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EVALUATION OF THE BASIC THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION COURSE AND ITS
IMPACT ON THE PREACHING SKILLS OF LAY PASTORS

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Stephen Joseph

May 2008

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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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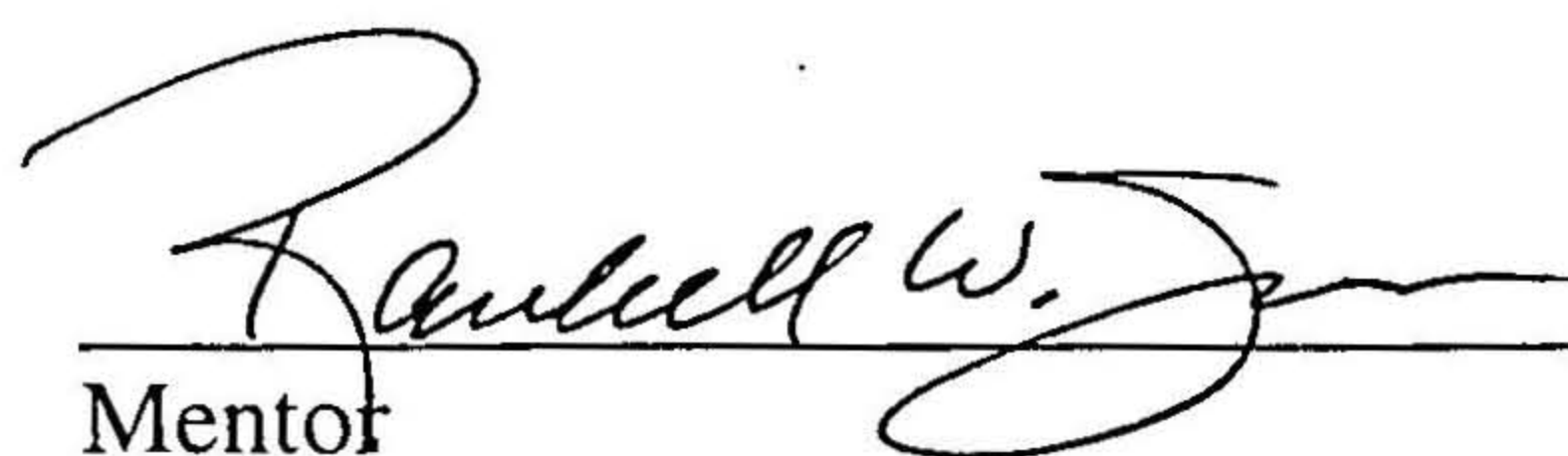
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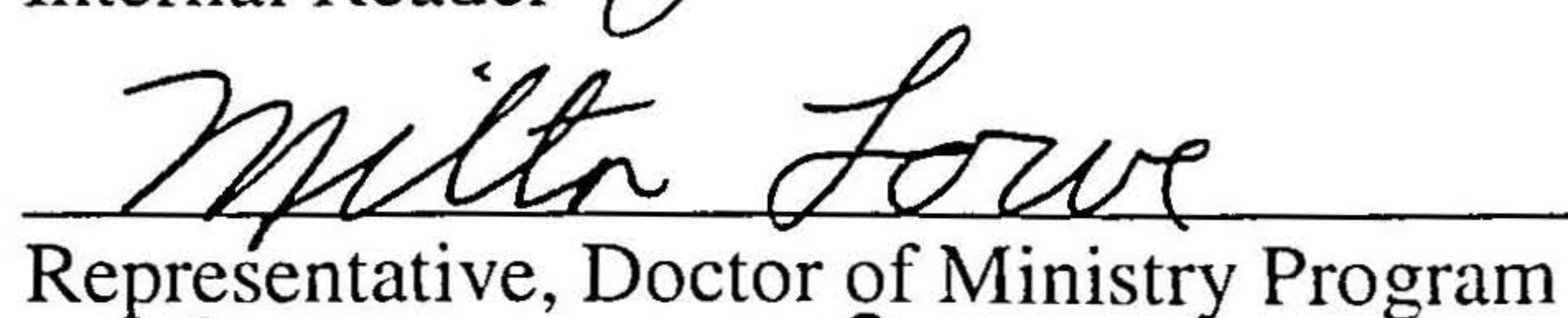
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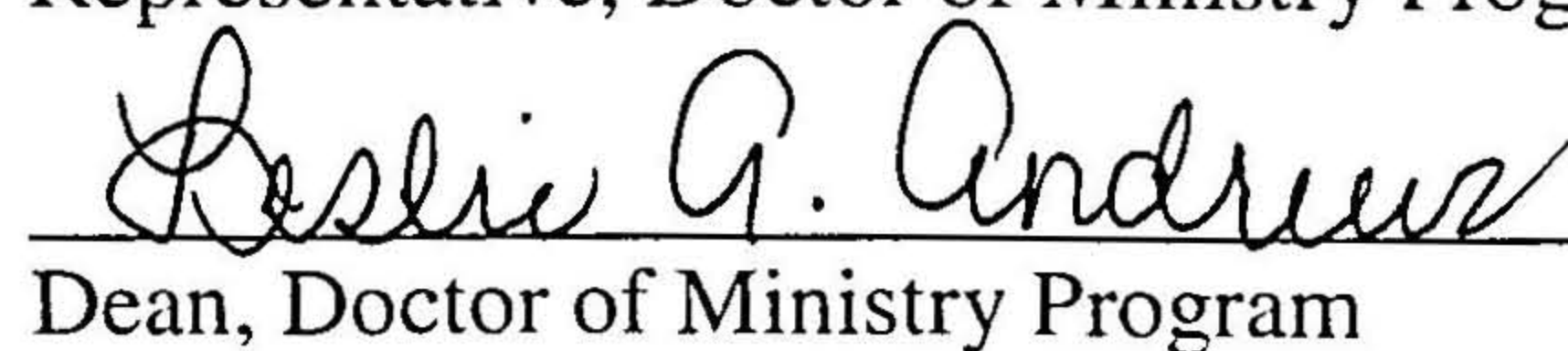
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Dean, Doctor of Ministry Program

May 7, 2008

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ABSTRACT

EVALUATION OF THE BASIC THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION COURSE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE PREACHING SKILLS OF LAY PASTORS

by

Stephen Joseph

The history of Indian Christianity has witnessed the remarkable growth of nondenominational churches in the first half of the twentieth century. Lay pastors who founded these nondenominational churches desired to head the church structure. Lay pastors' knowledge in methods of Bible study, communication of biblical messages, basic Bible doctrines, personal spiritual formation, and church ministerial administration was not adequate. As a result, the overall ministry was reduced to preaching, which had no proper interpretation of the Word. The lack of theological education and training has resulted in false teachings that misled or misguided people.

The purpose of this study was to provide basic theological education to lay pastors and help them find a fuller meaning for the ministry. Finding the need for Basic Theological Education (BTE) through hearing sermons of lay pastors and personal meetings with lay pastors, I developed a curriculum that fits in the multireligious, multicultural, and multilingual contexts of India. The research demonstrated that BTE was relevant, meaningful, resourceful, and easily accessible for the lay pastors. I quantified and verified the results by testing the participants through the researcher-designed instrument.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ix
CHAPTER 1 PROBLEM	1
Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Context of the Study	5
Purpose.....	6
Research Questions	7
Research Question #1	7
Research Question #2	7
Research Question #3	7
Definitions of the Main Terms.....	7
Some Biblical Passages for Reflection	8
Theological Reflection.....	9
Theology of BTE	10
The Nature of the Church	10
Methodology	12
Participants.....	12
Scope and Limitations.....	13
Review of Literature	13
Overview of the Study	14

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE.....	15
Definition of Laity in the Church.....	16
Biblical Foundations for Equipping the Laity	18
The Old Testament Theology about Laity	18
Old Testament Passages for Reflection	19
New Testament Theology about Laity.....	20
New Testament Passages for Reflection.....	21
Laity Training in Early Church History.....	22
Laity in the History of the Middle Ages	26
Laity in the Reformation Period	26
Laity's Equipping in the Contemporary World	28
Laity in Ecumenical Thinking	28
Lay pastors in the Present Context.....	30
Importance and Necessity of BTE for the Lay Pastors.....	30
BTE and Moral Formation.....	32
BTE and Spiritual Formation.....	34
BTE and Socioeconomic Transformation.....	36
BTE and Hermeneutics and Preaching	37
BTE and Ten Qualities for Effective Preaching	42
The Task of BTE.....	51

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	53
The Nature of BTE	53
The Process of BTE	54
The Content of BTE.....	55
BTE Strategy.....	56
Methods of Bible Study	56
Communicating Biblical Messages.....	57
Survey of Bible Doctrines.....	57
Personal Spiritual Formation	58
Church Administration and Ministry	58
Curriculum	58
Research Questions.....	59
Research Question #1	59
Research Question #2	60
Research Question #3	60
Participants and Samples	61
Instrumentation	61
The Necessity of Theological Training of Lay Pastors	63
Elements of Theological Training	63
Issues in Lay Pastors' Training Program	63
Variables	63
Validity and Reliability.....	64
Data Collection and Analysis.....	64

Generalizability.....	65
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS.....	66
Profile of Participants	66
Data Collection and Analysis.....	67
Baseline Skills.....	68
Comparison of the Evaluation of the Preaching	72
Observed Changes in Lay Pastor's Preaching	75
Evaluation of Ten Categories from General Observation.....	83
Evaluation of BTE from Exit Interview.....	84
Assessment of BTE Program	85
Summary of the Major Findings	87
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION.....	89
Training to Serve Effectively.....	90
BTE and Effective Preaching.....	90
The Practice of BTE.....	91
Limitations of the Study.....	93
Unexpected Observation	95
Recommendations for Application in Ministry Contexts	96
Recommendations and changes to the program.....	97
Some Important Concerns.....	98
Emphasis on Perspectival Change	98
Missional Thrust	98
Formation.....	99

Commitment	100
My Ministry Intervention.....	101

APPENDIXES

A. Description of Ten Categories of Preaching Evaluation and Guide to the Evaluation Committee to Assess the Effectiveness of the Preaching of the Lay Pastors	104
B. Preaching Evaluation Form.....	106
C. Questionnaire of Demography	107
D. Semi-Structured, Open-Ended Interview Questions.....	112
E: Description of the curriculum of the five subjects	114
WORKS CITED	124

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1 Sample of Preaching Evaluation Form	62
Table 4.1 Lay Pastors' Pretest by the Evaluation Committee	69
Table 4.2 Comparison of categories in pretest.....	70
Table 4.3 Evaluation of Constructive and Unconstructive Categories in Pretest	71
Table 4.4 Evaluation of Sermon in Pretest: Lay Pastor A	73
Table 4.5 Evaluation of Sermon in Posttest: Lay Pastor A.....	74
Table 4.6 Overall Evaluation of the Pretest Scores	75
Table 4.7 Overall Evaluation of the Posttest Scores.....	76
Table 4.8 Comparison of Evaluation of Preaching: Lay Pastor A.....	77
Table 4.9 Comparison of Evaluation of Preaching: Lay Pastor B	78
Table 4.10 Comparison of Evaluation of Preaching: Lay Pastor C.....	79
Table 4.11 Comparison of Evaluation of Preaching: Lay Pastor D.....	80
Table 4.12 Comparison of Evaluation of Preaching: Lay Pastor E	81
Table 4.13 Comparison of Evaluation of Preaching: Lay Pastor F	82
Table 4.14 Overall Scores of Lay Pastors Preaching.....	83
Table 4.15 Assessment of Personal Changes through General Observation	84
Table 4.16 Description on General Questions in Exit Interview	85
Table 4.17 Assessment of BTE in General Observation	87

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TOGETHER.

May God bless all of them who played a vital role in my life and may He be honored in everything.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Introduction

The history of Christianity in India originated with the arrival of St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. The historical record indicates that St. Thomas came to India in AD 52 and landed at Kodungallur on the Kerala coast. After a great ministry of preaching, St. Thomas was pierced to death by the high caste persecutors near Mylapore in Chennai, formerly called Madras, in AD 68. The arrival of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century strengthened and developed the Christianity that existed from the first century in India. In the eighteenth century, the arrival of the Protestant missionaries paved the way for Protestant missionary enterprise. Since then, Christianity has grown in numbers within South India and begun to spread into North India. At present with the population of more than 3.5 percent, Christianity stands as the third major religion after Hinduism and Islam. More than fifty thousand churches are established by different mission agencies and denominations.

