Table 4.50. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 4 December 2011 Question 2 (N=18)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	1	14.3	0		5.6
2	0		0		
3	1	14.3	5	45.5	33.3
4	5	45.5	3	42.9	44.4
5	2	28.6	1	9.1	16.7

**Table 4.51. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 4 December 2011 Question 3 (N=18)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	1	14.3	1	9.1	11.1
2	0		0		
3	0		5	45.0	27.8
4	2	28.6	3	27.3	27.8
5	4	57.1	2	18.2	33.3

The online survey asked a follow-up question after each statement in the online survey. The goal for the open-ended questions was to help identify further how specific visual images contributed to the audience's affective responses to the message(s).

*Which image do you remember from today's worship and why?* Not all respondents of the online survey chose to answer to the follow-up questions on 4

December 2011. Of the nine respondents who chose to answer, six were male and three were female. Furthermore, a clip of a father and daughter killed in an accident was shown on a different Sunday (11 December 2011).

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“[V]ideo of young mom brought home point about Mary.”

“I remember the video about the lady whose husband and daughter died because it was a powerful story.”

The participants distinctively remembered the videos shown during the message on 4 December. However, because the link to the 4 December 2011 online survey was still available on Connection Point’s Web site after the 11 December 2011 message, some respondents answered that the image they remembered the most was the father and daughter killed in a accident (see Table 4.52).

**Table 4.52. Responses to Follow-Up for Question 3 of 4 December 2011 Online Survey (N=9)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Father &amp; Daughter Killed in Car Accident (shown 11 December )</b>	<b>Teen Pregnancy (shown 4 December)</b>
Male	6	3	3
Female	3	2	1

The follow-up question to the statement asking participants if they had been emotionally moved by the use of visual image in the sermon that day queried if the visual image also helped the participants understand the sermon. Not all respondents to the online survey chose to answer the follow-up questions on 4 December 2011. Of the nine respondents who chose to answer, six were males and three were females. As mentioned earlier, the clip of a father and daughter killed in an accident was shown on 11 December 2011. However, some respondents alluded to that clip when answering the questions on the 4 December 2011 survey because a link to the 4 December online survey on Connection Point’s Web site was still live on 11 December 2011. More precisely, four males answered saying that the clip somehow was helpful in their lives (*Personal life application*) while two answered that the clip helped them to relate to the character (*Bible character*). All three females who responded to the follow-up questions related the clip(s) from 4 and 11 December to their personal lives (personal life application; see Table 4.53).

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“?? Not sure but it really makes you realize how lucky you are not to face that type of tragedy [sic]” (clip—father and daughter killed in car accident).

“Different culture, but reminder of Mary’s emotions.”

Based on the quotes mentioned, some respondents from both groups, male and female, seemed to have confused the clip from the message on 11 December with the message from 4 December. Since both links to the surveys were available at Connection Point's Web site, they might have confused the clips.

**Table 4.53. Participants' Categorical Answers to Follow-Up for Question 3 for Online Survey 4 December 2011 (N=9)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Personal Life Application</b>	<b>Bible Character</b>
Male	6	4	2
Female	3	3	0

The second message on 11 December 2011 was *Can You See Him? In Moments of Crisis*. The focus of the message was to see Christ in the midst of unexpected crisis. A special emphasis was given on how Joseph was probably preparing everything to celebrate his wedding with Mary. When, unexpectedly, *crisis* knocked on his door—Mary was pregnant. The visual image used in this message was a clip called *Losing a Daughter and a Husband*.

The two statements to help understand the affective response to the clip remained the same—a *picture is worth a thousand words even in a sermon* and *I have been emotionally moved by the use of visual images in the sermon today*. The one female who chose to answer the online survey on 11 December strongly agreed with both statements (Likert scale 5—100 percent; see Tables 4.54 and 4.55). However, she chose not to answer any of the follow-up questions—*Which image do you remember from today's worship and why? How did the image help you understand the sermon?*

**Table 4.54. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 11 December 2011 Question 2 (N=1)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		0.0
2	0		0		0.0
3	0		0		0.0
4	0		0		0.0
5	1	100.0	0		100.0

**Table 4.55. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 11 December 2011 Question 3 (N=1)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		
2	0		0		
3	0		0		
4	0		0		
5	1	100.0	0		100.0

The message for 18 December 2011 was *Can You See Him? In Moments of Joy*. To help explore the idea that *joy* is not exclusively about one season a year, the message focused on the story of *the wise men*. The story says that when they found the star where the child was, they were filled with *joy*. However, the *joy* did not mean that troubles, tribulation, and persecution were not present. The visual image used in this message was a clip from the movie *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* when the Grinch discovers that the town is still joyful after losing all their gifts. In a humorous manner, the message emphasized that, like the Grinch, people typically relate joy to the absence of troubles.

Both statements that helped understand the affective response to the clip remained the same—*a picture is worth a thousand words even in a sermon*. Most females strongly agreed (Likert scale 5—80.0 percent) while males highly agreed (Likert scale 4—100.0 percent) with this statement (see Table 4.56). *I have been emotionally moved by the use of visual images in the sermon today*—most females strongly agreed (Likert scale 5—60.0 percent) while males somehow disagreed with this statement (see Table 4.57). However, none of them chose to answer the follow-up questions—*Which image do you remember from today’s worship and why? How did the image help you understand the sermon?*—on 18 December.

**Table 4.56. Participants’ Gender and Online Survey 18 December 2011 Question 2 (N=6)**

	<b>1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total %</b>
1		0		0		
2		0		0		
3		1	20.0	0		16.7
4		0		1	100.0	16.7
5		4	80.0	0		66.7

**Table 4.57. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 18 December 2011 Question 3 (N=6)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		
2	1	20.0	1	100.0	33.3
3	1	20.0	0		16.7
4	0		0		
5	3	60.0	0		50.0

The message on 8 January 2012 was *The Law ... Anger Management*. The visual image used was a clip called *Short Temper* from Bluefish TV. It included a girl who professes to be a Christian yet confesses that she snaps easily and lets her anger take over in some situations. Both statements that helped understand the affective response to the clip remained the same—*a picture is worth a thousand words even in a sermon*. The only female answering the survey strongly agreed (Likert scale 5—100.0 percent) while males somewhat agreed (Likert scale 3—100.0 percent) with this statement on 8 January 2012 (see Table 4.58). As far as the second statement—*I have been emotionally moved by the use of visual images in the sermon today*—the one female answering the survey somehow agreed (Likert scale 3—100.0 percent) while males highly agreed with this statement on 8 January 2012 (see Table 4.59).

**Table 4.58. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 8 January 2012 Question 2 (N=4)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		
2	0		0		
3	0		3	100.0	75.0
4	0		0		
5	1	100.0	0		25.0

**Table 4.59. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 8 January 2012 Question 3 (N=4)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		
2	0		1	33.3	25.0
3	1	100.0	0		25.0
4	0		2	66.7	50.0
5	0	60.0	0	0.0	50.0

As previously mentioned, the visual image used the clip *Short Temper* from Bluefish TV. The follow-up question to the statement *a picture is worth a thousand words even in a sermon* remained the same: *Which image do you remember from today's worship and why?* Not all respondents of the online survey chose to answer to this follow-up question on 8 January 2012. Of the four respondents, only two males chose to answer (see Table 4.60).

The following are some representative quotes from participants:

“The angry girl.”

“People talking casually about sex.”

As happened previously, respondents who chose to answer follow up questions delayed answering the online survey for a week and confused the visual images. In this particular case, one of the respondents referred to a visual image shown on 15 January.

**Table 4.60. Responses to Follow-Up for Question 2 of 8 January 2012 Online Survey (N=2)**

Gender	n	<i>Short Temper</i> (shown 8 January)	<i>It's Just Sex</i> (shown 15 January)
Male	2	1	1
Female	0	0	0

The follow-up question to the statement, *I have been emotionally moved by the use of visual image in the sermon today*, remained the same: *How did the image help you understand the sermon?* Not all respondents of the online survey chose to answer this follow-up question on 8 January 2012. Of the four respondents who chose to answer the online survey, only two males chose to answer this follow up question (see Table 4.61).

The following are some representative quotes from participants:

“Yes, we all need to learn how to manage our anger.”

“Just regular people—All different excuses for casual sex.”

However, while one referred to the visual image shown on 8 January, the other referred to a visual image shown on 15 January as somehow helpful (*personal life application*).

None of the respondents made any connection with the biblical character and/or passage (*Bible character*).

**Table 4.61. Participants' Categorical Answers to Follow-Up for Question 2 of 8 January 2012 Online Survey (N=2)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Personal Life Application</b>	<b>Bible Character</b>
Male	2	2	0
Female	0	0	0

The message on 15 January 2012 was *The Law ... Cut It Out*. Another passage quite challenging in Matthew 5:27-30 where Jesus addresses the issue of adultery. The visual image used in this message was a clip called *It's Just Sex* from Sermon Spice. The clip shows a number of individuals (male/female) trying to rationalize why sex in itself is not significant. More precisely, their justification covers a wide spectrum from "I am married but not blind." to "We are just fooling around." Both statements that helped understand the affective response to the clip remained the same—*a picture is worth a thousand words even in a sermon*. Most of the females strongly agreed (Likert scale 5—66.7 percent) while males highly and strongly agreed with this statement on 15 January 2012 (see Table 4.62). When considering the second statement—*I have been emotionally moved by the use of visual images in the sermon today*—the one male and one female answering the survey were split between somewhat disagreed to strongly agreed with this statement on 15 January 2012 (see Table 4.63).

**Table 4.62. Participant Gender and Online Survey 15 January 2012 Question 2 (N=5)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		
2	0		0		
3	0		0		
4	1	33.0	1	50.0	40.0
5	2	66.7	1	50.0	60.0

**Table 4.63. Participant Gender and Online Survey 15 January 2012 Question 3 (N=5)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		
2	0		1	50.3	20.0
3	1	33.0	1	50.0	40.0
4	1	33.3	0		20.0
5	1	33.3	0		20.0

The follow-up question to the statement *a picture is worth a thousand words even in a sermon* remained the same: *Which image do you remember from today's worship and why?* Not all respondents of the online survey chose to answer this follow-up question on 15 January 2012 (see Table 4.64). Of the five respondents, two males and one female chose to respond to this follow-up question. Unlike some of the respondents from previous online surveys, the two males referred to the correct visual image (clip). The female was vague in her response.

The following are some representative quotes from participants:

“I remember the video showing people rationalizing about sex.”

“The video clip.”

Unlike some of the respondents from previous online surveys, the two males referred to the correct visual image (clip). The female was difficult to classify due to her being vague in her response.

**Table 4.64. Responses to Follow-Up for Question 2 of 15 January 2012 Online Survey (N=3)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Clip—<i>It's Just Sex</i> (shown 15 January)</b>	<b>Clip—no specification (possibly shown 15 January)</b>
Male	2	2	0
Female	1	0	1

The follow-up question to the statement *I have been emotionally moved by the use of visual image in the sermon today* remained the same: *How did the image help you understand the sermon?* Of the five respondents who chose to answer the online survey on 15 January 2012, only one male chose to respond to this follow up question.

The following is a representative quote from one participant: “It helped remind me what the world around me thinks about sex. It is easy to insulate oneself in church and forget that the rest of the world has a different view-point.” The visual image impacted his personal life (*personal life application*). Therefore, no biblical connection was made with the visual image (*Bible character*; see Table 4.65).

**Table 4.65. Participants' Categorical Answers to Follow-Up for Question 2 of 15 January 2012 Online Survey (N=1)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Personal Life Application</b>	<b>Bible Character</b>
Male	1	1	0
Female	0	0	0

The message on 22 January 2012—*The Law ... Good Foundation*—focused on Jesus' sayings (teachings) about the law as a firm foundation for life. Jesus seemed to summarize the idea of his sayings of the law in Matthew 7:24-29. The visual image used in this message was a clip of a silly version of the *Three Little Pigs*. More precisely, it showed the scene where the wolf blows away the houses made of straw and sticks but cannot blow away the house made of bricks. Worship attendees chose neither to answer the online survey nor the follow-up questions on 22 January 2012.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, ichat was a focus group where all worship attendees were invited to stay ten to fifteen minutes after the worship service for three Sundays in December and three Sundays in January. While enjoying coffee and bagels around a table, they answered specific questions about the message. One of them was a twofold question about the participants' emotions during worship:

2a. What feelings did you have while participating in the service?

2b. What parts of the service caused you to experience these feelings?

The questions 2a and 2b were specifically asking about the participants' feelings during worship. However, not everyone participating in the focus group (ichat) answered the questions. In addition, not all participants necessarily related their feelings to the worship service. Furthermore, not everyone who answered 2a during this focus group

necessarily answered 2b. Having said that, some of the feelings found in the answers to questions 2a and 2b were related to the following common themes.

### **Biblical Passages/Characters**

During the series in December and January, a wide variety of feelings apparently were triggered by either the passage or a character in a particular message. On 4 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Fear (Luke 1:26-38)*, a woman in her mid 60s felt *blessed* for having her husband. A young woman in her late 20s (from a Roman Catholic background) *thought she heard “the truth”* by the way the story of Mary was preached. On 11 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Crisis (Matthew 1:18-25)*, a woman in her mid 40s believed she could relate to the biblical characters because they went through *hardships and happy times like anyone else*. On 8 January, after the message *The Law ... Anger Management (Matthew 5:21-26)*, a woman in her mid 40s felt *anger* and *hurt* about someone in her life. In addition, on 22 January, after the message *The Law ... A Good Foundation (Matthew 7:24-29)*, a man in his mid 40s mentioned that he felt *uncomfortable* during the message.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“When I have anger, Jesus was even angry,... the problem is not to be angry but what we do with that....”

“So, the summary for me was there is a difference between what we are doing versus what we are [to do].... [I was feeling] uncomfortable during the message....”

“I feel guilty because I am not as good as the people you read about in the Bible.”

The January sermon series *The Law* caused a great level of discomfort for a number of worship attendees. However, those who chose to participate in the survey and focus group indicated the challenging subjects addressed during the series truly impacted them.

### **Holiday Season**

The holiday season seemed to have prompted a number of feelings in the participants and also caused them to be sensitive to others. On 4 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Fear (Luke 1:26-38)*, a man in his mid 40s said that the holidays caused him to have *mixed feelings* because of gifts and people suffering. Likewise, another man in his mid 40s confessed *feeling guilty* for spending money on gifts and not thinking of others in need. Another in his mid 40s mentioned he was *feeling sad* because of someone's last Sunday at church. On 11 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Crisis (Matthew 1:18-25)*, a man in his mid 40s mentioned he *felt compassion* for someone who was going through a tough time at Connection Point.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“I had mixed feelings. The holidays are such a boost for the kids, they feel all into it... But I also had that other feeling that there are lots of people who are suffering.”

“I sometimes felt a little bit guilty because ... [of h]ow much we are going to spend [during the holidays]. And we don't think about people that need some help.”

Again, the holiday season seemed to have caused worship attendees at Connection Point to be more emotionally vulnerable, sensitive to people's needs, and open to the messages of the series *Can You See Him*.

## Music

Music surfaced as a very significant theme in December but not as much in January. However, in both months, the theme music triggered different feelings. On December 11, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Crisis (Matthew 1:18-25)*, a man in his early 50s mentioned his feelings in the worship were tied to a particular song that was his daughter's favorite song. In addition, the same song caused a woman in her late 20s to feel something completely different in relation to Mary's story during the sermon. On 18 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Joy (Matthew 2:1-12)*, a woman in her late 20s mentioned that she felt uplifted by the worship and the *joy* that came from the worship attendees. As mentioned earlier, the theme music was not as prominent in January. It was mentioned basically once on 15 January, after the message *The Law... Cut It Off (Matthew 5:27-30)*, when a woman in her early 40s mentioned that she felt really good during worship (music). In addition, a woman in her late 60s mentioned that she felt really good, inspired, and blessed by the music.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“[P]art of the feelings were tied to one of the first songs *Mary Did you Know?* That was my daughter's favorite song... [T]hat kind of started the whole service off for me.”

“I am old.... When [they] lead the service, I feel really good. I feel inspired.”

Music was generally recognized as an important variable during both sermon series *Can You See Him* and *The Law*. However, the participants of the focus group specifically indicated the importance of music during the December series. The combination of the

holiday season and music might have caused the worship attendees to emphasize the importance of music during the December series.

### **Visual Images**

During the months of December and January, some participants mentioned visual images as something relevant for their feelings during worship. On 4 December after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Fear (Luke 1:26-38)*, a man in his late 20s mentioned that the clip (teen pregnancy) caused him to feel *sorry* for the wife's father when he was told that she was pregnant without being married. In addition, on 18 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Joy (Matthew 2:1-12)*, a woman in her late 30s mentioned that the clip from the movie *The Grinch* caused her to think that Christmas has become about gifts and presents. Likewise, a man in his early 60s mentioned that seeing the *heart of the Grinch* beating again caused him to believe that peoples' lives can indeed be impacted.

### **Summary—Research Question #1**

During the sermon series *Can You See Him* in December 2011 and *The Law* in January 2012, the following statements were intentionally tailored using a five-point Likert scale to help understand the affective responses of the participants in relation to a specific visual image: 1. *A picture is worth a thousand words even in a sermon*; and 2. *I have been emotionally moved by the use of visual images in the sermon today*. In addition, the respondents were asked to answer two follow up-questions: *Which image do you remember from today's worship and why? How did the image help you understand the sermon?*

On 4 and 11 December 2011, the visual images utilized were video clips about real-life stories—*Pregnancy and surrendering to God* and *Losing a Daughter and a Husband*. On 18 December 2011, the visual image utilized was a fairy tale video clip—*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. The female respondents tended to choose *highly agree* while the males tended to choose *somewhat agree* with statements 1 and 2. Exception is to be made on 18 December when the males *somewhat disagreed* with statement 2. Participants of the online survey did not answer the follow-up questions on 11 and 18 December 2011. However, on 4 December, the answers of the respondents showed some confusion about the visual image utilized on 11 December versus the one utilized on 4 December. In spite of the confusion, most of the males answered that the video clips were somehow helpful for *personal life application* and some answered that the clip helped them relate to the *biblical character*. The females, on the other hand, unanimously related the video clips to *personal life application*.

On 8 and 15 January 2012, the visual images utilized were video clips about real-life stories—*Short Temper* and *It's Just Sex*. On 22 January 2012, the visual image utilized as a fairy tale video clip—*Three Little Pigs from Disney World*. The participants did not answer the online survey on 22 January. On 8 and 15 January, however, most females *strongly agreed* with statements 1 and 2. Males only answered the survey on 15 January and *highly agreed* with statement 1 and *somewhat disagreed* with statement 2. Furthermore, participants answered the follow-up questions on 8 and 15 January. Most of the respondents were males and clearly remembered the visual images utilized. More precisely, they remembered the right visual images utilized on 15 January and related

them to *personal life application*. The one female answering the follow-up question did not specify how the visual image helped her.

During the sermon series *Can You See Him* in December 2011 and *The Law* in January 2012, iChat was a focus group where all worship attendees were invited to stay after the worship service to answer specific questions about the message. One of them was a twofold question about the participants' emotions during worship:

2a. What feelings did you have while participating in the service?

2b. What parts of the service caused you to experience these feelings?

Though these two questions specifically addressed feelings, a number of participants answered by expressing their thoughts and/or beliefs. Four common themes came out of the focus group sessions in December 2011 and January 2012.

The themes of *biblical passages/characters* were mentioned quite often. Though a number of participants expressed their thoughts/beliefs instead of feelings, some of the feelings expressed were anger, hurt, and being uncomfortable during the series *The Law*.

The *holiday season* was a theme that naturally surfaced during the December series *Can You See Him?* When referring to the holiday season, participants seemed more open to expressing feelings such as guilt, sadness, and compassion.

The theme *music* was mentioned in both sermon series but especially during *Can You See Him?* One of the feelings triggered by music was joy. Participants also said they were uplifted and inspired by the music and the music moved them to remember family.

*Visual images* were particularly referred to during the December series. A number of participants mentioned feelings but were actually referring to beliefs and thoughts. However, one of the feelings triggered by the visual images in December was *regret*.

### **Research Question #2**

How was the participants' cognition impacted by the use of images in the sermon series?

During the sermon series *Can You See Him* in December 2011 and *The Law* in January 2012, respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with statements related to the usage of visual images in the message. The statements were intentionally tailored using the Likert scale (1 to 5) to help understand how the respondents' cognition was impacted by the usage of specific visual images.

On 4 December—*Can You See Him? In Moments of Fear*—the visual image used was a clip of the fearful and unforeseen reality of teen pregnancy, *Pregnancy and surrendering to God*. Questions 1 and 6 of the survey helped discover how the respondents' cognition was affected by the usage of a specific visual image: *Visual images are nice in sermons but words really get the point across to me*. Most females somewhat disagreed (Likert scale 2—42.9 percent) while males somewhat agreed (Likert scale 3—45.5 percent) with this statement on 4 December 2011 (see Table 4.66).

*Whenever there is no visual image, chances are that I will not pay attention and will not remember the main point of the sermon*. Most females somewhat disagreed (Likert scale 2—42.9 percent) while most males strongly disagreed (Likert scale—45.5 percent) with this statement on 4 December 2011 (see Table 4.67).

**Table 4.66. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 4 December 2011 Question 1 (N=18)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	2	28.6	1	9.1	16.7
2	3	42.9	1	9.1	22.2
3	0		5	45.5	27.8
4	0		3	27.3	16.7
5	2	28.6	1	9.1	16.7

**Table 4.67. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 4 December 2011 Question 6 (N=18)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	1	14.3	5	45.5	33.3
2	3	42.9	4	42.9	38.9
3	1	14.3	2	18.2	16.7
4	0		0		0.0
5	2	28.6	0		11.1

Not all respondents of the online survey chose to answer to the follow-up questions on 4 December 2011: *What other factors help you understand and remember the sermon? Please explain.* Of the nine respondents who chose to answer, six were male and three were female.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

When the sermon is related to everyday things that happen in our lives.

Learn best from reading, next from verbal information.

Clips, pictures, the scripture displayed on the screen, movie clips, the way the pastor interacts with the audience, the emotion the pastor expresses in speaking, and the way the pastor constantly moves his hands and position while speaking. All together grab my attention and help me remember and understand the sermon.

Most of them, males and females, responded saying that other factors that help them understand the sermon are when the sermon is related to everyday things and/or real-life stories. None of those who mentioned real-life stories exemplified what they meant except for one female who mentioned video clips and some other factors (see Table 4.68).

**Table 4.68. Participants' Categorical Answers to Follow-Up for Question 1 of 4 December 2011 Online Survey (N=9)**

Gender	n	Real-Life Stories	Video Images	Other
Male	6	4	0	2
Female	3	2	1	0

Question 6, which asks if the participant would fail to pay attention to the sermon message if it does not include any visual aid, had a follow-up question: *How did you feel in response to seeing the image today? Please, explain.* Of the eight respondents who chose to answer this follow-up question, six were male and two were female.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

It's always nice to see clips and images but I will take the sermon any way it's delivered.

Sometimes sermons stick, and sometimes not. I think that although images can help, how well the sermon relates to my current situation in life is probably a stronger indicator of how well I will remember it. BTW, the

talk afterwards and these surveys are very good ways to remember the sermon.

I felt emotional because we can always relate to something from that particular visual image, especially situations that seem the end of the road.

Most males responded by saying that they felt empathy for the teenager and her family.

One of them was more detailed in his answer, mentioning the videos and survey. The females responded saying that they felt sorry for the pregnant teen (see Table 4.69).

**Table 4.69. Participants' Categorical Answers to Follow-Up for Question 6 of 4 December 2011 Online Survey (N=8)**

Gender	n	Empathy	Video Images	Other Emotions
Male	6	3	2	1
Female	2	0	1	1

On 4 December 2011, from approximately fifty worship attendees invited to participate in the online survey and focus group, no one answered the pre-questionnaire concerning the series *Can You See Him?* The goal of the pre-questionnaire was to understand the worship attendees' knowledge about the characters and/or biblical passages preached during the series.

The 11 December 2011 sermon—*Can You See Him? In Moments of Crisis*—used a clip called *Losing a Daughter and a Husband*. Question 1 helped discover how the respondents' cognition was affected by the usage of a specific visual image: *Visual images are nice in sermons but words really get the point across to me*. The one female who chose to answer the online survey on 11 December somewhat agreed with this statement (Likert scale 3—100 percent; see Table 4.70). In addition, she was the only one

who responded to question 6: *Whenever there is no visual image, chances are that I will not pay attention and will not remember the main point of the sermon.* She somewhat agreed with this statement on 11 December (Likert scale 3—100.0 percent; see Table 4.71).

**Table 4.70. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 11 December 2011 Question 1 (N=1)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		
2	0		0		
3	1	100.0	0		100.0
4	0		0		
5	0		0		

**Table 4.71. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 11 December 2011 Question 6 (N=1)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		
2	0		0		
3	1	100.0	0		
4	0		0		
5	0		0		

The following two inquiries followed question 1 and 6: (1) *What other factors help you understand and remember the sermon? Please explain,* and (6) *How did you feel*

*in response to seeing the image today?* Only one female chose to respond to this survey and answer these follow-up questions.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“Illustrations from pastors [sic] own experiences”

“Great. I will never forget!”

The female who chose to respond to the follow up questions was a bit vague in her answers. However, she indicated that the pastor’s personal experience impacted her during the message on 11 December 2011.

On 18 December—*Can You See Him? In Moments of Joy*—the visual image used was a clip from the movie *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* when the Grinch discovers that the town is still joyful after losing all their gifts. Question 1 helped discover how the respondents’ cognition was affected by a visual image: *Visual images are nice in sermons but words really get the point across to me*. Most of the females who chose to answer strongly disagreed with this statement on 18 December (Likert scale 1—60.0 percent) while the males somewhat agreed (see Table 4.72). When considering question 6, *whenever there is no visual image, chances are that I will not pay attention and will not remember the main point of the sermon*, most of the females strongly disagreed (Likert scale 1—50 percent) while the males somewhat disagreed with this statement on 18 December (see Table 4.73).

**Table 4.72. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 18 December 2011 Question 1 (N=6)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	3	60.0	0		50.0
2	1	20.0	0		16.7
3	1	20.0	1	100.0	33.3
4	0		0		
5	0		0		

**Table 4.73. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 18 December 2011 Question 6 (N=5)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	2	50.0	0		40.0
2	0		1	100.0	20.0
3	1	25.0	0		20.0
4	1	25.0	0		20.0
5	0		0		

Question 1 had one follow-up question on 18 December: *What other factors help you understand and remember the sermon? Please explain.* Only three females chose to answer. Though they continued to include clips, a couple of other factors helped them to remember the sermon.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“I can relate to the clips and pictures. The messages become more clearer [sic] to me. I enjoy this service format.”

“Videos, skits, pictures, illustrations.”

“Seeing the Scriptures in writing on the screen helps me to remember them.”

Though the respondents who chose to answer the follow up questions continued to include clips, a couple of other factors helped them to remember the sermon.

Question 6 had one follow-up question: *How did you feel in response to seeing the image today?* Only two females chose to respond. They had very distinct answers about their thoughts in relation to images.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“I always like visuals! I think it [sic] helps and it keeps [the sermon] interesting.”

“The image today was fine but I didn’t have to experience it to get the point of the Pastor’s sermon. His sermon was very clear and commanding. It was excellent.”

The two females who chose to respond to the follow up question had very distinct answers about their thoughts in relation to images.