The major denominations in India are the Roman Catholic Church, which has a membership of more than five million people; the Church of South India with a membership of more than 1.5 million; the Orthodox Syrian Church with a membership of 1.4 million; the Council of Baptist Churches with a membership of more than one million; the Methodist Church of India with a membership of more than one million; the Lutheran Churches in India with a membership of more than 0.8 million; and, other denominational churches that began around the second half of the twentieth century with a membership of more than twelve million (Oommen and Mabry 59).

The growth and expansion of Christianity can also be traced to mass movements in the late 1800s and the early 1900s as various regions of the country experienced severe drought. As a result people from the lower caste accepted Christianity as it provided for their needs. Apart from this major reason, other reasons such as equality, human dignity, and concern for fellow human beings and, above all, the assurance of eternity that led these people to accept Christianity. Very few from the higher caste and class accepted Christianity because they thought of it as the religion of love. More than half of the total Christian population of India is the result of the mass movements (IBC 73).

The denominational categories of churches such as Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal train pastors and lay workers for gospel interpretation and for church planting through their respective theological institutions. Nevertheless, this occurrence is not happening with all churches. The gap between denominational churches and nondenominational independent churches is so wide that there have been tensions and dilemmas that have proven detrimental to the church. One dilemma is the authoritative attitude of the clergy of the denominational churches with the laity. A second dilemma is the pastor of the denominational church as an inadequate facilitator, either practically or theologically. For the average learned laity, this dilemma seemed to be a problem that led to the tension. As a third dilemma, caste differences existed between the clergy and the laity. In a denominational church setup, any pastor who was appointed, but was not welcomed by the laity, resulted in some areas for the emergence of the nondenominational independent churches.

These reasons have blurred the growth and expansion of the church at large to a greater extent. Converts desiring an independent church framed their own agenda

depending on their contexts, which did not necessarily conform to the agendas of the denominational churches (Kumaradoss 3). Most of the founders of these nondenominational churches come from financially disadvantaged background but exhibit true, simple faith. These leaders' beliefs and practices have evolved around their own situations; hence, these founders need thorough training and equipping (Immanuel 333).

Statement of the Problem

Since the second half of the twentieth century, several nondenominational independent churches have established by lay pastors throughout the state of Andhra Pradesh, particularly in Vijayawada. The reason for their emergence, though, seems obscure but can be made clear based on the nature of the emergence. In some cases the vast majority of believers responding to God's call as pastors, missionaries, and evangelists have started their own churches. In other cases the reasons are related with the church administration. While for centuries supportive voices have raised for lay ministry and an active and creative participation in the theology, mission, and ministry of the church, the church ultimately was unable to maintain a valued relationship between clergy and laity. This disconnect resulted in the founding of nondenominational churches.

Circumstances surrounding the founding of these nondenominational independent churches revealed the agendas of many converts. While the nondenominational churches have been constituted as public spheres, offering converts the opportunity to come together without consideration of caste, race, or even nationality, the denominational authorized church did not allow converts full free participation and expression for various reasons. As a result, converts continued to live in caste discrimination and hatred. In light

of such injustices, nondenominational independent churches assumed the role of alternative public spheres and provided converts the opportunity to come together and articulate their respective views, ideas, and options (Pandian 385). These churches also allowed converts the opportunity to experience community within their own respective castes.

These changes provided reasons for founding the nondenominational independent churches in most parts of the Andhra Pradesh and particularly in Vijayawada. Though this idea of beginning independent churches is valid in some cases, it needs strong foundations for the future of the church. Most lay pastors of these independent churches did not undergo basic theological education. These lay pastors, thus, are unable to interpret the Word of God at fair value, and in these situations their interpretation is not sound. The lack of theological education and training has resulted in false teachings that mislead or misguide people. The following examples explain the problems lay pastors have with interpretation.

On 17 September 2005, a Christian program was broadcasted on the South Indian Television channel. The preacher was preaching on the topic “deliverance of the Israelites.” As he was describing the story at the point of the division of the Red Sea, he interpreted that the two divisions of the Red Sea represent the Old and New Testaments.

The lay pastor of a undersized congregation who runs a small organization called Horeb Ministries was preaching to a crowd of about 120 people in a place called Singh Nagar of the city Vijayawada, which happened to be heard over a public address system. He was preaching on Peter’s catching of fishes from John 21:11. He was referring to the number 153 and was giving an explanation to it. According to him, the number 153

represents the 153 states of the world that will be elected to be with the Lord on the last days.

Such interpretations are many. The great need of the church in India is theological education at the local level. This study sought to make basic theological education available to nondenominational pastors.

Context of the Study

This research occurred in the state of Andhra Pradesh, concentrated in the city of Vijayawada. In order to describe the emergence of Christianity in Vijayawada, the way Christianity emerged in the state of Andhra Pradesh at large, is necessary to consider. As expressed earlier, the foundations of Christianity in India were laid by St. Thomas the Apostle (Firth 3). At the end of the sixteenth century, the Jesuits, Theatines, and Augustinians brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to Andhra Pradesh; however, the real establishment of Christianity was brought about by Protestant missionaries in the early 1800s. Overseas missionaries established most of the Christian missions in Andhra Pradesh. After India gained independence from British rule, the national leaders were given the responsibilities of church leadership for most of the churches (Thekkedeth 298-99).

The New Testament was first printed in Telugu in 1818, and in 1854, the whole Bible was printed at Vishakapatnam, the second major city in Andhra Pradesh, Vishakapatnam is about 350 kilometers away from Vijayawada (Firth 158; Mundadan 2). Therefore, Christian missionary work began in the city of Vijayawada with the arrival of Protestant missionaries during the early 1800s; however, the exact dates of the missionary work are obscure. This limited research to the city of Vijayawada attempted

to emphasize the ministry of the laity, giving importance to the basic theological education of lay pastors.

Vijayawada, located on the banks of the Krishna River, is the third largest city in Andhra Pradesh, South India, and is a busy port town and the largest railway junction of the South Central Railways. The city is surrounded by hills on three sides with the Krishna River cutting through the southern end. The name Vijayawada literally means “The Place of Victory.” The city’s name is composed of two words—Vijaya or *victory*, and Wada, *locality* or *place*. The people of Vijayawada speak the chaste form of *Telugu*. Vijayawada is very famous for pickle making, and mangoes are grown in large quantity here.

Although diverse religions exist in Vijayawada, Hinduism largely dominates the city. The total population of this city as per the city corporation census is approximately 1.45 million. Hindus comprise 70 percentage of the population; Christians constitute about 18 percentage of the population; and, Muslims constitute about 15 percentage of the population. Of the Christians in this number, more than eight hundred churches of which 75 percentage are nondenominational. The context of this research is focused on fifty selected pastors of nondenominational churches in Vijayawada, in order to find new ways to promote theological education, particularly to find the level of their biblical interpretation and preaching sermons in their congregations.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of the basic theological education’s preaching module and its impact on the nondenominational independent lay pastors who were involved in church planting ministry in Vijayawada. The goal is to see

the effectiveness of interpretation of Scripture and to evaluate their preaching. The long-term purpose of this project determined whether the preaching module was effective in increasing their ability to present a sermon, to provide the relevant content and biblical interpretation to their respective congregation. Nevertheless, beyond the limited goals of this research project was the desire to measure the ongoing impact of this program on the lives and ministries of the lay pastors of these nondenominational churches.

Research Questions

In order to analyze the impact of the basic theological education program, the instrument used provided data to answer three basic questions.

Research Question #1

What was the effectiveness of preaching of the lay pastors before the preaching module of the basic theological education program?

Research Question #2

What was the effectiveness of preaching of the lay pastors after the preaching module of the basic theological education program?

Research Question #3

What aspect of the course was most effective in shaping the lay pastors' understanding of mission and ministry of their nondenominational churches?

Definitions of the Main Terms

This study defines the principal terms as follows.

Lay pastors are leaders who founded churches on their own but lack specific systematic training and theological education.

Nondenominational churches are independent churches or nonhierarchical congregations that have grown out of caste, class, or creed distinction existing within the church in India. As a result, these churches provide alternative public spheres and give converts a new domain for their existence.

Basic theological education (BTE) is a training program designed for lay pastors who have not had previous training or theological education. The BTE course contains five distinct modules:

1. Methods of Bible Study,
2. Communicating Biblical Messages,
3. Survey of Bible Doctrines,
4. Personal and Spiritual Formation, and
5. Church Administration and Ministry.

A strong theological foundation that encompasses all of life (e.g., fun, intellect, family, outreach) gives freedom to address all of life in church ministry and does not stifle creativity in ministry. Rooted in the Bible, history, and theology, BTE brings freedom to lay pastors to carry out their responsibility more precisely. Therefore, basic theological education can bring balance to the ministries of nondenominational pastors.

Some Biblical Passages for Reflection

Some passages were selected based on their relevance for reflection, though other passages in the Bible also explain equipping the lay pastors. I chose these passages because I preached on these passages many times to the lay pastors in the pastors' conferences. The following passages were selected for reflection:

And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the

burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone. (Num. 11:17, NIV)

For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel. (Ezra 7:10)

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. (Eph. 4:11-12)

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! (Heb. 5:12)

[A]nd how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:15-17)

These transparent and authentic references support equipping of the laity. Training of the lay pastors can find its ground in these passages.

Theological Reflection

The need for basic theological education for nondenominational pastors finds its support in Scripture, church tradition, and personal experience. The importance of theological education can be understood by its very nature and task. In Titus 1:9, Paul instructs that a church leader “must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.” The attention of theologians shifted from *theologia* to theological science or, more specifically, to theological encyclopedia, the rational distinction and affiliation of theological disciplines (Farley 49). Though the task of theology has shifted to science, message, content, and context (Ferris 1-8), the proper task of theology is clarification and articulation of biblical messages and engagement with challenges arising from the

sociocultural context. Thus, biblical and theological studies should be pursued rigorously with particular attention given to shaping character and equipping for ministry.

Theology of BTE

BTE not only helps with planning, but also with participation in the holistic ministry of the church. As a result BTE contributes and promotes church and congregational renewal. Learning is essential for renewal; hence, BTE is needed for lay pastors. A strong theological foundation that encompasses all of life gives freedom to address all of life in church ministry.

The relationship between the BTE and Christian mission is a dynamic and interrelated one. This evolves out of the continuing and ongoing struggle between text and context, with being and doing, with word and action (Nicholas 64). The role of BTE in the total ministry of the church affirms the value of the Scripture and helps in changing attitudes of the believers. When BTE is intentionally and actively pursued, a focused commitment to develop the church avoids the pitfalls of isolation and dilemmas. Because BTE focuses on ministry and the growth of the church in midst of existing caste and cultural based issues, it provides a clear understanding of the Scripture and methods of preaching for lay pastors. Mostly BTE is dialogue based and will certainly help these lay pastors in developing themselves for future ministry and at the same time help them grow their churches honor God and his word.

The Nature of the Church

Christians use the term “church” in two different, but closely related, ways. When capitalized, it refers to all of Jesus’ followers, viewed as a community. Using a lowercase c, church refers to specific institutions, either the local congregation or a national or

international body. It can even be used to refer to the building in which they meet. The church is also the group with which one worships (Journet 4). As such it has the responsibility to preach the Word of God and to administer the sacraments, thus creating a healthy relationship between God and people.

The church also has a responsibility to encourage its members to make spiritual progress and to show their faith by their behavior, both through their ethics and their good works. This responsibility includes administering gentle and loving correction when someone errs. Traditionally some of the churches have felt a responsibility to discipline and, if necessary, exclude members whose public lives are not in keeping with the message of Christianity. Sometimes these exclusions are based on cultural or caste differences. These experiences result in the birth of several new nondenominational churches. For such leaders of the churches at least some basic theological education can help keep the image of the church from being tarnished.