From approximately fifty worship attendees invited to participate in the online survey and focus group, only three answered the post-questionnaire on 18 December at the end of the series *Can You See Him?* Even though no one answered the pre-questionnaire, the goal of the post-questionnaire was to understand how the worship services impacted the attendees’ knowledge (cognition) after the series. They were asked the following question: *What new insights did you gain having participated in the series Can You See Him? What did you learn from the series Can You See Him?*

“Mary and Joseph looked past their personal fears and doubts and trusted God to guide them.”

“Joy is found in times that are not necessarily exciting or happy.”

“In our own times of hardship and despair, God is there if we look for Him.”

Of the three respondents who chose to answer the post-questionnaire on 18 December, two were very specific about some of the biblical characters and message points learned during the series.

On 8 January 2012, the visual image used for message *The Law ... Anger Management* was the clip *Short Temper*. Question 1 helped discover how the respondents’ cognition was affected by a visual image—*visual images are nice in sermons but words really get the point across to me*. The females somehow disagreed with this statement on 8 January (Likert scale 2—100.0 percent) while most of the males strongly agreed (Likert scale 1—66.7 percent) (see Table 4.74). Question 6, *whenever there is no visual image, chances are that I will not pay attention and will not remember the main point of the sermon*, also provided information. The one female respondent somehow agreed (Likert scale 3—100 percent) while the males somehow disagreed (Likert 2—66.7 percent) with this statement on 8 January (see Table 4.75).

**Table 4.74. Participants’ Gender and Online Survey 8 January 2012 Question 1 (N=4)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		
2	1	100.0	0		25.0
3	0		0		
4	0		1	33.3	25.0
5	0		2	66.7	50.0

**Table 4.75. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 8 January 2012 Question 6 (N=4)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		
2	0		2	66.7	50.0
3	1	100.0	1	33.3	50.0
4	0		0		20.0
5	0		0		

Question 1 had one follow-up question: *What other factors help you understand and remember the sermon? Please explain.* Only two males chose to answer on 8 January 2012:

“How it touches me personally.”

“How it relates to my life.”

Though both of their responses related to personal life application, they did not quite identify what else caused them to understand the message.

Question 6 had one follow-up question: *How did you feel in response to seeing the image today?* Two males answered on 8 January.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“I felt that the majority of people treat sex too casually.” (*It's Just Sex* shown on 15 January)

“I felt that the person had more issues than I do.” (*Short Temper* shown on 8 January)

One of the male respondents to the follow-up question on 8 January confused the clip used for that message with the one used on 15 January.

From approximately fifty worship attendees invited to participate in the online survey and focus group, fifteen chose to answer the pre-questionnaire to be applied on 8 January—*What do you know about the Sermon on the Mount?* Once again, the goal for this pre-questionnaire was to understand respondents' knowledge (cognition) in relation to the Sermon on the Mount.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“Blessed are the poor in the spirit for they shall inherit the earth, ... along with numerous other charges.”

“Long ... summary of the law (similar to 10 commandments) Moses preached it?”

“It is a great antidepressant.... Feed the 5000??”

Of the fifteen respondents to the pre-questionnaire of the sermon series *The Law*, only seven had a general idea about the *Sermon on the Mount*.

The 15 January 2012 message, *The Law ... Cut It Out*, used the clip called *It's Just Sex* from Sermon Spice. The statements that helped understand how the respondents' cognition was affected by a visual image remained the same—questions 1 and 6. The females were split between strongly agreed and disagreed with question 1 on 15 January (Likert scale 1 and 5—33.3 percent). The males were also split between strongly disagreed and highly agreed (Likert scale 1 and 4—50.0 percent; see Table 4.76). For question 6, most of the females highly disagreed (Likert scale 2—66.7 percent) while the males were split between highly disagreed and somewhat agreed (Likert 2 and 3—50.0 percent) with this statement on 15 January (see Table 4.77).

**Table 4.76. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 15 January 2012 Question 1 (N=5)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	1	33.3	1	50.0	40.0
2	1	33.3	0		20.0
3	0		0		
4	1		1	50.0	20.0
5	1	33.3	0		20.0

**Table 4.77. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 15 January 2012 Question 6 (N=5)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total Responses (%)
1	1	33.3	0		20.0
2	2	66.7	1	50.0	60.0
3	0		1	50.0	20.0
4	0		0		
5	0		0		

Question 1 had one follow-up: *What other factors help you understand and remember the sermon? Please explain.* Two males and two females answered on 15 January. The answers ranged from worship to humor:

“Connecting a concept with something that generates a strong emotional response.”

“The Pastor’s voice intonation.”

The respondents' answers were quite distinctive in mentioning other factors that helped them to remember the message.

The 22 January 2012 message, *The Law ... Good Foundation*, used a clip of a silly version of the *Three Little Pigs*. None of the worship attendees invited to participate chose to answer the online survey on 22 January. Furthermore, the post-questionnaire to help understand the worship attendees' knowledge (cognition) in relation to the Sermon on the Mount was not answered on 22 January.

As previously mentioned, the focus groups (ichat) took place for ten to fifteen minutes after worship for three Sundays in December and three Sundays in January. The twofold questions that help evaluate how the participants' cognition was impacted by the use of images during worship were:

1a. What new insights did you gain from participating in worship today? What did you learn from the worship experience?

1b. What parts of the service led you to these new understandings or insights?

Unlike the answers given to the questions about feelings, the participants' answers about new insight (cognition) remained faithful to the question(s) asked. However, not all participants who answered 1a necessarily answered 1b. The new insight (cognition) found in the answers to questions 1a and 1b were related to the following common themes.

### **Message (Passages/Character/Application)**

During the series in December and January, a variety of new insights (cognition) happened through the message. On 4 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Fear (Luke 1:26-38)*, a man in his mid 40s said that though he has been in

church almost his entire life, he learned something new about Mary and her relationship with Elizabeth. Likewise, another man in his early 50s mentioned that he never knew how young Mary was when she was found out she was pregnant. Still another man in his mid 40s mentioned that a new insight was a message application of how to face situations over which *individuals have no control*. On 11 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Crisis (Matthew 1:18-25)*, a man in his mid 40s mentioned he never quite understood why the angel told Mary *not to be afraid* and *the message clarified that point*. Another man in his early 50s mentioned he never heard the explanation about the law in relation to Mary being pregnant and not married. A couple of participants mentioned the message application. A man in his early 50s mentioned being reminded that something good will come out of bad situations. Likewise, a woman in her early 50s who felt encouraged always to *look back in the midst of crisis to see that things always work out*. On 18 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Joy (Matthew)*, basically, a woman in her late 20s mentioned that, though she was raised in church, she never learned about the importance of King Herod's genealogy. Most of the participants related new insight to message application. Two women, one in her early 40s and one in her early 50s, mentioned that they learned the difference between joy and happiness. A man in his early 50s said that he was reminded of how *people can get carried away with the material aspect of Christmas*. On 8 January, after the message *The Law ... Anger Management (Matthew 5:21-26)*, a woman in her late 20s related her new insight learned from the message about anger. On 15 January, after the message *The Law ... Cut It Out (Matthew)*, a man in his early 60s mentioned that his new insight happened through the explanation of the text (gouging the eye out). Two women, one in her late 60s

and the other in her mid 50s, said that the new insight happened through the way *the message approached the issue of sex*. A woman in her late 20s said she wished she had learned that kind of approach years ago. In addition, on 22 January, after the message *The Law ... A Good Foundation (Matthew 7:24-29)*, a woman in her mid 50s said she received a new insight through the analysis and application of the sand and the rock. In fact, a woman in her early 40s said that the analysis caused her to think about *building a house upon the rock (doing the right thing)* can be hard.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“I tended to grow up in a ‘new testament’ church and to realize it was a law that basically said, ‘Mary should die’ for being pregnant and not married.”

“The history that you gave about the King Herod being from like the Esau’s line.... I never knew that before.”

“I learned how we can look at or face the situations that you don’t have control over the hard situations.”

“I liked your approach to the sex subject. Because, I always struggled to understand why we could not have sex before marriage.”

The participants of the in focus groups (ichat) were impacted by and gained knowledge through the reality of the biblical characters displayed during the series *Can You See Him?* Furthermore, knowledge was acquired through the challenging subjects brought up during the series *The Law*.

### **Visual Images**

Visual images were not mentioned nearly as much as biblical facts and message application as something that generated new insight (cognition). Nonetheless, on 4

December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Fear (Luke 1:26-38)*, a man in his mid 40s mentioned that the video brought into light the story of Mary. On 11 December, after the message *Can you See Him? In Moments of Crisis*, a woman in her late 20s said that visual image used helped her understand the crisis Joseph went through. On 15 January, after the message *the Law ... Cut It Out (Matthew)*, a woman in her mid 50s said that video image helped to *expose* such a sensitive issue openly. On 22 January, after the message *The Law ... A Good Foundation (Matthew 7:24-29)*, a man in his mid 50s said that the video image helped him to think how people always choose the easy route.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“It brings into light more of what we see in our generation than something we cannot even imagine.”

“I think the clip [*It’s Just Sex*] really helped to put it in your face. I mean, those things, again, don’t get talked about.”

“Like the first two little pigs, you know, sometimes, we want the easy route.”

The worship attendees who chose to participate in the focus group indicated that visual images were somewhat helpful during the message. As previously mentioned, however, the participants did not give specific evidences that visual images necessarily generated knowledge (cognition).

### **Music**

Though music did not necessarily appear as a recurring theme and as something that generated new insight, a woman in her mid 50s mentioned that music led her to think

about the topic more closely on 8 January after during the message *The Law ... Anger Management*.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“When we were finally starting worship, we were singing, you know, ‘we need to walk by faith not by sight...’ So, then when the message went into the way it did I guess I was putting the two things together.”

Again, music did not necessarily generate knowledge but helped worship attendees get ready to listen to the message and/or connect with a specific theme in the message.

### **Summary—Research Question # 2**

During the sermon series *Can You See Him* in December 2011 and *The Law* in January 2012, two statements were intentionally tailored to help understand how the respondents’ cognition was affected by the usage of specific visual images: 1. *Visual images are nice in sermons but words really get the point across to me*, and 2. *Whenever there is no visual image, chances are that I will not pay attention and will not remember the main point of the sermon*. The respondents were asked to answer two follow-up questions to help understand if and how a particular visual image affected the worship attendees’ cognition: *What other factors help you understand and remember the sermon? Please explain. How did you feel in response to seeing the image today? Please, explain.*

On 4 and 11 December 2011, the visual images utilized were video clips about real-life stories—*Pregnancy and surrendering to God* and *Losing a Daughter and a Husband*. On 18 December 2011, the visual image utilized was a fairy tale video clip—*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. The females *somewhat* and *strongly disagreed* with statement 1 especially on 18 December. Visual images seemed more important than

words to them. However, most females *strongly disagreed* with statement 2. In other words, the lack of visual images did not seem to prevent the females from paying attention to and processing the message. Males *somewhat agreed* with statement 1 and *strongly disagreed* with statement 2. Participants who chose to answer the follow-up questions were mostly males on 4 December and only females on 11 and 18 December 2011. Some of the factors the participants mentioned as helpful in understanding and remembering the sermon were real-life stories, skits, pictures, illustrations, reading, Scripture on screen, pastor's interaction with audience, and video clips. Video clips, however, were mostly related to emotions and connected to the second follow-up question.

On 8 and 15 January 2012, the visual images utilized were video clips about real-life stories—*Short Temper* and *It's Just Sex*. On 22 January 2012, the visual image utilized was a fairy tale video clip—*The Three Little Pigs*. On 22 January, worship attendees chose not to answer the online survey at all. However, on 8 and 15 January, respondents presented interesting responses to the online survey. More precisely, on 8 January females *somehow disagreed*. On 15 January, some females *strongly agreed* while others *strongly disagreed* with statement 1. As far as statement 2, on 8 January, one female responded *somehow agree*. However, on 15 January most of the females *highly disagreed*. Interestingly enough, most males answered *strongly agree* with statement 1 on 8 and 15 January. However, males answered *somehow* and *highly disagree* with statement 2 on January 8 and 15. Furthermore, in responding to the follow-up question 1, participants did not specifically mention what caused them to understand the message on 8 January other than to say when *it relates to my life*. On 15 January, however, some of

the responses included the voice of the pastor and humor as variables that helped them to understand the message. As far as follow-up to question 2, the responses indicated that video clips helped participants connect with the subjects of the messages of 8 and 15 January—anger and sex.

During iChat, the twofold questions that helped evaluate how the participants' cognition was impacted by the use of images were

1a. What new insights did you gain from participating in worship today? What did you learn from the worship experience?

1b. What parts of the service led you to these new understandings or insights?

The participants' answers about new insight (cognition) remained consistent to the question(s) asked. The new insight (cognition) found in the answers to questions 1a and 1b were related to the following common themes.

Participants mentioned different variables within the message as crucial for cognition. More precisely, information about the character(s) such as social, cultural, and historical background placed within today's cultural context were specifically highlighted as important in generating knowledge (e.g., Mary, Joseph, shepherds). In addition, participants implied that knowledge was acquired through theological and doctrinal points drawn from biblical texts (e.g., sermon on the mount and the law about sex).

Video images were not mentioned nearly as much as biblical facts and did not seem to generate new insight (cognition). However, participants of the focus group indicated that video clips helped bring to light some biblical stories (e.g., Mary), reminded them of what to do in times of crisis and exposed sensitive issues such as sex.

Music was another variable that did not seem to generate knowledge. However, music was mentioned as a variable that seemed to help participants to listen to and connect with a specific theme in the message.

The pre-post questionnaires were also tailored and applied to understand the worship attendees' knowledge about the characters and/or biblical passages before and after the sermon series *Can You See Him and The Law?*

On 4 December 2011, the pre-questionnaire asked the following question: *What do you know about the following biblical characters: Mary, Joseph, and the wise men?* From approximately fifty worship attendees, no one answered the pre-questionnaire concerning the December sermon series. On 18 December, the post-questionnaire asked the following questions: *What new insights did you gain having participated in the series Can You See Him? What did you learn from the series Can You See Him?* From approximately fifty worship attendees invited, only three answered the post-questionnaire. Of the three respondents, two were very specific about the biblical character and message points learned during the series (e.g., the struggles of Mary and Joseph, joy different from happiness).

On 8 January 2012, the pre-questionnaire asked the following question: *What do you know about the Sermon on the Mount?* From approximately fifty worship attendees, fifteen chose to answer the pre-questionnaire. From the fifteen respondents, only seven had a general idea about the *Sermon on the Mount*. The remainder confused the Sermon on the Mount with other biblical passages and characters (e.g., Moses, feeding of the 5,000). On 22 January, the post-questionnaire asked the following question: *What new insights did you gain having participated in the series The Law? What Did You Learn*

*from the Sermon on the Mount?* None of the worship attendees answered the post-questionnaire in January.

### **Research Question #3**

How was the participants' application of the sermon content and behavioral change impacted by the use of visual images?

During the sermon series *Can You See Him* in December 2011 and *The Law* in January 2012, the online survey asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with statements related to the usage of visual images in the message. I intentionally tailored the statements using the Likert scale (1 to 5) to help understand the impact of the use of specific visual images during the sermon on the respondents' behavioral change and the respondents' application of the sermon.

The 4 December—*Can You See Him? In Moments of Fear*—used a clip of the fearful and unforeseen reality of teen pregnancy (*Pregnancy and Surrendering to God*). The statement that helped discover how the respondents' application of the sermon and behavioral change were impacted by the usage of this specific visual image was question 5: *I liked the visual image used today. It helped me to understand the point of the sermon.* Most females (Likert scale 5—85.7 percent) and males strongly agreed (Likert scale 5—45.5 percent) with this statement on 4 December 2011 (see Table 4.78).

**Table 4.78. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 4 December 2011 Question 5 (N=18)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0	33.3	0		
2	0	66.7	1	9.1	5.6
3	0		4	36.4	22.2
4	1	14.3	1	9.1	11.1
5	6	85.7	5	45.5	61.1

Question 5 had one follow-up question: *Are you likely to change your thinking or behavior in response to seeing the visual image today? Please, explain.* Of the nine respondents who chose to answer this follow-up question on 4 December, seven were males and two were females.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“I already rely on my relationship with Jesus to help me through difficult times, so I do not think that the visual images I remember will significantly affect my behavior.”

“Maybe. It becomes very difficult to not get too distracted by the holiday season and not forget about people in need.”

“Yes, puts small sadness into perspective and helps me think about God in all situations.”

The participants indicated they would not change their behavior after viewing the visual image used in the sermon. Among the male respondents, some were uncertain, a few said no, and the others said yes. Both females answered positively and mentioned how they were going to change their behavior (see Table 4.79).

**Table 4.79. Participants' Categorical Answers to Follow-Up for Question 5 of 4 December 2011 Online Survey (N=9)**

Gender	n	Visual Images— No Change	Video Images— Maybe, I will	Visual Images— Yes, I will
Male	7	2	2	3
Female	2	0	0	2

The 11 December—*Can You See Him? In Moments of Crisis*—the visual image used a clip called *Losing a Daughter and a Husband*. The statement that helped describe how the respondents' application of the sermon and behavioral change were impacted by the usage of this specific visual image remained the same: *I liked the visual image used today. It helped me to understand the point of the sermon* (question 5). The one female who chose to answer the online survey strongly agreed (Likert scale 5—100.0 percent) with this statement on 11 December 2011 (see Table 4.80).

**Table 4.80. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 11 December 2011 Question 5 (N=1)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		
2	0		0		
3	0		0		
4	0		0		
5	1	100.0	0		100.0

Question 5 had one follow-up question: *Are you likely to change your thinking or behavior in response to seeing the visual image today? Please, explain.* The one female respondent of the survey chose not to answer this follow-up question on 11 December.

The 18 December message—*Can You See Him? In Moments of Joy*—used the clip from the movie *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* when the Grinch discovers that the town is still joyful after losing all their gifts. The statement that helped discover how the respondents' application of the sermon and behavioral change were impacted by the usage of this specific visual image was question 5: *I liked the visual image used today. It helped me to understand the point of the sermon.* Most females somehow agreed (Likert scale 3—60.0 percent) while the one male who chose to answer the survey highly agreed (Likert scale 4—100.0 percent) with this statement on 18 December 2011 (see Table 4.81).

**Table 4.81. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 18 December 2011 Question 5 (N=6)**

	1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total Responses (%)
1		0		0		
2		0		0		
3		3	60.0	0		50.0
4		0		1	100.0	16.7
5		2	40.0	0		33.3

Question 5 had one follow-up question: *Are you likely to change your thinking or behavior in response to seeing the visual image today? Please, explain.* None of the six respondents chose to answer this follow-up question on 18 December.

The 8 January 2012 message—*The Law ... Anger Management*—image used the clip *Short Temper*. The statement that helped describe how the respondents' application of the sermon and behavioral change were impacted by the usage of this specific visual image remained the same: *I liked the visual image used today. It helped me to understand the point of the sermon* (question 5). The one female who chose to answer the survey strongly agreed (Likert scale 5—100.0 percent) while most of the males somewhat agreed (Likert scale 3—66.7 percent) with this statement on 8 January 2012 (see Table 4.82).

**Table 4.82. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 8 January 2012 Question 5 (N=4)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		
2	0		0		
3	0		2	66.7	50.0
4	0		1	33.3	25.0
5	1	100.0	0		25.0

Question 5 had one follow-up question: *Are you likely to change your thinking or behavior in response to seeing the visual image today? Please, explain.* The two

respondents (both males) had two very distinctive responses to the usage of the clip on 15 January (*It's Just Sex*).

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“It may change my approach to teaching the Kids about sex and God’s purpose for it.”

“No, I know that I should but I am weak.”

The two respondents who chose to answer this follow up question seemed to confuse the clip used on 15 January with this message preached on 8 January. One possible explanation was the respondents’ delay in answering the online survey.

The 15 January 2012 message—*The Law ... Cut It Out*—used the clip called *It's Just Sex*. The statement that helped describe how the respondents’ application of the sermon and behavioral change were impacted by the usage of this specific visual image remained the same: *I liked the visual image used today. It helped me to understand the point of the sermon* (question 5). Most of the females strongly agreed (Likert scale 5—66.7 percent) while the males were split between highly and strongly agreed (Likert scale 5—50.0 percent) with this statement on 15 January 2012 (see Table 4.83).

**Table 4.83. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 15 January 2012 Question 5 (N=5)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	0		0		
2	0		0		
3	0		0		
4	1	33.3	1	50.0	40.0
5	2	66.7	1	50.0	60.0

Question 5 had one follow-up question: *Are you likely to change your thinking or behavior in response to seeing the visual image today? Please, explain.* The clip shows a number of individuals (male/female) trying to rationalize why sex in itself is not a big deal. Two respondents (male and female) chose to answer this follow-up question on 15 January.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

Perhaps. One thing the service didn't really cover is how we as Christians should act towards and speak around non-Christians and Christians who believe or behave in a way not consistent with our understanding of how Christ wants us to behave.

Yes. It helped me to rethink my opinion about sex as well as to deal with it.

The male respondent was not sure the visual image used on 15 January caused him to change anything in his life. While the female respondent answered, saying that something changed in her understanding of sex.

22 January 2012 message—*The Law ... Good Foundation*— the visual image used was the clip of a silly version of the *Three Little Pigs*. None of the worship attendees invited to participate chose to answer the online survey on 22 January.

The focus group (ichat) lasted for ten to fifteen minutes after worship for three Sundays in December and three Sundays in January. Two follow-up questions helped evaluate how the participants' application of the sermon and/or behavioral change was impacted by the use of visual images during worship:

3a. How will you respond to the message of today's service? What might you do differently as a result of attending today's service?

3b. What parts of the service might have led you to do something differently?

Some of the participants did not necessarily answer what the question(s) 3a and 3b asked. Furthermore, not everyone who answered 3a during the same focus group necessarily answered 3b. Nonetheless, the participants' application of sermon and/or behavioral change found in the answers to questions 3a and 3b were related to the following common themes.

### **Biblical Passage/Message Application**

On 4 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Fear (Luke 1:26-38)*, a woman in her late 30s believed that she more easily could talk to her kids about the true meaning of Christmas. A man in his mid 40s said that, although he knew he was not necessarily going to take any action, he knew he needed to get more into the *spirit of Christmas*. A woman in her late 20s said that, based on the message application, she was going to view situations out of control differently. A man in his early 50s said that the *sermon* caused him to think that he needed to be less anxious.

On 11 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Crisis (Matthew 1:18-25)*, a man in his early 40s said he was going to remember the message in times of crisis. A woman in her early 50s said that the message helped her to make a special effort to see blessings in the midst of crisis. A woman in her late 20s said that hearing how Mary responded to fear and Joseph to crisis, she was going to remember how to respond when a crisis happens. A woman in her late 40s said the message reminded her how great God is and that she can rely on him.

On 18 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Joy (Matthew)*, a woman in her late 30s said that the message helped her to talk to her children about the true meaning of Christmas. A man in his mid 40s said that he was not necessarily sure what to do but learned the difference between happiness and joy. A woman in her late 20s said that she was going to remember the wise men stopped to worship in the midst of persecution. A woman in her early 50s was going to remember that, no matter what she was going through, someone always was doing worse.

On 8 January, after the message *The Law ... Anger Management (Matthew 5:21-26)*, a woman in her early 50s said that the message caused her to think about the idea of reconciliation. Another woman in her late 40s said that the message caused her to think of her unforgiveness. A man in his mid 50s said that the message convicted him and he added *the responsibility lies on us* [to learn the roots of anger that cause individuals to hurt others].

On 15 January, after the message *the Law ... Cut It Out (Matthew)*, a man in his early 40s said that the message convicted him as a man (looking at a woman lustfully).

Two women, one in her early 30s and another in her late 20s, said that the message was going to help them talk to their nephews and nieces about sex.

On 22 January, after the message *The Law ... A Good Foundation (Matthew 7:24-29)*, most respondents recognized that the task to be put into practice was difficult but necessary. One woman in her early 40s said that the message caused her to think of the need to *manage the heart*; that is, the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount helped her to look deep inside her struggles such as anger and anxiety.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“It is going to cause me to see things differently when things seem to get out of control.”

“It was actually in the sermon.... I need to be somehow less anxious or worry less about things and [be] more trusting.”

“I think I am going to really, really, really work hard to look consciously, make an effort to look at the blessing when I am in the middle of the crisis.”

“I think one of the things I want to look into more is to search myself and think about the idea of reconciliation.”

“I have a little cousin. She is 12. I really wanted a way to talk to her about sex so I learned how I can approach her.”

Participants of the focus group indicated that the messages based on the Sermon on the Mount were difficult. However, the messages moved them to reflect on a number of struggles rooted deep inside of them.

## Visual images

Not many participants in the focus group mentioned that video clips caused them to change something in their lives. However, a few respondents specifically mentioned the importance of the video clips. On 4 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Fear (Luke 1:26-38)*, a woman in late 20s mentioned that the video (teen pregnancy) used in the message encouraged her to share her story with other young girls. On 11 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Crisis (Matthew 1:18-25)*, a woman in her late 20s said that both videos (teen pregnancy and woman who lost her family) were helpful because she kept thinking about how *they handle such difficult situations*.

The following are some representative quotes by participants:

“It just made me realize I can share my story with younger girls.... [I]t made start to think about how that could impact younger people if I shared my story.”

For most participants of focus groups, visual images created awareness of and/or helped them relate to a particular subject during the message. However, the participants did not necessarily change something in their life due to the visual images.

## Music

Music was rarely mentioned as a factor that caused the respondents to change anything. However, on 11 December, after the message *Can You See Him? In Moments of Crisis (Matthew 1:18-25)*, a woman in her late 40s talked about the power of a particular song and worship.

The following is a quote by the participant. “The song, when you heard the song [*Mary Did You Know*].... Music is very powerful.” During both sermon series, music was

quite often recognized as a variable in the worship service. Music caused participants to be open to and connect with a particular point of the message. However, participants of the focus groups did not necessarily change anything in their life due to the music.

### **Summary—Research Question #3**

During the sermon series *Can You See Him* in December 2011 and *The Law* in January 2012, one online survey statement was tailored to understand the impact of the use of specific visual images on the respondents' behavioral change and the respondents' application of the sermon: *I liked the visual image used today. It helped me to understand the point of the sermon.* Respondents were also asked to answer a follow-up question: *Are you likely to change your thinking or behavior in response to seeing the visual image today? Please, explain.*

On 4 and 11 December 2011, the visual images utilized were video-clips about real-life stories—*Pregnancy and surrendering to God* and *Losing a Daughter and a Husband*. On 18 December 2011, the visual image utilized was a fairy tale video clip—*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Females answered *somewhat agree* on 18 December and *strongly agree* on 4 and 11 December with this one statement. Males did not answer the survey on 11 December. Interestingly enough, males answered *highly agree* on 18 December and *strongly agree* on 4 December. Participants of the online survey did not answer the follow-up questions on 11 and 18 December 2011. Of the nine respondents who chose to answer the follow-up question on 4 December, seven were males and two were females. Among the male respondents, some were uncertain, a few said no, and the others said yes to this follow-up question. Both females answered positively and mentioned how they were going to change their behavior.