Christianity in India is considered a foreign religion even after hundreds of centuries of its existence in India. The basic reason behind is that the Indian church failed in being the incarnational church in the culture and context of India. There is an ever-growing, ever-strengthening plea to make the church “fully Indian and authentically Christian” (Joji Babu 5). The multireligious, multicultural, and multi-caste context of the Indian society and the Indian church call for an ever-renewed ecclesiological reflection so that the church in India can be the salt of earth in India, a true witness of Jesus and his gospel. The answer to this call is the need of the hour and has to be accomplished by all existing churches, both denominational and nondenominational. Because the nondenominational churches are fast growing and founded by the lay pastors, these lay

pastors need at least basic theological education to answer the plea to make the Indian church fully Indian and authentically Christian.

Methodology

This study included both literary and empirical research. Literary research served to emphasize the biblical, theological, and historical foundations for equipping lay pastors or lay founders of the churches for ministry. Both the positive and negative aspects of the indigenous pastors' ministries were explored in this study. Nevertheless, the research also focused on the using the BTE for the systematic ministry of the church and the interpretation of the Word.

The empirical research applied primarily for the following reasons: (1) to find out the nature of the ministry of lay pastors, (2) to find out how and to what extent these leaders' interpretations of the Word have influenced the church members before BTE, and (3) to see the outcome of the BTE program through leaders' learning process.

Participants

Lay pastors of the nondenominational churches participated in this study. Fifty lay pastors were invited to participate in the BTE. Observable characteristics of these leaders were as follows:

1. The average age of these pastors was 45, with a range of 35-65.
2. Mostly these lay pastors are converts and first generation Christians.
3. Previously these lay pastors were lay leaders in the denominational churches but became lay pastors.
4. These lay pastors do not have basic theological education or are not academically qualified but lead the church.

Scope and Limitations

Indigenization and lay training in the present context is not a new challenge. Rather, such pursuits have received a significant importance in theological, ministerial, and ecumenical discussions. Moreover, this issue is emerging as a theological problem because all denominational churches in the world are facing these questions. Some churches have already taken efforts to encourage lay training, and some churches currently are in the process. Hence, this study considered the condition of lay training of nondenominational pastors who have started their churches in the city of Vijayawada. Further, the scope is limited to evaluating the interpretation and preaching skills of the nondenominational pastors.

Review of Literature

Many studies have considered lay involvement in the ministry of the church, but very few studies have concentrated specifically on the lay training. Basic theological education drew from four studies that are related to lay training. Partial review of these four studies helped me find the possible design for the basic theological education curriculum.

D. A. Thangasamy's early study of lay involvement and training in Indian churches reviewed the theological background and dimensions of laity involvement and suggested some programs for laity at various places such as church, society, and industry (2-26).

Doraisamy Pothirajulu proposes educational models for the laity in the church of South India (CSI) after explicating biblical foundations and theological affirmations for laity involvement (11-34).

S. K. Karuna Shri in March 1994 offered suggestions for better lay involvement after considering its various facets.

K. Usharani in April 1994 analyzed the Friends Missionary Prayer Band (FMPB) training programs for laity involvement and provided suggestions to develop them further.

The present study used a model for basic theological education that focused specially on curriculum development. A careful study of cultural relevance helped in preparing the curriculum.

Overview of the Study

The second chapter attempts to explicate the theological and historical foundations for lay involvement and training in the ministry of the church. Theological foundations include biblical foundations, the early Church teachers' views on laity, the treatment of laity in the Middle Ages and the Reformation period, and the modern developments with regard to lay ministry. Further, Chapter 2 proposes a method for training the lay leaders or lay pastors in the mission and ministry of the church.

The third chapter presents the design of the study, the research methods, and the methods of data analysis. The fourth chapter presents the findings of the study. Finally, the fifth chapter discusses the summary and interpretation of the research findings, offers the conclusion of the project, and also looks at the implication of BTE.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

The present theological and ecclesial context witnesses to laity participation and training in the mission and ministry of the church. Several voices, both from clergy and laity and from different churches invite the equipping of laity for fuller involvement in church activities. The growth of ecumenism both in Protestant churches and Roman Catholic churches supports this new development. The varied research regarding laity training aids in understanding church and ministry in a better way; however, the part of the training of the lay pastors has been an unanswered question for some extent.

Such confusion regarding lay leadership and training has not always existed in India. There have been ups and downs and differing opinions regarding the extent of participation in church leadership (Neill and Weber 25-28). Though neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament proposes any hierarchy among the people of God and though early Church teachers advocated strongly the place for laity's ministerial activities in the church, church teachers, historians, and theologians have also been very meticulous in the clergy-laity distinction. This distinction has paved way for the hierarchy and domination of the clergy and has challenged the unity within the church. The church is struggling to control this distinction and finding new ways to do so. As a result, in the current context, leadership must strive against this condition in order to motivate, mold, and train laity for fuller active participation in the ministry of the church. Hence, this chapter provides a historical view of theological foundations for the laity's training and participation in the ministry to the believers.

Definition of Laity in the Church

Laypeople or *laity* is a Christian term often used by the church (Leonard 634). Accordingly these terms refer to the simple, not specially qualified, members among God's people. In the New Testament, particularly in the Epistles, priestly themes and Levitical principles of the Old Testament are carried over to the people of God as a whole. The Greek term *laos* is used in the New Testament to refer to the people of God. On the other side, the clerical condition is defined by the service of the altar and the religious service of the Christian people (Congar 6). As such clerical position is an office or function rather than a state of life. This office demands a proper ordination leading to enter into the ministry, the *diaconia*, the service of sacred things (Patmury 136).

Rowan Williams affirms that the whole church is the *laos* or people of God (11-21). Therefore, if the history of the church is written correctly, the life of the church will be displayed in all its manifold variety complexity as it relates to the world outside. A true theology of the church will set forth in priestly relationship to members, society, and the entire universe (Neill and Weber 15). The church enters into contact with the world mainly by way of the laity. Though redeemed by Christ, the world stands before him in a relation manner than that of the church. As a result, Leonard Doohan observes that laity are the overwhelming majority in the church:

[T]he term laity has been present in some form from the very beginnings of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and ... has remained in use until today. It is also my hunch that whatever our theoretical positions, practical experience, and gut feelings might be, the word will continue to be used in some way to designate that group of baptized persons who make up the overwhelming majority of the People of God—the "person in the pew," the "laity." (*Laos* 3-4)

This majority of the churches who are redeemed by Christ are to be trained in order the Gospel is carried all over the world.

History projects three groups of laypeople. First, monks, nuns, friars, and lay sisters have served the Church through the centuries. Some of these individuals have been ordained priests, but the great majorities have been laypeople. At the present time, this group of laypeople can refer to the missionaries, including women. In almost all the younger churches in the world, the structure provides for a smaller number of ordained ministers and a greater number of catechists, evangelists, teachers, and others not ordained to any specific ministry. These laypeople are often dependent on the church for their livelihood and should give their undivided strength to the service of the church. Today in India some churches use schoolteachers to serve as catechists who are responsible for the church services. This call of serving as catechists is also extended to organists, choirmasters, and others such as sextons and janitors whose work is less directly spiritual but still necessary for the maintenance of organized Christian congregations. The service of laypeople as catechists can be best seen in the Tirunelveli diocese of the Church of South India.

A second group of laypeople, though not dependent on the church for a livelihood, identify themselves with the church and make the church central to their existence. Such men and women give much of their spare time to various financial, social, and other activities of the church. These laypeople are faithful attendees who serve on church committees. Some lay leaders even pastor their own churches. These lay leaders are well-informed regarding church life and business. Laypeople serve a valuable purpose for the church; indeed, the mission and work of the church would likely be

possible without vital laypeople. In spite of its great importance, the laity's theological foundation is often substandard. As a result laity's interpretation of Scripture is often vague or faulty.

The third type of laypeople consists of men or women who live in the world but believe they are called to exercise their vocation as Christians. Thus, their Christian vocations become exercises of the ordinary vocations of daily life in such a way that the glory of God is manifested (Neill and Weber 17-19).

Biblical Foundations for Equipping the Laity

Equipping laity has its foundation in the Scripture. The total ministry of the church can be well accomplished when its ministry is centered on the laity. The Old Testament emphasizes this aspect.

The Old Testament Theology about Laity

As mentioned earlier, the idea of laity is a Christian term found in the early Church. However, related and parallel ideas are found in the Old Testament. One such idea is the concept of the people of God generally used to describe the Israelites. The people of God are called and chosen by God to priesthood for the sacrificial service that is their characteristic feature. Three aspects could be mentioned regarding the people of God, which imply that the people of God are always people together without hierarchy: (1) the people of God are filled with divine revelation; (2) the people of God are chosen by divine election; and, (3) the people of God continue their service by divine covenant (Sunderland and Shelp 61). However, Edward Schillebeeckx observe that the term *laity* emerged in parallel fashion (35-36). *Laity* is used in contrast to the leaders of the people

of God, namely, in contrast of the priests, Levites, and prophets. The laity is that part of the church subject to the leadership and control of the church's hierarchy.

In the Old Testament, apart from the idea of the people of God, several supportive insights for lay ministry are seen. For example, when Moses struggled with the task of caring for his congregation, his father-in-law helped him to minister to the people better and in a more effective manner (Exod. 18:17-21).

Old Testament Passages for Reflection

The priesthood of the old law, which filled an important role in the divine plan for the people of God served primarily to prefigure the royal priesthood of the New Testament.

Numbers 11:17 talks about giving some of the spirit that was upon Moses to the elders (Smith 645). God promises to qualify elders. If the elders were not found fit for the service, they should be made fit, else they might prove more a hindrance than a help to Moses (v. 17). Though Moses had talked too boldly with God, God did not break off communion with him instead he showed Moses how to bear with one another. Not that Moses had less of the Spirit for their sharing, nor that elders were hereby made equal with him. Moses was still unequalled (Deut. 34:10), but the elders were clothed with a spirit of government proportionate to their place and with a spirit of prophecy to prove their divine call. The elders were made a part of leading the people.

Ezra 7:10 affirms the importance of studying and doing the law of the Lord. Observing the law and teaching it to the people of God is the core of this passage. Further, this text taught Israel regarding God's statutes and judgments. Accordingly, a number of evidences for lay ministry exist in the Old Testament.

The New Testament Theology about Laity

As in the Old Testament, the idea of laity is not spelled out in the New Testament; nevertheless, the idea of the church as one body has great significance for understanding laity and laity's ministry. Thus, the author of the letter to Romans writes, "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and not all the members have the same function, so too we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another" (12:4-5). The idea of the people of God in the Old Testament is similar to the New Testament idea of *church*, an idea that views Christ as the eternal High Priest (Heb. 4:14). As such, the early Christians came to think of themselves as the people of God. The baptismal incorporation into Christ—priest, prophet, and king—became a constituent in collectively building a priestly kingdom (Rev. 1:6) and a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9), and, as such, carried into the world the promises and the prerogatives of the ancient people (*laos*) of God (1 Pet. 2:10).

The church is primarily a community of the faithful, constituted by fellowship and charity in the Christian faith with the resulting obligation of witness and mission. In the framework of this community, the hierarchy is seen only as a function or service rather than a proper authority. A function of control is recognized in the church for the safeguard of charity in the community and the harmonizing of the church's activities; however, the hierarchy does not possess the authority to make pivotal decisions regarding the lives of subordinates. Mission is envisaged only as the undifferentiated mission of the church, and it is considered only under generalized or common aspect as the responsibility that falls on the Christian and the Christian community (Congar 26).

The church features the people's fellowship with God and with one another in Christ and is also the totality of the means to this fellowship. Regarding the fellowship aspect of the church as its ultimate reality, the church is the aggregate of those who are in Christ Jesus. This aggregate is quite different from a simple combination of individuals in a group; rather, the church is a people, the people of God. Better still, the church is the body of Christ (Congar 26).

New Testament Passages for Reflection

The New Testament teaches leadership among the people and calls the people of God as a priesthood. Though clergy and laity distinction is embedded in the churches, this distinction is not found in the New Testament. The New Testament emphasizes the body of Christ as a community of members who have respective functions.

Ephesians 4:11-12 makes a clear assertion about equipping the laity:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

In verse twelve Paul asserts the mandate "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ," a well-known feature in contemporary studies of laity. A number of texts and paradigms have appeared over the years on the interrelated topics of church leadership and the equipping of the laity. Laity should be given permission to lead and minister; they should not have to push against parish bureaucracy and entrenched, change-resistant thinking. In the spirit of Ephesians 4:12, church leaders are to equip the laity rather than performing and controlling ministry themselves. Leaders should help the laity become empowered by the Spirit.

Hebrews 5:12 states, “In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!” Three important features emerge in this text. First, God takes notice of the time and assistance for gaining Scripture knowledge. Second, from those to whom much is given much is expected. Third, those who have a good understanding of the gospel should teach others, either in a public or a private setting; thus this reference points at equipping or training the laity for the ministry of the church.

Paul instructs Timothy in his second letter 3:15-17 that:

[A]nd how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Paul instruction to Timothy suits the present situation that the right use of the Word is essential in training the lay pastors.

Laity Training in Early Church History

Apart from biblical sources, the first available source regarding the laity or the people of God as a whole comes from Clement of Rome (G. Williams 28). In a letter to the church in Corinth written circa AD 95, Clement debriefs to the participants in the liturgy with the assertion, “[T]he lay people (*ho laikos anthorpos*) are bound by the lay (*laikos*) ordinance” (30). In assigning the laypeople a liturgical role along with, but subordinate to, the role of presbyters or deacons (Levites), Clement was at once reflecting general Greek usage of the word lay and turning such usages in a specifically Christian direction. Until this time the Greek term was used as an adjective to distinguish the mass of people from their leaders. In translation of the Old Testament Hebrew into Greek, the

term was commonly used to distinguish ordinary or profane from cultic usage and was usually applied to objects rather than to persons. Clement used the term in regard to both persons and the ordinances and in so doing also insisted on the liturgical competence of the laypeople (30).

G. Williams made assertions regarding the apologists and Church fathers in connection with lay presence in the church. The apologist Justin Martyr restates the principle of the priesthood of all believers, “[B]eing inflamed by the word of his [Christ’s] calling, we are the true high-priestly race of God” (32). The contemporary Athenian apologist Aristides asserts that all Christians can trace their genealogy from the High Priest Jesus Christ.

Origen of Alexandria observes that the chief cleric must be ordained “in the presence of the whole laity in order that all may know for certain that the man elected to the priesthood is of the whole people the most eminent ... and ... to avoid any subsequent change of mind or lingering doubt” (G. Williams 36). Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (d. 258), also makes a similar point:

The bishop should be chosen in the presence of the laity who have most fully known the life of each one of several possible choices, and have looked into the doings of each one of several possible choices, and have looked into the doings of each one as regards his habitual conduct. (G. Williams 38-40)

The presence of laity made a great contribution in the total administration of the church in the early history. Laity were the ones to approve the clergy for the office of the bishop.

In the early Church the laypeople served as teachers. Justin Martyr says that laypeople also have the gift of healing. Moreover, G. Williams observes that the role of the laity during periods of persecutions was a disdainful picture of the little people (men,

women, and children) ever ready for a martyr's death. The laity carried the gospel into the recesses of society and who, though nameless and despised by cultured and informed observers, probably did more even than bishops, apologists, and theologians to prepare for the sudden conquest of the Greco-Roman world at the opening of the fourth century (50-51).

Thus, the laity in the ancient Church had an indelible "ordination" as priest, prophet, and king and, therefore, was no longer in bondage to the world but freed through Christ to know truth in the illumination of the Spirit, to exercise sovereignty over the inner temple of self, to join in corporate thanksgiving of the redeemed, and to forgive the brethren in Christ's name. The laity was a true order, often with its own distinctive liturgical, constitutional, and witnessing role in the gradual differentiation of the people of the mission into laity and clergy.

The Church in the first two centuries was a small and close-knit body scattered through the cities of the Roman Empire. So long as the church remained small and close-knit, the laity retained an important role in its organization and liturgy; however, the third century brought radical changes to the role of the laity, changes that adversely affected the position of the laity within the church. The church has become a mixed body, and the bond of unity was to be found in the sacraments administered by the clergy (Frend 57).

By the middle of the third century, the monarchical episcopate had become the universally recognized system of church government, and ordination had become a permanent measure. The place of laypeople in the worship and organization of the church began shrinking at the turn of the fourth century. "The Layman should honor the good shepherd (the bishop), respect him like a father, lord and master, as the high priest of God

as guide in piety” “He who hears the bishop hears Christ” became common phrase. Thus, the Apostolic Constitutions, probably written in the earlier part of the fourth century, defined the role of the laypeople (qtd. in Frend 76).

In spite of the restrictions laid on the laity by clergy, lay influence had an enormous effect in promoting a real Christianization of values among the population as a whole. Moreover, not all the early church teachers always held the view of domination of clergy over laity.

The turn of the fifth century featured fruitful work in the church carried out by educated Christian laypeople. The laity enriched the church both intellectually and materially by their efforts, and the clergy then defined their terms in response to the pressure of laity's interest and arguments. This movement ultimately faltered as well. A number of factors combined to prevent the continuation of intelligent lay interest in theology. Nevertheless, in the sixth century the only education was ascetic religious education given by the church. “Alas, for our age,” writes Gregory of Tours, in 576, “the study of literature has perished among us, and the man is no longer to be found who can commit to writing the events of the time” (qtd. in Frend 77). As a result, Christian laypeople who desired lives of service then had to consider alternatives such as ordination or the ascetic life of the monastery.

In the West, asceticism was a symptom of a declining culture, but in the in the East, asceticism was part of a mass movement. In both East and West, asceticism was a protest against Greco-Roman society and some aspects of the Greco-Roman Church. In both places though the asceticism was influenced by the clergy but the lay participation was more in numbers.

Laity in the History of the Middle Ages

Except toward the end of the Middle Ages, little is known about the involvement of laity in the church. There are records and evidences in church history that outline conflicts between Christian emperors who normally lead the Christian laity and the bishops and popes who lead the clergy. Generally the lay ruler ordered the temporal and religious affairs of the Christian community and led by divine appointment (Carey 361-81).

By the time of the Council of Trent (1545-63), the church was described as a perfect but unequal society, and the council led not only to an emphatic distinction between clergy and laity, but it also placed great emphasis on ecclesiastical authority and the obedience required of the laity. In due time the institutional, hierarchical aspect of the church was predominant, while the ordinary laity were left in the shadows. No wonder, then, many saw the church as the domain of the clergy (Aumann 322). In spite of such domination, the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* explicitly stated that the word “Church” must never be understood as applying exclusively to the hierarchy (324).

Laity in the Reformation Period

The basic doctrines of the fifteenth century or of the sixteenth century reformers bore a strong and generic similarity to some of the supportive voices of the Middle Ages. When questioned how the lay world of the Middle Ages had been transformed most strikingly by the events and pressures of the three centuries that followed, several answers may ensue. Some historians might emphasize the growth of anti-clericalism and antagonism toward the state-like nature of the official church; another might counter with the growth of material possessions that emerged from wider occupational choices. A third

might emphasize the presence of new ideas—contact with Islam and renewed contact with ancient paganism—that invited disquieting reflection on the monopoly hitherto enjoyed by the Catholic faith, whereas a fourth might place his or her emphasis on the growth of lay education, the larger lay element in the universities and the professions or on the enlarged opportunity for lay speculation and lay influence on learning and thought (Brooke 130).

During this period various factors were involved in the office of the church and not least among them was the necessity of defending the traditional sacramental theology of the church, especially concerning the Eucharist and the sacrament of Holy Orders. To challenge the church, Martin Luther and the other Protestant reformers introduced “congregationalism,” that is, control of the churches and the pastors by the laity, which in essence restricted the ministry of the clergy to preaching (Aumann 321-44). Clergy was in control of the pulpit whereas the laity of the church, i.e. the believers, the church property and matters related to the administration.

In the Reformation period, faith was set in order by the preaching of the Church, through a ministry sprung from Christ and generative of his body. At the same time the view of the church as an assembly of the faithful was developed most one-sidedly. Assembly was explained in part by a reaction against an invasion of religious life by a multiplication of external forms. Ecclesiologically, this reaction took the form of reducing the notion of the Church to that of a holy assembly of the faithful, a proceeding that the very word *ecclesia* supported (Congar 41). In this period the number of lay martyrs increased in the church. Though several clergy also suffered persecution, the number of laity was greater.

Laity's Equipping in the Contemporary World

A laity-clergy divide is not a modern concept or reality; rather, this problem existed for centuries throughout the formation and development of the Church as seen so far. However, the modern church witnessed a number of efforts attempting for lay ministry and training, lay theology, and a fuller participation of the laity in ministerial and theological activities (Anderson 203-05). Though importance was given to the laity in the overall activities of the church, their training and basic theological education is lacking among all denominations and churches. Nevertheless, here are a few comments made in the World Council of Churches (WCC) with regard to the equipping of the laity.

Laity in Ecumenical Thinking

W. A. Visser 't Hooft asserts that the ecumenical theologian J. H. Oldham points to the role of the laity as a crucial matter of study and concern (Weber 117-18).

“In relation to the issues which will come before the Oxford Conference,” Oldham wrote, “nothing could be plainer than that if the Christian faith is in the present and future to bring about changes, as it has done in the past, in the thought, habitats and practices of society, it can only do this through being the living, working faith of multitudes of lay men and women conducting the ordinary affairs of life”. (Weber 377).

From this point onward in several of the assemblies of WCC, the issues of laity, training, and involvement were discussed. Some examples are the 1948 first assembly at Amsterdam, the second assembly in 1954 at Evanston, and the third assembly in Delhi in 1961, mainly focused on the issue of laity. Hence, H. Berkhof writes, “In Amsterdam we spoke about the layman. In Evanston he got his own section. But in New Delhi the layman gave more than ever his own contribution and revealed his own face” (379). The

issue of training and providing basic theological education for the laity was not taken seriously in ecumenical gatherings. The study strives at providing BTE for laity.

Outlining the aforementioned efforts or describing various understandings of the laity is insufficient for a full, systematic involvement of the laity in Christian ministry. As the context in which a layperson lives changes, the church must also activate its efforts for the laity's ministry and training. In this regard, Stephen Charles Neill and Hans-Ruedi Weber provide an interesting observation of the present context of the laity:

The Christian laity living in the world is challenged in four different ways to be a Christian. There is, first, the demand for simple personal integrity in all his doings. On a certain level this problem presents itself as fairly simple. Secondly, the Christian is called always to regard himself or herself as the servant of society, and to estimate the quality of his or her work as service. Here, again, on certain levels the relationship between work and the needs of society may be fairly obvious. On a third and deeper level the Christian laity is challenged to think out the Christian significance of his or her work. Fourthly, the Christian laity does not regard his or her world as intrinsically evil. (22-25)

The role of laity in the church is so prominent at the same time it is demanding. In order to meet the demands the church needs to equip the laity in all aspects.

Within these historical, theological, and contemporary realities, the church can find strategies to equip laity participation in the ministry of the church. As shown in this chapter, there have been both supportive and oppressing voices towards the laity's place in Christian ministry. The church as "people of God" can no longer support hierarchy and domination rather than training the laity to serve the church and nation. From this assertion comes an accurate understanding of the importance of theological education. Theological education for the laity is important for the church is comprised of the lay people who are to be engaged in the service of the Lord. Laypeople are key for the development of any church and they are to be trained for the future of the church.

Lay Pastors in the Present Context

Lay pastors have founded the churches on their own, and most of them are not theologically qualified or sound. Their interpretation of the Scripture is at stake. Ministry in the church is not in order and healthy because of the lack of theological education. Lay pastors' interpretation of the Scripture is vague such that one cannot comprehend it.