On 8 and 15 January 2012, the visual images utilized were video clips about real-life stories—*Short Temper* and *It's Just Sex*. On 22 January 2012, the visual image utilized was a fairy tale video clip—*Three Little Pigs*. Participants chose not to answer to the online survey on 22 January. On 8 and 15 January, however, the females tended to *strongly agree* with this statement. Males responses varied from *somewhat agree* on 8 January to *highly* and *strongly agree* on 15 January. Again, respondents did not answer the online survey and, consequently, the follow-up question on 22 January. However, on 8 January, two male respondents answered this follow-up question. Though they seemed to have confused the visual images utilized on 15 January with the one utilized on 8 January, they presented very distinct answers. One answered saying yes and the other saying no to a possible change in personal life. On 15 January, two respondents (male and female) chose to answer the follow-up question. The male respondent was not sure the visual image used on 15 January caused him to change anything in his life. The female respondent answered that something changed in her understanding of sex.

During the focus group (ichat), two follow-up questions helped evaluate how the participants' application of the sermon and/or behavioral change was impacted by the use of visual images during worship:

3a. How will you respond to the message of today's service? What might you do differently as a result of attending today's service?

3b. What parts of the service might have led you to do something differently?

When participants were asked about possible sermon application, the common themes that came out of the focus group sessions in December 2011 and January 2012 were the following.

Biblical passages and message application were mentioned as important variables causing participants to apply the message(s). During the December sermon series, some applications mentioned were helping to talk to children about Christmas, getting into the *spirit of Christmas*, helping to be less anxious, remembering what to do when a crisis happens, and being reminded of the difference between happiness and joy. During the January sermon series, some of the applications mentioned were thinking about the idea of forgiveness and reconciliation, conviction of looking at someone lustfully, helping to talk about sex, and looking deep inside the struggles such as anger and anxiety.

Visual images did not seem to lead participants to change behavior and/or application of the sermon(s). However, some mentioned that visual images encouraged them to share their own stories. Others mentioned that visual images helped them to think about how to handle difficult situations. The fact is, for most participants of focus groups, visual images created awareness of and/or helped them relate to a particular subject during the message. However, the participants did not necessarily indicate that something would immediately change in their lives due to the visual images.

Music was rarely mentioned as a variable that caused respondents to change anything in their lives. Perhaps, the closest that music came to being a trigger for change was when a participant stated she was open to and could connect with a particular point of the message (e.g., *Mary Did You Know?* song).

#### **Research Question #4**

What other intervening variable(s) might account for the changes observed in the participants over the course of the study?

During the sermon series *Can You See Him* in December 2011 and *The Law* in January 2012, respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with statements related to the usage of visual images in the message. The statements were intentionally tailored using the Likert scale (1 to 5) to help understand how other intervening variables might have accounted for the changes in the participants during this study.

During the first message on 4 December—*Can You See Him? In Moments of Fear*—the visual image used was the clip of the fearful and unforeseen reality of teen pregnancy: *Pregnancy and Surrendering to God*. Statement 4 helped describe other intervening variables that might cause changes in the participants: *Generally, I found the pastor's use of visual images in the sermon today very distracting*. All females (Likert scale 1—100.0 percent) and most males strongly disagreed (Likert scale 5—54.5 percent) with this statement on 4 December 2011 (see Table 4.84).

**Table 4.84. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 4 December 2011 Question 4 (N=18)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	7	100.0	6	54.5	72.2
2	0		2	18.2	11.1
3	0		2	18.2	11.1
4	0		1	9.1	5.6
5	0		0		

Question 4 had one follow-up question: *Were there other factors that were distracting and prevented you from understanding the sermon today? If so, what are they?* Of the five respondents who chose to answer to this follow-up question on 4 December, three were males and two were females.

The following is a representative quote by a participant: “I have lots to do during the service, so I am always a little distracted.” Two of the males related their distraction to the many things they have to do during the worship. The other male and the two females, answered “no.” Participants of the focus group who do not serve in a specific function during worship service were not distracted.

The 11 December message—*Can You See Him? In Moments of Crisis*—used a clip called *Losing a Daughter and a Husband*. Statement 4 helped identify other intervening variables that might have caused change in the participants: *Generally, I found the pastor's use of visual images in the sermon today very distracting.* The one female who chose to answer the survey strongly disagreed (Likert scale 1—100.0 percent) with this statement on 11 December 2011 (see Table 4.85).

**Table 4.85. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 11 December 2011 Question 4 (N=1)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	1	100.0	0		100.0
2	0		0		
3	0		0		
4	0		0		
5	0		0		

Statement 4 had one follow-up question: *Were there other factors that were distracting and prevented you from understanding the sermon today? If so, what are they?* The one female respondent chose not to answer this follow-up question on 15 December.

The message on 18 December—*Can You See Him? In Moments of Joy*—used the clip from the movie *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Statement 4 helped explain other intervening variables that might have caused change in the participants: *Generally, I found the pastor's use of visual images in the sermon today very distracting.* The majority of the females strongly disagreed (Likert scale 1—80.0 percent) while the one male who chose to answer highly disagreed (Likert scale 2—100.0 percent) with this statement on 18 December 2011 (see Table 4.86).

**Table 4.86. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 18 December 2011 Question 4 (N=6)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	4	80.0	0		66.7
2	0		1	100.0	16.7
3	0		0		
4	0		0		
5	1	20.0	0		16.7

Statement 4 had one follow-up question: *Were there other factors that were distracting and prevented you from understanding the sermon today? If so, what are they?* From all the respondents, only one female chose to answer, saying, “N/A.”

The message on 8 January 2012—*The Law ... Anger Management*—used a clip called *Short Temper*. Statement 4 revealed intervening variables that might have caused change in the participant: *Generally, I found the pastor's use of visual images in the sermon today very distracting*. The one female who chose to answer the survey strongly disagreed (Likert scale 1—100.0 percent) and the majority of the males also highly disagreed (Likert scale 1—66.7 percent) with this statement on 8 January 2012 (see Table 4.87).

**Table 4.87. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 8 January 2012 Question 4 (N=7)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	1	100.0	2	66.7	75.0
2	0		1	33.3	25.0
3	0		2		
4	0		1		
5	0		0		

Statement 4 had one follow-up question: *Were there other factors that were distracting and prevented you from understanding the sermon today? If so, what are they?* Only one respondent (male) chose to answer this follow-up question on 8 January relating his distraction from the topic (anger).

The following is a representative quote by the participant: “The topic itself was very distracting.” The answer of the respondent on 8 January 2012 well reflected the general perception of the worship attendees during the sermon series *The Law*. For this particular respondent, the subject addressed was very challenging and uncomfortable and became *distracting* to him.

The message on 15 January 2012—*The Law ... Cut It Out*—used the clip called *It's Just Sex*. Statement 4 helped reveal other intervening variables that might have caused changes in the participants: *Generally, I found the pastor's use of visual images in the sermon today very distracting*. Most females (Likert scale 1—66.7 percent) and all males strongly disagreed (Likert scale 5—100.0 percent) with this statement on 15 January 2012 (see Table 4.88).

**Table 4.88. Participants' Gender and Online Survey 15 January 2012 Question 4 (N=5)**

1—strongly disagree 5—strongly agree	Female	%	Male	%	Total %
1	2	66.7	2	100.0	80.0
2	0		0		
3	0		0		
4	0		0		
5	1	33.3	0		20.0

Statement 4 had one follow-up question: *Were there other factors that were distracting and prevented you from understanding the sermon today? If so, what are they?* None of the respondents chose to answer on 15 January.

The message on 22 January 2012—*The Law ... Good Foundation*—used the clip from the *Three Little Pigs*. None of the worship attendees invited to participate chose to answer the online survey on 22 January.

During the focus group (ichat), no specific questions addressed other intervening variable(s) that might account for the changes observed in the participants. However, when the participants were answering the questions about their feelings (affective response), knowledge (cognition), and application of the message, some of them mentioned unexpected (intervening) variables.

### **Christmas Event**

During the month of December, worship attendees were invited to participate in a special Christmas event (giving Christmas baskets to the elderly). Some of those who participated in this Christmas event were part of the focus group on 18 December. When

I asked focus group question 3b—*what parts of the service might have led you to do something differently*, some participants mentioned that their participation in the Christmas event changed something in them.

The following is a representative quote by a participant:

I was touched ... when Sharon and several other people shared about the event that took place yesterday and how there are people out there that are being touched when we, as a church,... do what we did yesterday.

As previously mentioned, the holiday season might have caused worship attendees to be more sensitive to the message and others. Therefore, participants of the focus group who were not part of the Christmas event yet heard the testimonies of those who participated Sunday morning, mentioned that something changed in them, too.

### **Hospitality**

On 8 January, after the message *The Law ... Anger Management (Matthew 5:21-26)*, the following questions about feelings (affective response) were asked of the participants of the focus group:

2a. What kind of feelings did you have while participating in the service?

2b. What parts of the service caused you to experience these feelings?

One of the participants in the focus group was a visitor—a male in his early 50s—and was apologetic about his response.

The following is a representative quote by a participant: “I came expecting some knowledge or truth. But when I got here, I felt welcome. So, that pretty much opened the door for the music or the message....” Though he liked the message and music, hospitality was the key factor that opened the door for the visitor to be engaged by the music and listen to the message.

## Environment

On 15 January, after the message the *Law ... Cut It Out (Matthew)*, the focus group was supposed to answer the questions about feelings (affective response):

2a. What kind of feelings did you have while participating in the service?

2b. What parts of the service caused you to experience these feelings?

A woman in her late 20s did not quite answer about her feelings during the worship service, per se.

The following is a representative quote by a participant:

I want to say that I also tried other churches but what I like this combination of the lights and the way you talk, your voice.... The way the scripture is on the screen, I think it helps me understand.... And, also, the songs....

The combination of factors in the environment that happened during worship usually captured her attention and helped her to understand the message instead of one isolated variable such as visual images, the message, or music.

## Summary—Research Question #4

During the sermon series *Can You See Him* in December 2011 and *The Law* in January 2012, the following online survey statement helped understand how other intervening variables might have accounted for the changes in participants during this study: *Generally, I found the pastor's use of visual images in the sermon today very distracting.* Furthermore, this statement was accompanied by a follow-up question: *Were there other factors that were distracting and prevented you from understanding the sermon today? If so, what are they?*

On 4 and 11 December 2011, the visual images utilized were video clips about real-life stories—*Pregnancy and surrendering to God* and *Losing a Daughter and a*

*Husband*. On 18 December 2011, the visual image utilized was a fairy tale video clip—*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Most females who chose to participate in the online survey answered *strongly disagree* with this statement on 4, 11, and 18 December. No male answered the online survey on 11 December. However, on 4 and 18 December, males' answers varied between *highly* and *strongly disagree*. Participants of the online survey did not answer this follow-up question on 15 and 22 January. On 8 January, only one male answered the follow-up question indicating that the subject addressed was very challenging, uncomfortable, and became *distracting* to him.

During the focus group (ichat), no specific questions addressed other intervening variables that might account for the changes observed in the participants. However, when the participants answered the questions about their feelings (affective response), knowledge (cognition), and application of the message, some of them mentioned unexpected (intervening) variables.

When I asked the focus group question 3b—*what parts of the service might have led you to do something differently*, some participants mentioned that their participation in the Christmas event (giving Christmas baskets to the elderly) changed something in them. Perhaps, the holiday season caused worship attendees to be more sensitive to the message and others.

Though a visitor liked the message and music on 8 January, hospitality was the key factor that opened the door for him to be engaged by the music and listen to the message.

The combination of factors in the environment that happened during worship usually captured attention and helped a participant to understand the message (e.g., voice, lights, screen, etc.).

### **Summary of Major Findings**

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness of visual images to a postmodern, ethnically and biblically diverse audience in regard to their affective response, understanding, and application of a series of sermons preached over the period of six weeks at Connection Point Church during the primary worship experience. Based on the data collected through an online survey, focus groups, and pre- and post-questionnaires, I discovered the following major findings:

1. Given the demographics and church background of the worship attendees at Connection Point (mostly de-churched), I initially thought that visual images were the key factors to help worship attendees acquire knowledge of the Bible and apply sermon messages in their daily lives. Surprisingly, the key factors generating knowledge and moving worship attendees to apply the message were biblical facts and stories and theological and doctrinal points applied during the message.

2. Two sermon series were set up to test the Elaboration Likelihood Method. One would be more easily accepted and would operate more in the central route. The other would be more challenging and would be heavily dependent on the peripheral routes in processing the information. For most worship attendees who chose to participate in this survey, visual images (clips) did not seem to generate knowledge or move them to apply the message to their lives. Furthermore, worship attendees' responses gravitated very similarly in both series.

3. Visual images were not considered a distraction by the worship attendees participating in this study. However, visual images were most helpful in generating affective response and knowledge and in moving the participants into application of the message when real-life stories were involved.

4. Real-life stories told during the message seemed more effective in helping people acquire knowledge and apply the message. Furthermore, when biblical characters' stories were told as real-life stories (joy, struggles, and brokenness of the characters), they caused an affective response, generated knowledge, and moved the participants of this study to apply the message to their lives.

5. Though music did not necessarily generate direct biblical, theological, and doctrinal knowledge, it caused an affective response from the participants of this study. More precisely, music helped the participants to be emotionally available to the message and make connections with biblical characters, passages, and the main point of the message (e.g., Christmas season).

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### Problem and Purpose

Connection Point Church, for the most part, attracted a postmodern, ethnically diverse, and de-churched population. Therefore, the purpose of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness of visual images to a postmodern, ethnically and biblically diverse audience in regard to their affective response, understanding, and application of a series of sermons preached over the period of six weeks at Connection Point Church during the primary worship experience.

This study was initially fueled by the assumption that society and culture in the U.S. today is immersed in a post-Christian and postmodern culture. Moreover, the so-called de-churched and unchurched population immersed in this post-Christian, postmodern culture seemed very averse to anything that resembled *organized religion*, that is, traditionalism established by Christian churches. Furthermore, they seemed to be living in the climax of visual imagery and communication. Therefore, individuals attending Connection Point Church—being a glimpse of the post-Christian, postmodern, and visually driven culture—might have acquired knowledge from Sunday morning messages due to the use of visual images. More precisely, visual images might have facilitated a lot of the knowledge acquired by worship attendees from Sunday morning messages at Connection Point.