The differences between denominational churches and nondenominational churches are so vast that such differences have led to tensions and problems between the clergy and laity. Further, these issues have also led to divisions in church and resulted in blurring the growth and expansion of the church at large and, to a greater extent, in the Indian scenario. Converts desiring an independent church framed their own agenda depending on their contexts that did not necessarily conform to the agendas of the conventional churches (Kumardoss 3). Most of the founders of these nondenominational churches come from financially disadvantaged backgrounds but exhibit true, simple faith. Their beliefs and practices are coined around their own situations. Their interpretation of the Scripture is affected by their beliefs and practices, thus creating a sense of danger in the Hindu-dominated society (Immanuel 332). Hence, these founders are to be thoroughly trained and equipped. The importance of BTE must be shown and taught and the necessity of BTE must be explained to lay pastors. These tasks represented the goals and commitment of this study.

Importance and Necessity of BTE for the Lay Pastors

Theology is a universal need for everyone. Theology, the science of God is the careful and systematic study of those matters that God has revealed about himself. As such, theology is of supreme practical importance. Proverbs 9:10 declares, "The fear of

the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” *Knowledge of the Holy One* refers to theology and constitutes the practical wisdom and understanding that Proverbs declares is beyond price.

BTE is a matter that concerns all the people of God; therefore, BTE is not the exclusive domain of the priestly elite or a clerical caste but a subject of intense concern to every member of the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:13-15 describes this phenomenon:

[U]ntil we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ.

BTE helps the laity to be matured in faith and be faithful in carrying out the respective ministries of the church.

The importance of BTE for all the people of God constitutes the proper context in which Scripture calls for special theological education for the teachers of the church.

Another example is noted from 2 Timothy 2:2, which states, “And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also”. The charge given Timothy in this text does not imply that only faithful men who are able to teach should be entrusted with the great doctrines and truths about which Paul preached. As such, the text is not exclusive but inclusive.

Timothy taught especially (though not exclusively) those men who were qualified to give pastoral leadership to the church. Therefore, careful theological education should focus especially upon those men qualified to compose not only the future leadership of the church but also the present leadership of the church. If theological education is important

for everyone, it is certainly and especially important for those charged to pass on the great deposit of Christian truth to future generations carefully and powerfully.

Christian ministry finds its highest purpose in serving the church's calling to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Central to preparation for Christian ministry in its variety of forms is an accurate understanding of its unique vocation; thus, the church, its calling, and its reality serve as the orienting point for theological education.

The overall importance and necessity of BTE can be seen as the following:

1. To support and renew the church in its mission;
2. To renew emphasis on leadership ministries in relation to the ministry of all believers;
3. To guide the theology and practice of Christian ministry to find its roots in the nature and purpose of the church;
4. To help the lay pastors in systematic interpretation of the Scripture in the midst of multicultural, multireligious, and multilingual contexts; and,
5. To pay new attention to personal and pastoral formation and to exhibit a concern for growth in the intellectual and practical abilities essential for ministry.

BTE and Moral Formation

All the believers who are baptized in the name of the Lord are called to ministry, and this aspect is understood as the ministry of the whole church (i.e., the people of God). Some are called to ordained ministry and are set apart to serve in particular ministry, some are called to serve in their work places, and some are called to serve without any structure. However, Christian ministry, both lay and ordained, involves particularity and distinctiveness. Particularity results from Christian identity, and distinctiveness results

from the community in which Christians live. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ characterizes ministry and distinguishes Christian community (Campbell 21).

The New Testament clearly says that Christians and Christian servants are to develop lifestyles that are different from those of others and of the general society. Matthew 10:35 and Luke 12:51 clearly states that Jesus is saying on to setting the life at difference. Particularly ministers, whether lay or ordained, who live in the multireligious, multicultural, and multi-lingual contexts are to make a difference in their lifestyles and identity. Many of the lay pastors of Vijayawada lack knowledge in this aspect. Problems with regard to moral formation derive not only from the intellectual confusion about what is good and right but also from similar confusion in the churches that exist within multicultural contexts. Apart from this confusion it also is because of the lifestyle of the ministers, ordained or un-ordained. Theological education that is culturally relevant comes an aid to solve these problems and help the ministers have a healthy moral formation. Dennis M. Campbell proposes two ways of life for the moral formation, namely authenticity and accountability. Campbell defines authenticity as the consideration for growth in spiritual life and of personal life (18). Growth is essential in spiritual life and personal life whether for ordained or lay pastors. BTE makes an effort in helping lay pastors grow in both aspects of life.

Accountability is the ethics of how one leads in worship, deals with the Scriptures, preaches the Word, celebrates the sacraments, and takes care of the church. BTE strives to fill the need for teaching moral formation, which leads to accountability, to lay pastors. Both authenticity and accountability are the pillars for and ways to moral

formation, and they go together for the smooth functioning of the church in multicultural, multireligious, and multilingual contexts.

BTE and Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation is the process of transformation of the innermost dimension of the human being, the heart, which is the same as the spirit or will. It is being formed in such a way that its natural expression comes to be the deeds of Christ done in the power of Christ (Willard). The progression of spiritual formation is outlined in various passages of the New Testament. It is most fully spelled out in 2 Peter 1:

Now since you have become partakers of the divine nature, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. (vv. 4-7)

Peter reminds that spiritual formation is to be exhibited in all the spheres of life and it also should be continuous practice.

Spiritual formation is “the deep and personally committed appropriation of a comprehensive and coherent outlook on life and the world” says George A. Lindbeck (15-16). Such formation is not simply a matter of external behavior but, to a significant degree, developing the capacities and dispositions to think, feel, and act in accordance with the worldview no matter what the circumstances are, says Charles M. Wood (26). Both Lindbeck and Wood are pointing to the same thing that should be the core character of a lay pastor. For a nondenominational lay pastor, training is required in order to understand this concept and lead a church with authority.

As ministers, whether ordained or un-ordained, leaders are generally expected to know what and where they speak, and this notion demands some sort of internalization of

the tradition and living it by example. Dealing with the church that is situated in multiple contexts requires and demands a certain level of spirituality, spiritual insight, and strength. All these expectations are to be fulfilled by the lay pastor, who can achieve them only through basic theological education.

Nothing is more important in Christian spiritual formation than the need to continue ever focused upon Jesus. This is not a formation-in-general but a formation into Christlikeness. Everything depends on this approach of formation. Some of the deepest teaching comes in the relationships with which one must deal day in and day out. In such situations several issues and questions arise as how to relate to someone who deceives constantly, how do I address the unspoken issues in the churches that need addressing, and how do I do mission within this multi-society. Jesus knows. "Ask and it will be given to you" (Matt. 7:7). How about understanding ego-driven colleagues? He understands them, too. Jesus is the Master of all human relationships. He will guide people in what to say and what to do and how to respond. BTE makes an effort to this level of coming to human relationship and also to help lay pastors shape their entire beings while they are in ministry.

The Task of Implementing Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation needs to be an everyday exercise. Jesus says, "Without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Without the initiative and presence of God, all efforts are in vain, whether justification, sanctification, or the exercise of power. Spiritual formation that binds the chords of spirituality together helps further the betterment of the individual and the church. The lay pastors of the nondenominational churches are to be aware of spiritual formation and make sure that they exercise the notion of spiritual

formation everyday. To make the task more applicable, BTE has adopted four ways, which helps the lay pastors to strengthen themselves in the spiritual realms and then lead the people towards higher spirituality.

The task of implementing the Spiritual Formation on the lay pastors is as follows:

1. Helping them understand the absolute necessity of spiritual formation (no more optional discipleship),
2. Leading them toward a firm intention to pursue it at all costs,
3. Guiding them to learn something of means formation on daily basis, and
4. Instruct them faithfully practice it in daily life.

As lay pastors move forward in spiritual formation, some areas of focus are essential.

BTE and Socioeconomic Transformation

Basic theological education does make a change in the socioeconomic spheres of the life and ministry of the lay pastors and their churches that are in the Indian context. Though the change may differ from culture to culture, it does make a change. For a church under persecution, education may enable lay pastors to remain faithful under extreme stress, to teach their laypeople to remain firm and pass on the faith to their children. Unless lay pastors learn the knowledge of the past, they may not be able to withstand difficult situations.

In a society such as India, the aim may be to enable congregations to own their Indian-ness in worship, spirituality, and theology. Further, the aim is to enable the entire church to contribute to the development of the country and to engage constructively wherever possible with people of the other faiths (Wingate 107). Training lay pastors for the socioeconomic transformation is the need of hour. Because this study sought to find

solutions for the developing of lay pastors, promoting basic theological education for the lay pastors of nondenominational churches is very important and helping them for the better service through training is essential.

BTE and Hermeneutics and Preaching

BTE mainly emphasizes hermeneutics and preaching. As asserted earlier lack of theological education has led to misinterpretation of Scripture and the misleading of people. Therefore, BTE helps lay pastors learn the nature of the Scripture and interpret Scripture relevantly to the Indian context and also to look at various issues involved in interpretation.

The nature of the Scripture. The nature of the Scripture is better understood in two basic ways, namely through the iconographic nature and secondly through being profoundly intimate.

One of the ways to think of Scripture is as a divine being that takes into reality. This thought further opens up a window to an unlimited experience. First Corinthians 2:13 clearly suggests that scriptural truths are to be understood spiritually, not cognitively, and in order to understand this one needs to experience a deeper spiritual reality (Mulholland). The, religious false self always wants God on its terms and it does not want to be in God's control. The only way to work among people with religious false selves is by love and truth. These people need to be engaged where they are. False selves are ready to do anything to protect themselves, which is dangerous. Reading of the Scripture with meaning helps understand this reality.

The other way to understand the nature of Scripture is being profoundly intimate with the Scripture. The Scripture brings the promise of salvation as well as the warning of

judgment. Hebrews 4:12-13 makes very clear that the Word of God is said to be living and active, implying that it achieves the purpose for which it is uttered by God. The writer of Hebrews states clearly that God's word penetrates to the deepest recess of one's being, opening up and judging the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Peterson 1331). When confronted by the word of God, people are confronted by God himself, thus becoming intimate with God and his Word.

The Scripture in its very nature helps believers choose the best in their lives. The world and God are on opposite ends. Humankind stands in the middle and must make a choice. The choice is simple: selfishness or selflessness, a self-centered or God-centered existence. God has promised to those who desire to be conformed into his likeness, those in Christ Jesus, the power and ability to be transformed into his likeness. Further, he gives the Holy Spirit to live in the hearts of those people who will take God at his word and accept what God said concerning the state of separation and his salvation, which he brought about in Jesus Christ (Col. 1:27).

The issues of interpretation and preaching of the text to the context: Some of the major issues in the interpretation and preaching are addressed with particular reference to the Indian context, especially in relation to the language and culture, the caste system, and the different translations of the Scripture.

In India, the languages mostly stem from Sanskrit, a language that is totally different from the biblical Hebrew and Greek. The interrelation among the supreme, Sanskrit, and the humble regional languages, or vulgar tongues, as the European Occidentalists used to call them, is complex and intimate. Indian languages are not self-contained categories. There is much fluidity among them and they continue to interact

with one another (Sugirtharajah 95). Thus, the linguistic barrier is a problem not only among nations but also within a multilingual society such as India. It affects the interpretation of the Scripture in several ways.

In dealing with the languages of India, especially tribal languages, social, political, cultural, and religious considerations come into play. J. S. M. Hooper says, “[R]apid social changes are affecting the development of languages.... [P]olitical changes have affected the status of certain languages” (8). Thus, the translation of the Bible into the Indian languages has made the interpretation more difficult and, at times, meaningless.

Christianity began in a Jewish cultural environment with a Hebrew or Aramaic vocabulary and a background of Semitic hopes and longings. When the first Christian laypeople and missionaries began their proclamation to people of Greek cultural background in Antioch and later in Europe, they had to use a different vocabulary (Boyd 255). The interaction of culture in the language of the translated Bible creates the problem of different understanding of the message from the original; however, modern Indian interpreters in most parts of India, particularly in South India, are influenced by the tribal and caste culture to bring different cultural languages into translations other than the original (Johnson 11-12). Thus, the use of different cultural backgrounds with linguistic flavor in translations provides a different worldview than the original text; hence, this provision seems to be an issue in the interpretation of the Scripture.