The final chapter of this dissertation clusters the major research findings according to the demographics, the post-Christian, postmodern, and mostly de-churched characteristics of the worship attendees of Connection Point Church. Following a

discussion of the major findings, this research offers implications of the findings, outlines the limitations of this study, highlights unexpected observations, makes recommendations, and offers suggestions for future research.

### **Major Findings**

This section outlines the study's major research findings by evaluating the effectiveness of biblical facts and stories, theological, and doctrinal points made during message(s) and possible knowledge generated by visual images. Additionally, research included the use of real-life stories told through visual images, the preaching of biblical characters as real-life stories, and the use of music during worship service.

#### **Biblical Facts and Stories, Theological and Doctrinal Points**

Authors such as Slaughter stated that churches would fail in communicating Jesus to this generation with sixty minutes of literate-linear worship (36; 62). Furthermore, Wilson and Moore say that postmodern culture is so visually engaged these days that the best way to communicate with them is to research what they are seeing at home on TV and in magazines and create messages that relate to their daily lives (19). Therefore, given the demographics and church background of the worship attendees at Connection Point, my initial thought was that visual images were key factors in helping worship attendees acquire biblical knowledge and applying the message in their daily lives. Surprisingly, the key factors generating knowledge and moving worship attendees to apply the message were biblical facts and stories, and theological and doctrinal points made during the message. The research findings analyzed through an online survey and especially through focus group sessions revealed that most cognition acquired during the

two sermon series came through biblical, theological, and doctrinal points made during the messages in December 2011 and January 2012.

The focus group format helped participants to express their learning experience and feelings openly during the worship service. Though some participants mentioned specific visual images used, especially during the month of December, the majority often emphasized specific biblical historical facts and/or information given during the message as crucial variables for their cognition. Furthermore, participants of the focus group and those who chose to respond to a post-questionnaire on 18 December pointed out message applications possibly promoted by biblical, theological, and doctrinal points. In fact, when asked about possible behavioral change during the focus group, the majority mentioned that change might happen due to a specific doctrinal and/or theological point made during the message. Therefore, I was led to believe that worship attendees' cognition at Connection Point happened through a process of high elaboration of the message as the central route. In other words, the worship attendees who chose to participate in the online survey, pre-post questionnaires, and especially the focus group had a chance to listen, process, scrutinize, and respond to the message as a central route.

I believe Slaughter's, Wilson's, and Moore's perception of the postmodern and post-Christian culture was correct to a certain extent. People in postmodern times are, indeed, visually driven and immersed in a highly visual culture. However, as Sweet argues, postmodern culture is about uncertainty, otherness, openness, multiplicity, and constant change (*Aqua Church* 24). Therefore, if postmodern and post-Christian cultures attending Sunday morning service are put in a box and/or given a specific formula on how they should function, that is when churches and theologians will misunderstand

them. Connection Point's response to this survey might have been a small sample of what is happening on a large scale in today's postmodern and post-Christian culture, that is they are constantly changing. Therefore, I believe the culture today is highly visually driven, and visual images should be part of the Sunday morning worship and message. However, I also believe most of the cognition happens to postmodern and post-Christian cultures through biblical information and/or facts, doctrinal, and theological points made during the message.

### **Visual Images and Knowledge**

I set up the two-sermon series *Can You See Him?* and *The Law* to test the Elaboration Likelihood Method (ELM). As stated in Chapter 2, one of the basic premises of the ELM is that *under different conditions, receivers will vary the degree to which they are likely to engage in elaboration of information ...* (O'Keefe 138). Therefore, the *Can See You Him?* series was easily accepted and operated more in the central route and/or attended closely to the message. *The Law* series was more challenging and heavily dependent on the peripheral routes in processing the information. In other words, worship attendees were more heavily dependent on visual images in order to be engaged by and process the message. However, worship attendees' responses gravitated very similarly in both series. Furthermore, for most worship attendees who chose to participate in this study, visual images did not necessarily generate knowledge or move them to apply the message. More precisely, the participants of the online survey who chose to answer the follow-up questions presented an affective response by remembering specific video clips shown during the messages. A number of the respondents, however, confused the dates the clips were used. The participants remembered the content of the clip and, although

some of them were impacted by it, they did not necessarily connect the clip with the right message. Some did say they learned from the clips; unfortunately, a technical oversight confused enough of the participants that I was not able to draw any other conclusions from this data. In both the online survey follow-up questions and the focus group sessions, a small percentage made the right connection between a video clip and a particular biblical character (e.g., Mary). To a certain extent, worship attendees remembering the clip but not the message confirms Matthes, Schemer, and Wirth's research, which claims a frequently presented brand placement causes the viewers to like the brand even though they do not remember the brand itself (485). Perhaps, the constant usage of video clips in the Sunday morning message caused the worship attendees to perceive clips as *a brand*. Therefore, as a *brand*, videos clips were remembered to a certain point but a direct connection with the message was not necessarily made. The fact is, I still believe in the use of visual images in the Sunday morning worship and message. However, I must emphasize that the outcome of this study did not necessarily support what I anticipated in terms of visual images in relation to the Elaboration Likelihood Method. The visual images did not seem to have generated immediate cognition and/or promote behavioral change in a ministry context such as Connection Point.

### **Visual Images and Real-Life Stories**

Visual images were not considered a distraction by the worship attendees participating in this study. On the contrary, everyone participating in both online surveys and focus groups found nothing negative to say about the visual images used during the messages in December 2011 and January 2012. One of the reasons might be that worship attendees were used to seeing visual images since the beginning of Connection Point.

Perhaps the simple fact is that worship attendees at Connection Point are part of a greater culture that is becoming more and more visually driven.

Worship attendees who chose to participate in this study had a positive response to the use of visual images during the worship service. However, I believe visual images were most helpful in generating affective response, promoting certain knowledge, and, in some cases, moving participants into possible behavioral change when real-life stories were involved. More precisely, the video images most remembered in response to the follow-up questions and focus group sessions during the sermon series in December were two real-life stories—teen pregnancy and a wife who lost a husband and daughter in a car accident. In fact, a participant of a focus group session said that the teen pregnancy visual image helped him to connect with Mary’s possible struggle of becoming pregnant and not being married to Joseph. Another one said that next time fear and crisis happened, she would remember how the teen and wife in the visual images, as well as the biblical characters of Mary and Joseph, handled situations of fear and crisis. Though visual images generated minimal knowledge and possible behavioral change, the real-life stories told through visual images were still mentioned by several participants of this study. Visual images of movies and/or anything that was not perceived as a real-life story might have been entertaining but were rarely mentioned. More precisely, the clip from the movie *Grinch* was mentioned a couple of times as a good illustration but not to the point of generating cognition that would move the participants to a behavioral change.

I reflected on the idea of real and familiar life stories as powerful mental pictures. When Achtemier speaks of Jesus’ parables, he says that the effectiveness of the parables was directly related to powerful and familiar images: “The parables were an especially

effective means of teaching, engaging the hearts and minds of the common people with memorable stories and vivid images drawn from their everyday experiences” (61). A possible function of Jesus’ parables was to draw images from everyday life situations in order to engage and teach his audience effectively. Perhaps, real-life stories go beyond a particular culture and time in history. Furthermore, video clips telling real and everyday life stories can be considered as the parables of the twenty-first century. More precisely, visual images in a ministry context such as Connection Point were directly related to real-life stories and seemed to be more effective than fairy tales and/or fake stories. To a certain extent, some of these visual images helped worship attendees to feel engaged and to connect with the message.

### **Biblical Characters and Real-Life Stories**

In addition to the effectiveness of real-life video clips, real-life stories told from the pulpit during the message seemed more effective in helping people acquire knowledge and apply the message to their lives. When real-life stories were mentioned, a certain number of participants referred to illustrations and/or real-life stories that I told during the message. Furthermore, when biblical characters’ stories were told as real-life stories (joy, struggles, and brokenness of the characters), they caused affective responses, generated knowledge, and, to a certain extent, moved the participants of this study to apply the message to their lives. Perhaps, Boomershine was right after all about storytelling and the Bible. Boomershine says that Jesus chose to tell stories because that was part of an Israel tradition and helped to build community. He elaborates on the importance of telling stories in Jesus’ time, saying, “In telling and listening to the stories of Jesus, early Christians made connections with their own lives that made clear to them

how God was present” (19). Furthermore, Boomershine, a great storyteller, summarizes the idea of the New Testament being filled with so many stories, saying that the word *gospel* is a shortened form of an Old English word *godspell*, which means *good tale*. He goes on to say, “In the Old English, therefore, the word that was the best equivalent for the Latin word, *evangelium*, was a tale whose telling had power” (16). In one of the focus group sessions, a number of participants mentioned how they felt more connected to the character and the message when biblical stories were told as real-life ones. More precisely, a participant mentioned that, when he learned how young Mary was, he thought of his daughter (seventeen years old) and how *crazy* he would feel if he received the news that his daughter was *pregnant with the Holy Spirit of God*. The biblical characters’ story told in a more realistic manner helped participants to connect with personal life situations. In other words, the biblical characters stories told as real-life ones were part of the central route. Though scrutinized by the participants in this study, biblical characters’ real-life stories caused them to process and relate to the story at a personal level. Furthermore, biblical characters’ real-life stories seemed to have generated cognition that transpired into possible behavioral change. I do not believe that the postmodern and post-Christian culture represented at Connection Point desired linear messages. However, they gave clear indications that they were affectively and cognitively engaged by personal and/or Biblical stories that are told and as close to their reality as possible. Perhaps, the *ethos* (the nature of the communicator) and *logos* (message) proposed by Aristotle played a much greater role in the process of communication to a culture that is hungry and thirsty for transparency, honesty, and a

good dose of reality. Personal and Biblical stories told from the pulpit seemed effective because the stories essentially involved ethos and logos.

### **Music**

Though music did not necessarily generate direct biblical, theological, and doctrinal cognition, it caused an affective response from the participants of this study. More precisely, music helped participants of this study to be emotionally available to and make connections with biblical characters, passages, and the main point of the message. In one of the sessions, music was mentioned by a number of participants of the focus group as an important variable helping them to connect with biblical characters and the message point, especially during the December series. Perhaps, the songs sung during the Christmas season relating to biblical characters and/or stories helped participants of this study to connect with the message(s) better. For that matter, Sweet's perspective that the Bible is real stories told through images, metaphors, narratives, symbols, and songs was right after all. Though Sweet was referring to the different genres present in the Bible, the idea can be applied to the worship attendees emphasizing songs as something very important in December. In other words, the reason why songs seemed to be so effective in December was that Christmas time was the perfect opportunity for the worship attendees to sing and listen to the story(ies). To the point that, at a much lower level, participants mentioned music as an important variable during the worship service that helped them to connect with a specific theological point during the series preached in January 2012.

I believe song that somehow tells the biblical stories and/or theological point to be made should be considered as peripheral route requiring a lower level of elaboration from

worship attendees yet helping participants to connect with the message. Again, over the holidays, music seemed to have triggered a better affective response than visual images in the participants of this study. Furthermore, the affective response to music might have facilitated the participants' cognition and possible behavioral change through the message.

### **Implications of the Findings**

The implications of this study will likely become increasingly pertinent to the practice of ministry as the post-Christian and postmodern culture continues to evolve in the U.S. More precisely, as the culture seems to continue to be increasingly multitasking, multisensory, and deeply immersed in visual communication, churches such as Connection Point trying to be relevant to the twenty-first century might feel tempted to depend heavily on visual images. In other words, fifty years ago the *pendulum* called methodology in communication of the Sunday morning message was stuck to one side of the spectrum with visual images almost nonexistent. In today's church culture, the *pendulum* seems to have swung the other way with churches depending on visual images. The so-called *emerging* and *missional* church desperately trying to break away from traditionalism might have fallen into what I call the *visual images trap*. For that matter, any church trying to be relevant to the culture and, rightly so, using visual images might have caused some affective response but not necessarily cognition and behavioral change in worship attendees. Though I strongly advocated the use of visual images during worship, the effective use of visual images happened when they were treated as peripheral routes and under the following premises.

## Real-Life Stories

Worship attendees of a church such as Connection Point stated that real-life stories told through visual images caused a better affective response, a certain level of cognition, and possible behavioral change. I must say that, as *entertaining* as the use of movie clips was, participants in this study rarely mentioned the movie clips in this study. Visual images were not considered real-life stories and, therefore, were treated as an interesting illustration but not necessarily as producing cognition and/or behavioral change. Furthermore, worship attendees coming to Connection Point—mostly de-churched and immersed in post-modern culture—considered movie clips as something neither real nor sincere and, therefore, should be ignored. Unlike I initially thought, worship attendees at Connection Point seemed more engaged by visual images that were close to real-life than a good illustration that was not necessarily real. The more a story was perceived as real and sincere, the more worship attendees at Connection Point seemed to have been engaged. More precisely, the postmodern and post-Christian culture attending emerging churches such as Connection Point seems to be going back to something found throughout the Bible—real stories. Perhaps, Griffin’s affirmation about the Bible as God’s many colored hues of the story needs to take center stage in the Sunday morning messages of emerging churches to a postmodern and post-Christian culture (181). This culture disbelieves in the organization called church for, perhaps, perceiving such organization as something fake and Sunday morning messages as something based on *fairy tales*. Sunday morning messages in emerging churches must bring into light that Jesus’ parables, figures of speech, and startling metaphors were not entertaining and empty illustrations but were meant to encourage people to think about

the deeper meaning of life (Sweet, *SoulTsunami* 203). The fact is, cognition at Connection Point occurred through real-life stories I told during the messages. Again, I do not believe that the effectiveness of the message in the twenty-first century church should solely rely on orality. However, postmodernity has challenged the church of the twenty-first century to do everything with much sincerity and transparency and, in many cases, exposing human brokenness, fears, and failures. Sweet, McLaren, and Haselmayer may be right in assuming that the emerging culture perhaps identifies more with the suffering Jesus than the glorified one. The emerging culture can understand the Jesus that was part of a single-parent household, was single beyond what was considered normal, and could not get along with the established authorities of his day (196). This real-life message about stories with real characters and a real Jesus who went through human struggles resonated with worship attendees who chose to participate in this study. They demonstrated in their answers that they were more interested in messages that show that they were not alone in their brokenness, fears, and failures. Therefore, I believe visual images may function best in a peripheral role, telling a real-life story to help complement the real-life stories of biblical characters.

### **Evaluation**

During the research I became very enthusiastic about some communication theorists such as Barry who says that visual language is more quickly processed than verbal language. Based on the literature such as Barry's, I assumed that advertising companies and communication theorists are experts in the use of visual images to persuade an audience. Therefore, Sunday morning messages can be understood as a *form of persuasion*. Furthermore, in my mind, the usage of visual images would fall within the

category described by Barry as a storyline quickly processed by Sunday worship attendees. Basically, communication theorists confirmed my assumption regarding the use of visual images in Sunday morning messages. I must confess, however, my assumption was one of the major mistakes I made in preparing for this study. Worship attendees of Connection Point were being impacted and learning from visual images. In fact, for the last four years, I placed visual images as part of the central route along with the Sunday morning message without necessarily evaluating cognition and possible behavioral change. One very important lesson learned from literature review about advertising companies is to evaluate the effectiveness of visual images constantly. As experts in the use of visual images, advertising companies do not ever assume commercials are being effective without research. I believe churches immersed in the ever-changing waters and visually driven postmodern culture must adopt a similar philosophy by constantly evaluating its Sunday morning methodology. Whether small or large, if evaluations can be done via online survey and/or focus group sessions, I believe the so-called emerging and missional churches will be more effective in delivering Sunday morning messages and more relevant to the culture. For that matter, Christian churches, generally speaking, can no longer assume that cognition is happening and worship attendees are experiencing behavioral change. The Sunday morning message method(s) must be constantly evaluated.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Every study is a work-in-progress, offering observations and analyses from a particular historical and cultural context. As such, each one offers both strengths and weaknesses. This study is no exception. Undoubtedly, I believe this study could have

been strengthened in a number of ways. If Connection Point was a larger church, I could have had a larger pool of worship attendees encouraged to answer the online survey and participate in the focus group sessions. More participants would have allowed me to gain a better understanding of the affective response, possible cognition, and behavioral change due to the use of visual images. If this study was applied to *emerging* and *missional* churches that rely heavily on the use of visual images outside of the Milwaukee geographical area, I could have had a broader understanding of the use of visual images during Sunday morning messages and, perhaps, different insights would have emerged from it.

Another limitation of this study is that Connection Point has a history of low response rate to a number of church events. More precisely, the history of low response rate included inconsistency in worship attendance, mid-week Bible study participation, volunteer involvement in Sunday morning tasks, and leadership formation to name a few. Therefore, the lack of commitment of the worship attendees from Connection Point in responding to the online survey, participating in the focus group, and to pre-post questionnaires was a reflection of the culture of the congregation. Perhaps, the busyness of the holidays and the late start of the second series in January 2012 might have contributed to the lack of commitment of worship attendees. However, I could not ignore the reality that Connection Point was a reflection of the postmodern and post-Christian culture. Sweet's allusion to postmodern culture might be right after all. The fact that postmodern culture rebelled against order, regulation, stability, singularity, and fixity justifies the low rate response or low commitment from worship attendees at Connection Point (*AquaChurch* 24). Connection Point did not follow the regular

pattern so common in *modern worship attendees*, that is, going to the 11 o'clock worship service every Sunday morning. On the contrary, if nothing else, worship attendees at Connection Point fit within the category described by Carter as pilgrims who are suspicious of institutions and are trying to discover their own place in the midst of the sinking sand of modernity (38-39). Furthermore, they behaved close to what Debold describes in her article as *people having spiritual experiences and the decline in traditional affiliation*. The fact is, low rate response prevented me from better understanding the worship attendees' cognition from each sermon series. Therefore, the evaluation of affective response, cognition, and message application due to the use of visual images was limited.

All three instruments—pre-post questionnaires, online surveys, and focus groups—were affected by the uniqueness of Connection Point's worship attendees. As previously mentioned, worship attendees at Connection Point presented a very low response rate to a number of events. Therefore, I decided to leave the online questionnaires available longer than a week. By doing so, I was aiming to receive a higher response rate. However, some of the respondents who delayed their participation in the online survey became confused as to how they had to respond and related certain visual images to unrelated messages. The confusion might have caused a shifting of the data and limited the understanding of the responses.

The focus group sessions experienced a number of shortfalls as well. The sessions were typically held after services, and all attendants were encouraged to participate while enjoying coffee, bagels, and fellowship. Though, the attendants always seemed to be highly relational, the sessions could not go longer than thirty minutes.

Furthermore, Connection Point—considered a small, emerging church—might not have had enough intimacy among its attendants due the transient nature of the church. As identified in Chapter 4, some participants attended church once or twice a month. Therefore, participants of the focus group sessions might not have felt as comfortable in talking about their feelings more openly. Farah identified in Chapter 2 that the perceptual power of image is capable of reaching emotions before it is cognitively understood (78). The combination of short sessions and lack of intimacy, however, might have prevented participants from identifying fully how visual images cognitively impacted them. Therefore, I did not have rich qualitative data with which to work.

The worship attendees' response to pre- and post-questionnaires followed the same inconsistent pattern of behavior previously mentioned. No answer was given to the pre-questionnaire, and only some answered the post-questionnaire during the series *Can You See Him?* Likewise, a number of worship attendees answered the pre-questionnaire but no one answered the post-questionnaire during the series *The Law*. Therefore, the inconsistent data prevented me from fully understanding the knowledge worship attendees acquired during those series at Connection Point.

### **Unexpected Observations**

Some surprising insights and/or unexpected observations happened during the development of this study. One of them stems from a series of testimonies during the sermon series *Can You See Him* in December 2011. More precisely, on 10 December, Connection Point partnered with *Interfaith* ministries in distributing Christmas baskets to the elderly. On Sunday, 11 December, those who participated in the Christmas basket distribution gave testimonies of their experience. In the session that followed Sunday's

worship service, a good number of participants of the focus group mentioned that they were affectively impacted by the experience and testimonies. In fact, some participants of the focus group were so moved by the experience and/or testimonies that they felt they would be more intentional about helping others not only during Christmas time but all year round. An argument can be made that worship attendees became more sensitive over the Christmas season. This cognitive response possibly led to a behavioral change. Over the holidays, experiencing testimonies and acts of mercy became the most effective peripheral routes. As I reflected on the participants of the focus group hearing about and delivering Christmas baskets, my observation was that the story of Christmas became tangible in a very practical manner to them. More precisely, I reflected on the fact that God's story involving visual images were tangible manifestations of his mercy and care for the people. As Levine points out, from Midrash's perspective, the burning bush was a lowly bush signifying a symbol of God's care for Israel's situation of oppression and depression. Levine highlights that God chose to communicate through an image representing his anguish and how he related to Israel's sense of humiliation. For that matter, the many visual images present in the New Testament show that Jesus, God-with-us, happens in the context of mercy and care for the people as well. Green, McKnight, and Marshall propose that miracles such as the one registered in Mark 2:12 should be primarily viewed as "episodic manifestations of the advent of the kingdom of God" (552). The manifestation of the kingdom of God is essentially incarnational and deeply immersed in mercy and care for human beings. The fact that participants of the focus group mentioned the Christmas basket distribution and/or testimonies helping them to

connect with the message better might be a reflection of a culture that can be deeply impacted by the peripheral route of living the incarnational gospel of mercy and care.

Hospitality was another insight and/or unexpected observation. Though mentioned one time in a focus group session, the participant was a visitor who emphatically said that hospitality was the variable connecting him with everything else in the worship service, including the message. The unexpected variable of hospitality became a crucial peripheral route in helping a visitor to connect with and process a very difficult message during the series *The Law* in January 2012. I must highlight that hospitality observed in this case was not necessarily people being friendly and/or polite to a first-time visitor. Instead, the participant of the focus group mentioned that he felt *genuinely welcomed*. The idea of a first-time visitor (a stranger) feeling genuinely welcomed or part of the community has to do with the essence of hospitality. The essence of hospitality is part of who God is, that is, fellowship with strangers. Perhaps, a perfect example is God meeting Jacob in Bethel—a cheater, a deceiver, and homeless wanderer in the middle of nowhere. Furthermore, the visual images separated from a deep sense of hospitality or a perfect stranger being welcomed into God's physical presence would not have impacted Jacob. Cornelis Houtman says that *Luz-Bethel* was a place where heaven literally touched earth (345). I believe when a church such as Connection Point moved from being polite and friendly to being hospitable the so-called postmodern and post-Christian culture was impacted. In other words, true hospitality was a peripheral route that moved a visitor, a perfect stranger, to be affected by the message into making a possible behavioral change.

These two unexpected observations were crucial learning experiences in terms of the use of visual images in the context of the church of the twenty-first century. Furthermore, researching and writing this dissertation caused me to reflect on an emerging church I will be planting in Maricopa, Arizona. More precisely, I no longer make any assumptions on how to impact *successfully* the so-called unchurched or de-churched. When attending seminars on church planting for the last few years, I have heard all sorts of things on how to launch a *successful* new church. The *successful* methods included highly visually driven messages trying to be *relevant* to a visually driven postmodern and post-Christian culture. Furthermore, in reading and researching different communication methods used by advertising companies, I felt tempted to rely heavily on visual images as the central route or, should I say, the message itself. Having a background in social communication, my tendency was to rely on specialists in visual images such as Proctor, Papasolomou-Doukakis, and Proctor who state that postmodern advertisement was more appealing because the ads focused more on symbols (247). My initial assumption was that communication companies rely on thirty second visual images to persuasively impact their audience. Therefore, the same idea could be adjusted and applied by emerging churches to reach out to a postmodern and visually driven culture.

I do not despise the wisdom of church planting and communication experts in relation to the postmodern and post-Christian culture. In fact, I believe that visual images should be part of the twenty-first century church worship and message. However, I was humbled and reminded time and again during this research that the church of Jesus Christ is not an advertising company and Sunday morning messages are not thirty-second TV commercials. I was reminded that God operates above and beyond human *successful*

*formulas* on how to impact the unchurched and de-churched. God is highly relational and hospitable and incarnationally shows his love and care for the unchurched and de-churched and for all people. Again, visual images should be part of Sunday morning worship and messages. However, I believe postmodern and post-Christian culture can be more effectively impacted when the focus of emerging churches is on hospitality, mercy, care for others, and meaningful relationships instead of visual images. Furthermore, the ever-changing postmodern and post-Christian culture is crying out for less superficiality and more reality and transparency that should occur from messages utilizing real-life and biblical stories told and shown through visual images.

### **Recommendations**

This study is a work in progress and composed of strengths and weaknesses. However, I believe the weaknesses can be great opportunities for continual research, especially within the area of the use of visual images in worship.

One area that needs more research refers to how other church settings respond to the use of visual images (i.e., if the so-called emerging and missional churches located in different geographical areas outside of Milwaukee respond to the use of movie clips versus real-life stories). For that matter, cognition acquired through the use of visual images by churches other than the ones classified as missional and/or emerging churches can be further researched.

Another area to be explored is the fact that Jesus very effectively used a number of illustrations (e.g., parables) in his messages that were not necessarily real-life stories. Though I do not come close to comparing movie clips to Jesus' parables, I believe movie clips could be considered within the category of good illustrations without involving real-

life stories. More precisely, movies are good stories that especially appeal to emotions and impact people in a lot of ways. A possible continual research could further evaluate the affective response to the use of movie clips and possible and behavioral change, if any. The research could be applied to a younger church setting (e.g., college age group) in order to evaluate their response to movie clips versus real-life stories. For that matter, I would encourage further research to include spending more time in multiple church settings evaluating the response to the use of visual images in worship.

As previously mentioned, the usage of visual images in messages should be deserves more research in different settings other than a small emerging church within the Milwaukee-metro area. However, a special emphasis should be given to how women process and learn from visual images differently than men. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Schultz and Schultz shared their discoveries from a poll of adult church attendants (189). Furthermore, the research displayed in Chapter 4 seems to present a trend showing that women were more vulnerable to and perhaps learned more than men from the visual images used during the messages. One example can be found in Table 4.50 where most females highly agreed while the males mostly agreed that *a picture is worth a thousand words even in a sermon*. Table 4.51 also shows the same trend where more than half of the respondents were females and strongly agreed while the males somewhat agreed with the following statement: *I have been emotionally moved by the use of visual images in the sermon today*. Furthermore, during focus group sessions females specifically mentioned the visual images used in the message. One possible explanation is the reality that adults attending Sunday morning worship might be composed more by women than men. This reality of women attending church more than men can be true in any church setting and

might be true for the reality of Connection Point. More women seemed to have responded to the survey and participated in the focus group than men. However, for the purpose of this study, I cannot come to a final conclusion due to the low numbers of worship attendees and participants in the survey. Therefore, I highly recommend further research drawing from a larger sample size in order to determine if and how males differ in their responses to the use of visual images in Sunday morning messages. Furthermore, having a larger sample to draw enough data will help to test and experiment fully with the Elaboration Likelihood Method in relation to the usage of visual images. As mentioned in Chapter 2, some of the basic premises of the ELM are in high elaboration and/or central route, the message is perceived as important and, therefore, will lead the audience to immediate relevant thinking. In low elaboration and/or peripheral route, however, the message might not be considered as important and/or is highly challenging. Therefore, the audience might need a number of peripheral routes to be engaged by and process the message. My expectation was to create two kinds of sermon series involving messages with high and low elaborations. More precisely, the sermon series *Can You See Him?* preached in December 2011 would be easily accepted and perceived as central route. Therefore, visual images (peripheral routes) were not as important in helping worship attendees to feel engaged, process, and hopefully apply the message. The second sermon series *The Law* preached in January 2012 would be more challenging and, therefore, would be heavily dependent on peripheral routes (visual images). The results pointed out that the participants of the research seemed to have processed both series the same. One possible explanation is the small sample size that might have caused such a similarity in processing both sermon series. More precisely, the lack of substantial data might have

prevented me from seeing the results indicated by the Elaboration Likelihood Method. Therefore, I recommend for future research, with enough supportive data, the researcher utilize the Elaboration Likelihood Method in relation to the usage of visual images in the Sunday morning message.