The Indian social system also has its impact on the interpretation of Scripture and preaching within the context of India. The historical records indicate that Indian society is divided into three categories. First is the caste community, which consists of four groups

that are hierarchically ordered. The Brahmins (priests) are the preservers and protectors of the eternal laws of the Universe (Dharma); the Ksatriyas (rulers and warriors) are the defenders and the guarantors of the safety and security of the community; the Vaisyas (business persons) are the conservers and distributors of wealth; and, the Sudras (the laborers) are the working majority involved in the production of essential commodities. Although there is a clear separation between the first three castes, which are ritually pure and socioeconomically dominant (referred to as the twice-born), and the fourth laboring caste, which is ritually suspect and socioeconomically dominated (referred to as the once-born), they together form the constituents of the Hindu human community.

Second, related to but outside of these four segments of the Indian human society, a fifth outcast community. Even though this populace consists of about 20 percent of the Indian community, it was thought of as being sub- or nonhuman; thus, it was not included into its composition. This large group was ejected from the contours of Hindu society: it still lives outside the gates of the Hindu society with the labels *Outcaste*, *Untouchable*, *Exterior Caste*, *Depressed Class*, and *Dalit*.

Third, not obligated to the Indian caste system and yet marginalized by caste societies are many distinct and diverse communities that have been grouped under the term *Adivasis*. They are also referred to as *Tribals* or *Schedule Tribes* (ST). The term *Adivasis* (the ancient or original dwellers of the land) is utilized here to retain their claim of being the original people of the land and to point to their cultural and religious relatedness to things of the earth or land. Further, according to a recent article, Gail Omvedt suggests that they would want to be named with this term (10-13).

All these categories have their own religious practices; hence, interpreting the Scripture and preaching in the Indian context, in general, is a tough task. Both interpretation and preaching depends on each system, and the translated Bible does not provide a clear picture of the original source. If one needs to do the interpretation and preaching he or she needs to be an expert in the source languages, and then an effort can be made to interpret the Scripture systematically. In such situations “interpretation of respect” is suitable, but many times Scripture becomes the object; thus, this danger needs to be tackled carefully through preaching. BTE meets this need in helping lay pastors understand issues, interpret the Scripture, and preach relevantly, thereby avoiding tensions and dilemmas.

The use of divergent theological and theoretical concerns in translations introduces yet another issue and obstacle for interpretation of the text in India. For instance, in the context of South Indian states, the Roman Catholic Hosanna Version (such as the Jerusalem Bible and the New Jerusalem Bible in English) has emerged with a different theological outlook than the Bible Society’s Indian version. The principles of translation also differ from version to version. These differences divide the Christian community on the basis of divergent theologies and interpretations. Lay pastors are not aware of these issues. They need to be trained and equipped for the better and peaceful ministry within the multiple contexts of India.

The translations into the tribal languages (i.e., unwritten language, one without an alphabet or method of written translation) use improper tools and methods to equate biblical terms, concepts, and figures with the cultural patterns of the tribe. As the initial effort, the newly converted people grasp the message as it is without wider understanding

of the text and its context. Thus, the whole community receives a wrong interpretation far from the intent of the author. The BTE is designed to meet this need and help the community receive a proper message through the lay pastor.

BTE and Ten Qualities for Effective Preaching

In reviewing the Indian situation and the preaching of the lay pastors in the Vijayawada area, several qualities can be proposed for the effectiveness of preaching. For the limited area of study and for a particular region, only ten qualities can be adhered to in usage. These qualities are delineated from various sources and literature as to suit the need. A brief explanation of these ten qualities follow.

1. Biblically oriented. Paul's words to Timothy, "All the Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16), is the core foundation for the measure of authority in preaching. The key factor is in understanding the source of their authority when they preach to their audience. Haddon W. Robinson says that ultimately the authority behind preaching resides not in the preacher but in the text (24). This foundation got to be deeply rooted in the mind of the lay pastor as to deliver the sermon in the right manner.

The message of the preacher needs to demonstrate that the sermon is biblically oriented. The preacher cannot view Scripture as a good moral book or a guide for better living and pick parts that seem to be good. Such preaching makes listeners only consider what can connect them to better living but not to God and his plan for their lives on this earth. BTE emphasizes this quality very strongly, that the sermon should be biblically oriented and its emphasis lies in the Scripture with its explanation in the original context.

The main thrust behind this training is to let know the congregation that the Word of God still speaks today and the Word is living as it is preached.

2. Culturally relevant. Culturally relevant preaching connects with life and brings the truth of God's Word to bear on real life. Lay preachers are to be relevant to real life and culture in their preaching. If preaching is not fit to the culture, audiences may not connect themselves to the message. Culture plays a vital role in the Indian situation, and preachers must take note of it while preaching and make sermons more culturally relevant.

The ultimate goal of preachers is to speak God's Word in such a way that people are compelled to weigh it and respond to it (Henderson 37). He further indicates three things for relevance. First, to preach effectively preachers need to understand their own world (38). Lay pastors who want to communicate God's Word with effectiveness and power need to be the students of their own culture by reading everything that relates to it and by being keen observers of events. Secondly, entering into their world without any reservations (40). Preaching is not enough to understand their world from afar; they must wade into it and rub shoulders so that preaching can be more effective. Thirdly, bringing truth to bear from outside world (44). God's Word comes outside of human's sphere of existence and the Word meets people wherever they are. Effective preaching brings truth to suit the existing culture and make it relevant to the hearers.

Yet another important inclusion that preachers need to make the sermon more culturally relevant is to engage the audience within the sermon. Whenever a story is told or an illustration is given, the better way to involve the audience is to ask questions, use objects, and create an atmosphere of dialogue by which an effective sermon can be

preached. In the Indian culture, this pattern is most welcomed and people of the villages, where this study is concentrated, particularly appreciate them. Thus, preaching can become more culturally relevant. BTE places more importance on this quality and encourages the lay pastors to involve the audience in their preaching.

3. Socially relational. India is a complex society and the area where this study is undertaken is much more complex with varied castes, customs, and practices but with of one language. India is also known for joint family systems or collective family systems where multiple families of the same origin live together under one roof. This system is very Asian in nature. In the recent past, this kind of system is fading away and making people be more individualistic. The influence of media and modernism is bringing isolation and disconnection. In addition, different castes and creeds are adding flavors to this existing system and causing people to be socially non-relational in the society, even within the churches. The answer to such a tendency is to preach the Word effectively and intensify the beauty of Christian fellowship.

Selfishness and isolation are to be taken seriously in preaching. Affirmation and acceptance gives depth to preaching (Henderson 117). God is love, which means that God is fundamentally relational. Firstly, God is relational in God's self, and secondly, God is relational with the world. When the greater depth of God's love for humankind is rightly understood and preached, a sense of mutuality and relationship and a peaceful society can be created. Preaching effectively needs this aspect and brings people of different caste and creeds within the church and outside together as one family.

One of the major emphases of BTE is to help the lay pastors of different churches understand this basic concept of being socially relational, thereby helping them develop a

healthy relationship between the churches and its members. Further, this practice helps them to lead their churches and members towards spiritual maturity.

4. Contextual issues. Henderson rightly points that one of the most helpful approaches to sharing faith is to cause people to see the inadequacy of their way of life or worldview (64). The issues that are involved in the day to day life are to be addressed and tackled with. Christian preaching can draw people to the faith by helping them see the answer for their issues through the Word and lead them for a meaningful life.

The burning contextual issues in the Indian situation like caste system, child labor, women discrimination, poverty, etc. are to be addressed in the preaching.

Addressing these issues in the church can help church members to lead a life that is different from others. Further they can help their neighbors, friends and others at least to understand the issue and work towards an answer. As David W. Henderson says, it is true that Christianity thrusts people into an alternative perspective (65). Every aspect of life, culture, and even thinking can be viewed differently through the lens of the Word and bring peace and harmony in the complex society.

Lay pastors seldom preach on these issues. BTE encourages lay pastors to touch upon these issues in their preaching and help their church members be aware of the world in which they are living in order to work towards the common good of society. BTE also stresses that escaping from rather than addressing these issues will result in further separation from the world and alienation within the complex society. It also results in further divisions within the church. Hence, these contextual issues are to be addressed in the preaching and make preaching more effective.

5. Relevant illustrations. Vernon Ralphs rightly points out that illustrations can illuminate a sermon and supports its application. Relevant illustrations play a vital role in preaching effectively. Illustrations bring the audience closer to the preacher and the preaching. Well selected, well chosen, and relevant illustrations can do a great deal such as repeat, elucidate, confirm, or apply ideas by relating them to concrete experiences.

William E. Sangster says that illustrations have seven uses:

1. They make the message clear. Illustrations should shed light on dark points.
2. They make the truth impressive. Preachers can gain the interest and attention of all ages by using illustrations.
3. They make preaching interesting. Illustrations can give life to a sermon.
4. They ease the congregation. They enable the mind to relax and then reapply itself to the message being heard.
5. They make sermons memorable.
6. They are persuasive.
7. They make repetition possible without being boring.

To preach effectively and to build the interest of the hearers, relevant illustrations are a must. Illustrations make truth believable (Robinson 152). BTE certainly agrees with Robinson that relevant illustrations are to be illustrated properly as they aid memory, stir emotion, create need, hold attention, and establish rapport between speaker and hearer (154).

One of the most important qualities that BTE stresses in effective preaching is to use relevant illustrations. Lay pastors though used illustrations were not effective and relevant. BTE helps them sift through their sermons again and again and helps them use

relevant illustrations to preach more effectively because they are very important. Kalas Ellsworth. J says the worth of an illustration is in how it is put to work (105).

6. Christ and Spirit empowered. Ownership is the key for Christ and Spirit-empowered preaching. Personal experience with Christ and the Holy Spirit will lead the preacher towards ownership. Ownership leads to a fine presentation of the message with real conviction. Kalas says for Christ-empowered preaching one has to be in love with Christ. To love Christ, he says, is to deal with the incongruity of One who is hailed as the Lion of Judah but who appears as a slain Lamb (33). This love of Christ in preaching becomes clear when the preacher sees the redemptive work of God intercept the lives of ordinary men and women in the Bible. Christ-centered preaching helps the listeners to be alive in Jesus Christ.

The other facet for the redemption of humanity is to preach with the empowerment of the Spirit. Dennis F. Kinlaw rightly points out that when the Spirit's internal revelation breaks into the preacher's mind and attends his preaching, it has the potential for radically transforming people's lives (15). Though preaching involves reciting and explaining the text, more than that it is the presentation of the message in such a way that it speaks to the needs of the people who hear it, which is possible only when the preacher is empowered by the Spirit.

Paul writing to Timothy says, "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). Hence, preachers need to seek the power of the Spirit to divide the Word rightly and present it for a life change to the hearers. Effective preaching needs the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Christ needs to be proclaimed by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for the

transformational lives of the people. Preachers need to submit themselves to the divine authority and must labor to put their preaching under the divine influence by prayer; thus, the preaching becomes Christ and Spirit-empowered and works in the lives of the hearers.

7. Missiological basics. Missiological basics in a way are related to authenticity and relevance. Bringing the truth of God's Word to bear on real life and motivating the listeners to take the message elsewhere from where they are is an important part of preaching. David J. Bosch rightly states that mission is from God.

Mission [is] understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It [is] thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending Son, and God the Father and God the Son sending the Spirit [is] expanded to include yet another "movement": Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world. (390)

The mission that Jesus gives is that a sending which simply means "taking to the road." The duty of the disciple is to take the good news to others. This thrust of sending is to be seen in preaching.

This sending aspect got to be very clear in the preaching thus making preaching more missional and effective. The ultimate purpose of preaching is to help the listeners to take the gospel with them and fulfill the Great Commission from the Lord Jesus Christ. The message preached needs to stimulate the hearers to carry out the plan of God and fulfill the Great Commission.

8. Personally internalized. Personally internalizing the sermon is called falling in love with the sermon according to Kalas (28). Personally internalized means that the truth is poured through the personality of the preacher and this is possible only when the message is internalized. Internalizing the message comes only when the preacher wrestles with it. Going on knees, walking through the roads, and making some personal plans are

the methods in which preacher needs to internalize the message. The self-conviction has to be brought in the sermon.

Kinlaw calls this quality of personal internalization as relating the written Word to the living Word. Persons who preach must be people of the Word, that his ministry should come out of his walk with God, and that he should work with God rather than simply for God (65). The message of preachers should be seen in their day-to-day activities; otherwise, it becomes only a lecture without proper meaning. BTE encourages preachers to preach sermons to their congregation members only if they are able to adhere to what they preach. Because preachers are also human beings first, they need to live out what they preach and only then tell their people of the importance of the sermon. Once the sermon becomes personally internalized, it becomes more effective.

9. Systematic presentation. Systematic presentation in effective preaching deals with the way preachers present their sermons. Appropriate gestures and proper behavior during the delivery of sermons are keys for effective preaching. The one thing I noticed in the area of Vijayawada is that these lay pastors try their best to prepare sermons for hours together, but they fail in presenting them or in the delivery of their sermons. Their inner feeling is that preparation is their part and the presentation is God's part; hence, less importance is given to systematic presentation. At times they do not care about their appearance, their gestures, and even their behavior in the pulpit. They believe what they say is important, not how they say it. Some of the lay pastors that live in the lower strata areas do not give much importance to this and, therefore, are not widely accepted. Those who do accept them do so as Hindu priests who perform the rituals.

Robinson makes a clear statement that the effectiveness of the sermon depends on two factors: what preachers say and how they say it (201). Both are important in preaching and it is true. To get the message deeper into the hearts of the hearers, gestures and behaviors play a vital role. Gestures and behaviors appear as the most understandable and convincing part of the preaching. While gestures draw the hearers' senses, the behaviors convey the inner feelings of the preacher because the sermon has already been personally internalized. Robison indicates that gestures do four things: emphasize the speech, maintain interest and hold attention, put the preacher at ease, and help the listeners experience what preachers feel while identifying with them (209–10).

BTE's emphasis is to help the lay pastors be fully equipped in presenting themselves as well as the sermons more systematically and drawing many to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Much importance is given not only to the preparation of the sermon but also to the presentation. The church needs effective communicators and the strength and growth of the church are with the preachers who communicate effectively.

10. Clear inference. Conclusion of the sermon possesses such an importance that many of these lay pastors don't pay attention to. The end of the sermon has to be technically prepared and presented to get the attention of the hearers and allow them to draw their own conclusion. Though close takes different shapes depending on the preacher, hearers, and situation, it must bring the element of freshness and interest to preaching (Robinson 176).

The material that is put in the sermon must, in the conclusion, lead people to eternity, which is the business of the preachers. A short summary, an illustration, a quotation, a question, a prayer, or such elements used in the conclusion need to move

towards the specific direction leading people to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to help them towards eternity. However, conclusions need not be very long but are to be very effective. They need systematic preparation as per the text of the sermon. The conclusion moves the hearer towards making a decision.

Obviously conclusions are more difficult. Endless conclusions and never landing conclusions are to be avoided. The BTE program stresses three points:

1. a true conclusion in the sermon goes beyond recapitulation to personal application;
2. the sermon needs to have a summons—a call to the hearers to act apart from just hearing, enjoying, remembering, and appreciating the sermon; and,
3. the conclusion strengthens one's faith and grants assurance of eternity upon responding to the sermon.

The Task of BTE

M.H. Erickson defines the task of theological education:

[The] discipline which strives to give a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith, based primarily upon the Scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in a contemporary idiom, and related to issues of life. (Erickson 21)

BTE can achieve this task in three ways:

1. By teaching simpler methods of interpretation of Scripture and making it suitable for the context in order to witness acceptably;
2. By helping nondenominational pastors learn to make good judgments about faithful belief and practice in diverse cultural settings; and,
3. By helping nondenominational pastors articulate the church's message in ways that nurture Christian life and faith in the contemporary world.

The overall task of BTE begins with the life situations of the lay pastors. The role of lay pastor, thus, is to bring to the biblical texts questions arising from the social-historical context in order to determine the Christian response to that context. Although the biblical message does not change from culture to culture, the questions brought to the Bible by lay pastors from different cultures vary widely; however, the answer is available when the question is considered in the light of the Scripture. The concept of contextualization many times brings a solution as it articulates the answers from the Bible, which communicate within the culture.

Paul stipulates in Titus 1:9 that church leaders must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that they can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. The task of BTE is to clarify and articulate the question raised from the sociocultural perspective. Biblical and theological studies when rigorously pursued, always with an eye to shaping character and equipping for ministry, help the church and believers grow. To this end BTE takes its task seriously.

BTE strives to help the lay pastors listen to the Scripture seriously and take the outcome to solve existing issues of society. Lay pastors also should listen to the historical-social cultures in which they live that make them more acceptable. Lay pastors must bring the questions of morality, justice, culture, inequality, and similar issues to the Scripture in order to declare God's authoritative truth to the communities in which they live. BTE's task is tremendous in shaping the lives of lay pastors and in helping them and their churches in the Lord.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of the basic theological education's preaching module on the nondenominational independent lay pastors who were involved in church-planting ministry in Vijayawada. The goal was to see the effectiveness of the interpretation of Scripture and to evaluate their preaching. The long-term purpose of this project determined whether the preaching module was effective in increasing their ability to present a sermon, to provide the relevant content and biblical interpretation to their respective congregations. Nevertheless, beyond the limited goals of this research project was the desire to measure the ongoing impact of this program on the lives and ministries of the lay pastors of these nondenominational churches.

The purpose was achieved by maintaining the integrity of the course, and the BTE was able to assess outcomes of the program in the lives of lay pastors. Data collected from the instruments used in this study will be used to evaluate and further develop BTE curriculum and its usage at the national level.

The Nature of BTE

Basic Theological Education has some unique characteristics that make it different from any other disciplines of education. BTE is an experience and expression of encounter with some lay pastors who never had any formal training and so failed to interpret the Word properly, thus inviting protest from people of other faiths. BTE as said is unique in that its nature differs from the traditional theological education. Traditional theological education often speaks of itself as a tool for the formation of people of God for their vocations. It also considers or views the laity as well as lay pastors as empty

vessels. Hence, Dorothy McRae-McMohan rightly points out that often the pattern of traditional ministry (I would say also the pattern of theological education) does not reflect and, in fact, runs counter to the theology of the church (109-11). This understanding has led to the development of independent churches, lay pastors, and lay leaders who have founded churches on their own but who lack in leading their congregations qualitatively.

Sensing the need of the multi-world of India in which the church exists in midst of uprising persecution and agitation and to help lay pastors of the independent churches, I designed the BTE program that is more convenient and comprehensive in its nature. All the lay pastors in this program saw that it was set up so they could “learn as they go.” Each of them came into the program with various motivations for learning and equipping themselves for a fruitful ministry. For some it was a chance to rethink how they ministered and preached, and for others it was an opportunity to into themselves for correction and development for better ministry in their given contexts. The very nature of BTE is to help the lay pastor in developing the church’s ministry more systematically, and the lay pastors who were part of this program endorsed it.

The Process of BTE

Unlike many other disciplines that can limit themselves to imparting a body of knowledge, the BTE program by nature involves faith formation, which engages the whole of lay pastors. This process has several important implications.

BTE does not begin and end in the classroom; rather, it finds its place first in the lay pastor and spreads to the whole church of the lay pastor and then to the society

BTE addresses spiritual development and other sociopolitical developments. At this point several questions arise within the participants through interaction that leads

them into deeper understanding of BTE. Leading lay pastors to this end and encouraging them to wrestle with these questions are essential points for their spiritual formation and for good pastoral service.

BTE ensures shaping of the lay pastors for effective preaching. Preaching that incorporates ten essential categories motivates congregations to be open-minded with people of other faiths, missional in their approach, and ecumenical with fellow Christian believers (see Appendix A).

The Content of BTE

Deciding on the appropriate curriculum and content for India's context became complex but was possible (see Appendix A). The BTE curriculum met the needs of lay pastors and it is more contextual in its design. Such an approach teaches lay pastors to be more open in their evangelistic work and build churches that are accepted globally. BTE's approach further helped the lay pastors to identify the questions and concerns that need to be addressed in their churches' contexts. The content of the BTE curriculum desires to be relevant and reveal God's call to do justice in the society in creating a harmonious society.

BTE's content leads lay pastors to the following framework:

1. Maintaining a clear balance between church and world where proclamation takes place,
2. Serving the community along with the church to create equality and develop the mind of acceptance with non-Christians,
3. Tackling the social evils that create havoc within society, and

4. Drawing lay pastors into profound engagement with to the meaning of confessing Christ in the midst of persecution and confrontation.

Each course is open to the lay pastors for their own educational enrichment and spiritual advancement, which may broaden their leadership in their congregations' ministry. Healthy churches need pastors who are equipped for ministry. Healthy churches are transforming agents in the society where pastors play a key role. BTE equips lay pastors who founded churches of their own under different circumstances to lead in a healthy manner. Each of BTE's courses has set goals for training and helping the lay pastors.

BTE Strategy

The strategy for training lay pastors was designed in an accessible way. Three days of evening classes for four hours a day helped them cover a subject in two to three weeks time; hence, the entire program was designed for three and half months (one hundred days) in which the lay pastors could learn five different essential subjects for their ministry and towards the growth of their church. These five courses are custom designed and self-contained to provide a comprehensive training equivalent to a foundational level course of a Bible college or seminary. The subjects that were taught provided lay pastors a lasting resource for future ministry and personal growth. The description for each subject is as follows.

Methods of Bible Study

The course was designed for the personal growth of the participants. The lessons were aimed at basic methods of Bible study and rules of interpretation with emphasis on accurately understanding and obeying God's word. This course further helped

participants to determine what the Scripture means and how can it be applied. This course was designed alongside of the *lectio divina*, the concept of spiritual reading of the Scripture taught by Dr. Robert Mulholland in hermeneutics class. The goals of this subject were to train lay pastors to study and interpret the Word properly and systematically, to lead lay pastors to an awareness of their need to apply and obey the Word personally as they preach to others, and to encourage the lay pastor to engage in personal, serious, and regular study of the Word.

Communicating Biblical Messages

This course was designed to equip and train the lay pastors with the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare and communicate messages from God's word. The prime goal of these messages is that they be biblically truthful and meet the needs of the people. This course also emphasized the ministerial aspect of practical preaching in the classes to help lay pastors develop the skill of preaching. This course further helped the participants know about various forms of preaching and practice most of them in different circumstances. Preparing this course emerged out of the classes that I had on preaching at the Beeson program at Asbury Theological Seminary.

Survey of Bible Doctrines

The course was designed to help lay pastors understand the basic doctrines of the Bible, which are essential as they serve in the multireligious, multicultural and multilingual contexts. This course further helped lay pastors know God more fully and practice sound theology in the overall ministries of the church. The goal of this course was to enable the lay pastors to see the right belief and translate it into acceptable practice, and teach the church to practice them in their own situations.

Personal Spiritual Formation

This course was designed at the inspiration of a Theology of Ministry class at Asbury Theological Seminary. This course was to help the lay pastors learn the basic concepts and understandings of spiritual life. This course aimed at their personal growth in their lives and helped them become spiritually mature and lead them to live lives worthy of their calling and pleasing to God. This course also helped the lay pastors grow in relationship with the believers and lead them to spiritual maturity. The goal was to help the lay pastors towards spiritual maturity, thereby helping the congregation in the process of growth to spiritual maturity.

Church Administration and Ministry

This course designed to help the lay pastors to carry out the functions of the church effectively as they exist in the pluralistic contexts. The course aimed at teaching the principles related to the nature and function of the church, which would give the lay pastors a better understanding of how to run a church towards success. The overall goal of this course was to enable the lay pastors to build the body of Christ effectively in the pluralistic contexts.

Curriculum

The total number of hours for the BTE program was 150 in which five subjects were offered. Each subject had the time frame of thirty hours and was taught continuously for three weeks concluding with a small test. Each day, one course was offered so that these lay pastors who are mostly undereducated could grasp the subject completely. Curriculum was designed to fit the timeframe of the lay pastors and was easily accessible to the lay pastors.

Many of the lay pastors were willing to attend the course for three days in the week, namely on Tuesday, Wednesdays, and Thursday. The reasons for choosing these days were that most of the lay pastors have fasting prayers on Fridays, preparatory prayers on Saturdays, and on Sundays regular worship services both in the mornings and evenings. Most of them have a day off on Mondays. The classes conducted between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., was a convenient time for all the lay pastors. The course stressed that each lay pastor use the lessons during the weekends in their ministry, thus fulfilling the requirement of practical work, and report the results back to the class when they come the following week.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study elicited three important questions. To promote the basic theological education to the lay pastors of the church and to analyze it, the collected data helped to answer these important questions.