This study is a work in progress with many possibilities for improvement. Though I did not necessarily see much application of the messages, I hope that over time the participants of this study who may have been impacted will apply the messages. Furthermore, as culture will continue to become more visually driven, the findings of this research can be a good starting point for future research in evaluating affective responses, cognition, and possible behavioral change due to the use of visual images.

### **Postscript**

For about seven years, I have imagined writing the concluding paragraphs of this dissertation. My ending journey of this dissertation has caused me to doubt the completion of the dissertation was ever possible for me. I began the program thinking that I could *easily* accomplish everything within the time frame mentioned during orientation. In fact, I vividly remember how I had everything planned out and figured during orientation. Writing this dissertation has been one of the most humbling experiences for me. I was humbled by many things in life and ministry during this process, by the move to different ministries and the many challenges each ministry presented, and by trying to be faithful to God's calling and still take care myself and my most important flock—my family. We have lived in the U.S. for about sixteen years and have often wished we were a little closer to *home* or had gone *home* a little more often. Being so far away made the experience of dealing with my mom's death a lot

harder. Furthermore, my own unexpected diagnosed illness was certainly *a life detour*. Furthermore, many sleepless nights fiercely tried to convince me that the *finish line* of this dissertation was being pushed away from me. However, I must say that, through all and all, certain biblical truths never became more real to me, such as “when I am weak then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10). Moreover, the biblical truth that “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength” (Phil. 4:13) was the more constant guide and strength in writing this dissertation.

I am passionate about visual communication and, more importantly, creative ways to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the twenty-first century postmodern and visually driven culture. Therefore, my prayer is that my findings will somehow help other churches and preachers continue to find creative ways to be relevant in the proclamation of the gospel so that we “may by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22).

APPENDIX A

ONLINE SURVEY—VISUAL IMAGES IN WORSHIP

Section 1- Demographics	
<i>Please, choose the response that best represents you. All answers will remain confidential.</i>	
Questions	Answers
A. Gender	Female Male
B. When were you born?	Before 1925 Between 1925-1944 Between 1945-1963 Between 1964-1980 After 1980
C. Please, describe your personal relationship with God.	I committed my life to Christ <b>before</b> I began attending Connection Point Church. I committed my life to Christ <b>after</b> attending Connection Point Church. I have <b>not yet</b> made a commitment to Christ. I am <b>not sure</b> about my relationship with God.
D. Approximately how long have you attended Connection Point Church?	I am a first-time guest. Less than a month. One to six months. Six months to a year. One to four years.
E. Please, describe your attendance at Connection Point Church in the past six months.	Nearly every week. Twice a month. Once a month. On holidays and special occasions.

Section 2- Media	<i>Please respond to the questions in this Media section by doing the following: placing a check mark on the number that represents if you strongly agree or disagree with the statement made. Also, briefly respond to the questions located right below each statement. All answers will remain confidential.</i>
Questions	Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
1. Visual images (clips, pictures) are nice in sermons but words really get the point across to me.	1 2 3 4 5
1A. What other factors help you understand and remember the sermon? Please explain.	
2. A picture really is worth a thousand words even in a sermon.	1 2 3 4 5
2B. Which visual image do you remember from today's worship? Why?	
3. I have been emotionally moved by the use of visual images (clips, pictures) in the sermon today.	1 2 3 4 5
3C. How did the image help you understand the sermon? Please, explain.	
4. Generally, I found the pastor's use of visual images (clips, pictures) in the sermon today very distracting.	1 2 3 4 5
4D. Were there other factors that were distracting and prevented you from understanding the sermon today? If so, what are they?	
5. I liked the visual image used today. It helped me to understand the point of the sermon.	1 2 3 4 5
5E. Are you likely to change your thinking or behavior in response to seeing the visual image today? Please, explain.	
6. Whenever there is no visual image (clip, picture), chances are that I will not pay attention and will not remember the main point of the sermon.	1 2 3 4 5
6F. How did you feel in response to seeing the image today? Please, explain.	

**APPENDIX B**

**FOCUS GROUP—VISUAL IMAGES IN WORSHIP**

**Focus Group—iChat—Can You See Him?/The Law**

- 1a.** What new insights did you gain having participated in worship today? What did you learn from the worship experience?
- 1b.** What parts of the service led you to these new understandings or insights?
  
- 2a.** What feelings did you have while participating in the service?
- 2b.** What parts of the service caused you to experience these feelings?
  
- 3a.** How will you respond to the message of today's service? What might you do differently as a result of attending today's service?
- 3b.** What parts of the service have led you to respond differently?

APPENDIX C

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE—VISUAL IMAGES IN WORSHIP—*CAN YOU SEE*

*HIM?*



What do you know about the following biblical characters: Mary, Joseph, and the wise men?

APPENDIX D

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE—VISUAL IMAGES IN WORSHIP—*CAN YOU SEE*

*HIM?*



What new insights did gain having participated in the series *Can You See Him?* What did you learn?

APPENDIX E

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE—VISUAL IMAGES IN WORSHIP—*THE LAW*



What do you know about the *Sermon on the Mount*?

APPENDIX F

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE—VISUAL IMAGES IN WORSHIP—*THE LAW*



What new insights did you gain having participated in the series *The Law*? What did you learn from the *Sermon on the Mount*?

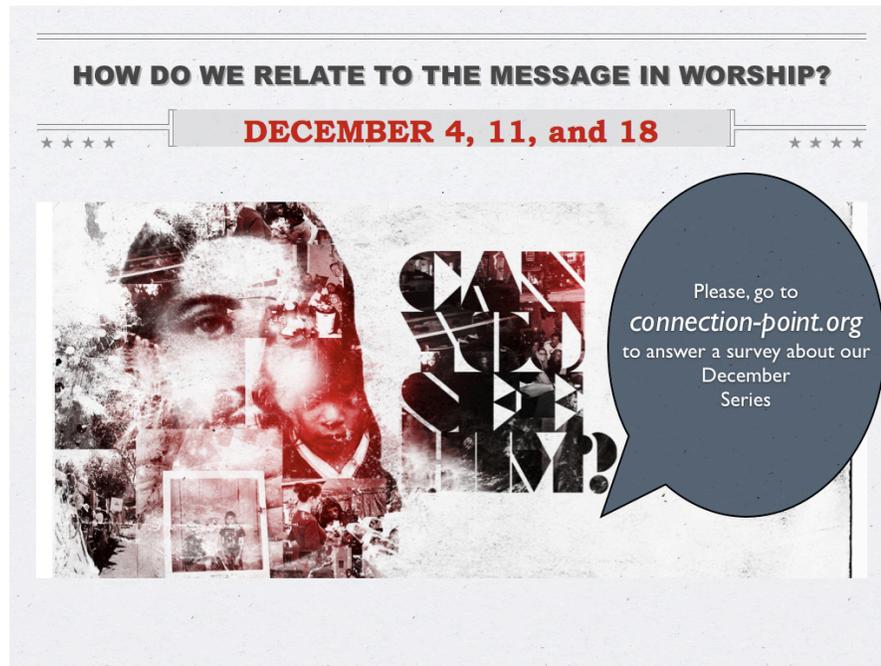
APPENDIX G

SLIDE ANNOUNCEMENT 1—VISUAL IMAGES IN WORSHIP

HOW DO WE RELATE TO THE MESSAGE IN WORSHIP?

DECEMBER 4, 11, and 18

Please, go to [connection-point.org](http://connection-point.org) to answer a survey about our December Series

The slide is a horizontal banner with a light gray background. At the top, the text "HOW DO WE RELATE TO THE MESSAGE IN WORSHIP?" is centered in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below this, a dark gray horizontal bar contains the dates "DECEMBER 4, 11, and 18" in a red, serif font. On either side of this bar are three small white stars. The main visual area is a collage of images: on the left, a woman's face is overlaid with various photos and textures; in the center, there are abstract geometric shapes and patterns in black and white; on the right, a dark blue speech bubble contains white text. The overall aesthetic is artistic and layered.

APPENDIX H

SLIDE ANNOUNCEMENT 2—VISUAL IMAGES IN WORSHIP

HOW DO WE RELATE TO THE MESSAGE IN WORSHIP?

DECEMBER 4, 11, and 18

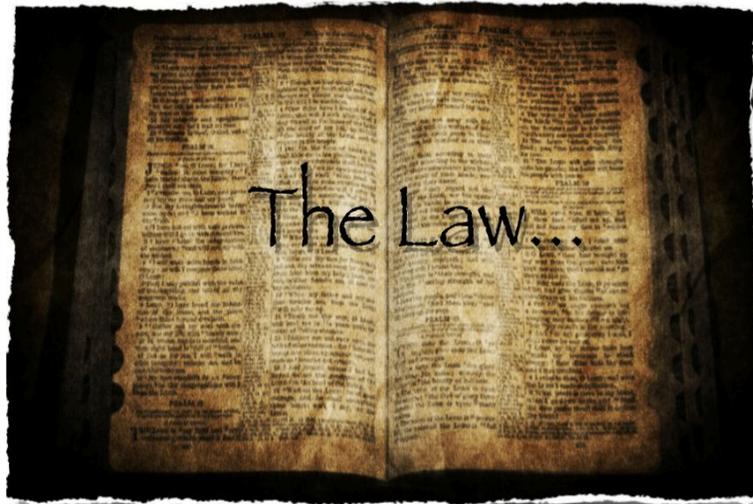
You are invited to  
**iChat**  
after worship in December  
Information:  
contact pastor Eneyas at  
efreitas@wi.rr.com



APPENDIX I

SLIDE ANNOUNCEMENT 3—VISUAL IMAGES IN WORSHIP

The challenging sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount  
January 8, 15, and 22



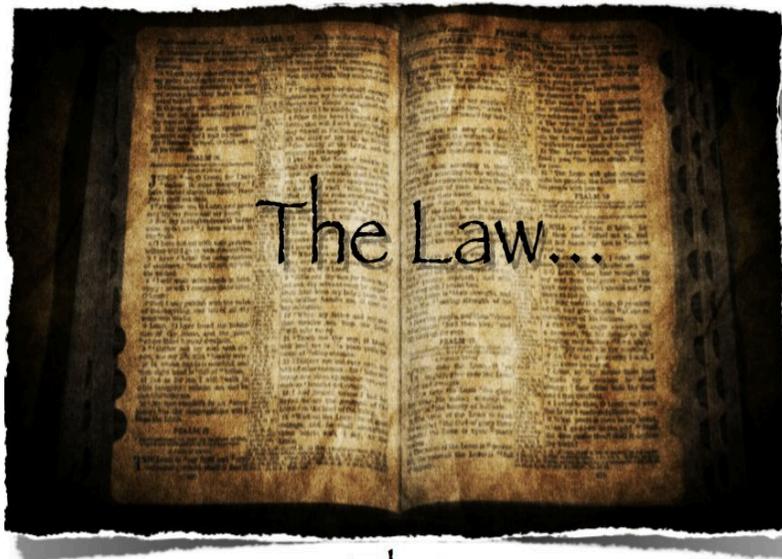
Don't forget to answer our online survey

[www.connection-point.org](http://www.connection-point.org)

APPENDIX J

SLIDE ANNOUNCEMENT 4—VISUAL IMAGES IN WORSHIP

The challenging sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount  
January 8, 15, and 22



Participate in our iChat sessions (15 min.)

RIGHT AFTER WORSHIP

APPENDIX L

REMINDER CARD 1—VISUAL IMAGES IN WORSHIP



APPENDIX M

REMINDER CARD 2—VISUAL IMAGES IN WORSHIP



The  
Law...

A series based on the challenging sayings  
of Jesus in the *Sermon on the Mount*.



January 8, 15, and 22

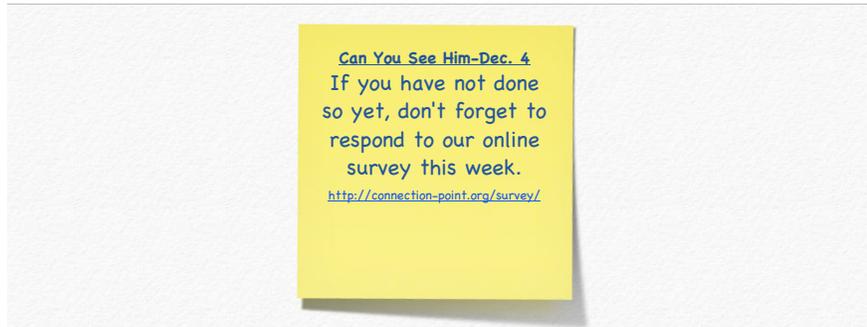
**Don't forget** to answer our **online survey** &  
participate in our **iChat sessions** (15 min.)  
right **after worship**.

[www.connection-point.org](http://www.connection-point.org)

## APPENDIX N

### E-MAIL/ONLINE SURVEY—VISUAL IMAGES IN WORSHIP

Connection Point Church <connectionpoint@mac.com>  
Don't forget to share your opinion this week  
December 6, 2011 2:24 PM



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