Research Question #1

What was the effectiveness of preaching of the lay pastors before the preaching module of the basic theological education program?

The answer to this question is provided at the introduction of the study. Most founders of these independent churches did not undergo any theological training or have skills in biblical interpretation; hence, their understanding of Bible and theology was shallow. An instrument created determined their level of understanding of interpretation and preaching and its usage in their churches. The instrument also explored the usage of study tools such as Bible commentaries and dictionaries to determine their level of interpretation and preaching before they undergo the BTE program.

Research Question #2

What was the effectiveness of preaching of the lay pastors after the preaching module of the basic theological education program?

The intended BTE was based on the assumption that with the specific programming, a lay pastor's life will experience a change. The BTE positively affected the lay pastors, affirming the importance of basic theological education, particularly with regard to interpretation of the Scripture and preaching. Lay pastors were assessed at various points through their ministry experience to determine the change and increase in their level of understanding of basic theological education.

For the limited purpose and duration of this study, the levels of effective preaching were measured once after the BTE program; however, the level of understanding of the basic theological education did elevate and help the lay pastors grow in their church ministry with much more confidence. For the long-term goal, the trained lay pastors will be further assessed at least at two-year intervals after the completion of the program.

Research Question #3

What aspect of the course was most effective in shaping the lay pastors' understanding of mission and ministry of their nondenominational church?

The final portion of this research determined the change of the level of understanding of the course in the lay pastors and to see what aspect helped them most in the given five courses. Special emphasis was on the course communicating biblical messages. This final step distinguished that a number of intervening variables needed to be filtered to determine the interpretation and communication skills of the lay pastors.

Participants and Sample

The participants for this study were the lay pastors of the nondenominational churches. About fifty pastors participated upon invitation. The participants were both from the bigger churches as well as from the smaller churches. All the participants completed the instrument of demography before joining the course in order to help me assess the backgrounds.

The method of random selection (Wiersma and Jurs 296) was used to assess the levels of biblical interpretation and preaching. Selected ten lay pastors through a numbers game of chance were given Scripture portions (Matthew 28:18-20 and Luke 10:25-37) to preach a sermon before BTE that was evaluated and interpreted afterward by the five-member committee.

Instrumentation

This project was an evaluative study in the explanatory mode that utilized the Single-Group Time Series Design—SGTSD (137) to analyze the quality of interpretation and effectiveness of preaching. The evaluation committee consisted of five members: Two were theologically qualified professors of the seminary, two were leading pastors of large churches, and I was the other. The researcher-designed instrument was created with scores 1-5 as per the SGTSD with special emphasis on interpretation and preaching. Ten categories were identified suiting the Indian context (see Appendix A for definitions and complete evaluation form): biblically oriented, culturally relevant, socially relational (or harmonic), contextual issues, relevant illustrations, Christ and Spirit centered, missiological basics, personally internalized, systematic presentation, and clear inference.

The evaluation committee was instructed to observe ten categories in the sermons preached. The scores were finally analyzed and interpreted with the help of the evaluation committee. The evaluation of effective preaching is based on a five-point scale (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Sample of Preaching Evaluation Form

1-Not evident	2-Unclear	3-Uncecided	4-Clear	5-Very Clear		
Ten qualities	Evaluation					Remarks
1. Biblically Oriented	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Culturally Relevant	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Socially relational	1	2	3	4	5	

I created the secondary questionnaire to analyze the demography of the lay pastors in order to balance and validate the BTE program and also to work toward the long-term goal (see Appendix B). These questionnaires were distributed at two different occasions with the purpose of knowing the levels of understanding of basic theological education. Prior to the program a set of questionnaires was distributed, and after the program, the same was distributed. The distributed questionnaires were later tabulated to assess the understanding of BTE.

The semi-structured interview protocol was also used to get more information particularly on the issues that are concerned with the Indian church (see Appendix C). For the most part, this instrument was used with the leading pastors in order to find the depth of their understanding on the basic theological education.

The Necessity of Theological Training of Lay Pastors for Church Ministry

The second part of the instrument developed to see the necessity of theological training. The literature review explicitly points out the necessity of theological training for laity as well as for the lay pastors of the nondenominational churches. Three critical concerns were observed such as personal spiritual life, biblical interpretation and preaching, and ministry and administration of the church in the present Hindu dominant society.

Elements of Theological Training

The respondents were consulted through the questionnaire to express their interest in the elements of theological training. These elements included the duration of the study, the courses offered, the venue, and any further training if needed. Each respondent was then asked to assess the training and find changes in their mission and ministry.

Issues in Lay Pastors' Training Program

The instrument was further developed to understand the issues of society though the BTE gives importance to the Bible, Christian experience, and Christian traditions. The present-day issues ought to be taught in a manner so that good things will be enforced and evils will be eradicated. The instrument was directly pointed at a few serious issues such as casteism, globalization, child labor, poverty, and political issues.

Variables

A number of interfering variables influenced the outcome of the data collected for this study. These variables were constant throughout the research, and they were given serious consideration in interpreting outcomes. The major variables were the education, efficiency, and ability of the evaluating committee of five members. During

interviews and discussions regarding the questionnaire, participants evaluated the impact of several factors in their ministries including family, friends, and church ministry.

The dependant variable of this study was the effectiveness of preaching in the pastors. This was operationalized as the change was observed in the preaching of the lay pastor. Yet another dependant variable was the urge in the lay pastors for further ways to equip themselves for the meaningful and fruitful ministry of the church.

The independent variable of this study was the curriculum of the BTE. This was designed with five subjects: methods of bible study, communicating biblical messages, survey of bible doctrines, personal and spiritual formation and church administration and ministry. Special emphasis to the effectiveness of preaching was yet another independent variable which was operationalized through ten categories.

Validity and Reliability

The survey was pretested with a few nondenominational lay pastors within the city of Vijayawada in order to test the validity of the instrument. The content validity determined the growth of the levels of understanding of basic theological education among the pretested nondenominational lay pastors. The result of the pretest determined the reliability of the program and thus led to implementation.

Data Collection and Analysis

Three separate methods were used in data collection. First, in order to ensure the greatest possible participation of the lay pastors, I personally distributed an instrument of demography to the lay pastors prior to the program. A set time frame of fifteen days helped collect the first data. My secretary and I manually tabulated the collected data and

then interpreted it. A similar procedure was followed with the same questionnaire after the BTE program to ensure the long-term goal of the BTE.

Second, a pretest in which the randomly selected participants were asked to preach a sermon on the given text which, the evaluation committee and I then evaluated. Observation based on this evaluation served as the baseline to assess the lay pastors' further effectiveness of preaching after the BTE program.

Third, at the end of the program the randomly selected lay pastors were asked to preach a sermon on the same passage previously given, which was then evaluated to measure the effectiveness and the development in their preaching.

My secretary and I collected and tabulated all the results manually in consultation with the evaluation committee. I, along with my secretary and the evaluation committee, analyzed and interpreted the results. The data from the surveys was summarized using descriptive statistics.

Generalizability

BTE seeks to be a growing, reproducing, and sustainable training program that continue to impact the community of believers and lay pastors within the country. BTE mainly focuses on communication of biblical truths and its relevant application to life and ministry in a relational environment of continuing pastoral ministry. It is intended for day-to-day learning, growth, and better preparedness to serve others without the structure, distance, or expense of a formal institution.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

BTE in its overall teaching made a significant contribution in training the lay pastors. Particularly the preaching module with its evaluation helped the lay pastors to improve themselves in communicating the message more effectively. A readily accessible and tangible measure of the qualities of effective biblical preaching is in the outward observation of one's preaching. From the beginning, the BTE was set up so that ten qualities of effective biblical preaching were understood, applied, and then observed in each of the individual participants. The presumed effect of the program was that the participants would increase in their ability to communicate the message in their given context. Therefore, the goal of this research project was the evaluation of the effectiveness of preaching based on the BTE course.

Three research questions guided this study: What was the effectiveness of preaching of the lay pastors before the preaching module of the basic theological education program? What was the effectiveness of preaching of the lay pastors after the preaching module of the basic theological education program? What aspect of the course was most effective in shaping the lay pastors' understanding of mission and ministry of their nondenominational churches?

Profile of Participants

The process of inviting the lay pastors to participate in the BTE course began three months before the classes. Various lay pastors were approached, and by the beginning of the class, fifty lay pastors registered themselves for the course. By the end of the program, fifteen left for various reasons such as travel and ministry circumstances.

The rest were faithful until the end of the program. As was decided earlier, ten lay pastors were selected through a random selection process to measure the effectiveness of their preaching. Six were prompt in their preaching therefore, the following data (particularly of effective preaching) is limited to those six lay pastors.

All the participants have a minimum of six years ministerial experience. Thirty-five of them are married undergraduates. Six of them are married and well qualified with bachelor's degrees. They function or lead the church by imitating the mainline denominations such as Lutheran, Methodist, Church of South India, and Baptist. They have their own pastoral committees and small boards that are submissive to them. The others pastoring different churches have their own way of leading their congregation. Some try to imitate the pattern of mainline denominations whereas the others have their own way of worship designed according to their congregation. Thirty-five lay pastors were from different backgrounds, namely twelve Pentecostals, seventeen evangelicals, and six mainline denominations in the Vijayawada urban and suburban area.

All thirty-five lay pastors preach at least three times a week—once on Sunday service, once in cottage prayer meeting and the other in fasting prayer meeting. All these pastors conduct cottage prayer meeting and fasting prayer meeting once in a week, which is the practice of this area among all churches. The randomly selected six lay pastors for evaluation do the same, and the attendance of their listeners is well over fifty in number for each session. The lay pastors ranged in age between 35 and 55; 45 was the mean age.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this research project was collected from the sermons preached by the selected lay pastors who were involved in the BTE program for the period of 3 ½ months

and the further data was gathered from the second instrument. The exit interviews were done at the end of the program to make further observations with regard to the ongoing BTE program.

The data was collected in four phases over the course of five months. The first phase was the analysis of the demography to ensure the greatest possible participation of the lay pastors. This phase brought forth the multifaceted information about each participant. The second phase was the pretest in which I evaluated the sermons preached before the beginning of the BTE course as along with the evaluation committee. The third phase was the evaluation of the posttest sermons. The final stage was the exit interview, which specifically focused on gathering feedback on the effectiveness of the whole BTE.

Once all the data was collected, a period of organization and analysis followed. The findings were examined to determine if the intervening variables of education of BTE, ministry role, the length of ministry, and also the evaluation committee had any impact on the outcomes. The following outcome is the product of that analysis.

Baseline Skills

The first research question was, "What was the effectiveness of preaching of the lay pastors' before the preaching module of the basic theological education program?" The evaluation of the pretest sermon measured the ten categories of effective preaching. The five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1.0 to 5.0) was used to identify the baseline evidence of effective preaching. Changes were observed later in their effective preaching after the BTE program indicated their progress in adopting the ten qualities.

To record their baseline ability, the mean score was found of all the selected participants by the evaluation committee in the pretest preaching. Lay pastors scored a

mean of 33.12 out of a possible total of 50 in their pretests (see Table 4.1). With the mutual consensus of the evaluation committee, mean scores of those categories that were constructive (i.e., receiving a score of 24, representing clear or very clear on the preaching evaluation form) with those qualities that were unconstructive or uncertain (i.e., receiving a score of 36, representing not evident, unclear, or undecided) indicated significant room for development in the ten categories in the effective preaching of the lay pastors (see Table 4.2). In all, lay pastors showed a positive score in a little less than eight out of ten categories (75 percent average).

Table 4.1. Lay Pastors' Pretest by the Evaluation Committee

Lay Pastor	Evaluator					Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	
A	23	24	23	29	30	25.8
B	26	25	26	28	29	26.8
C	27	28	26	29	30	28.0
D	29	27	28	30	27	28.2
E	27	29	28	30	28	28.4
F	28	30	27	28	29	28.4
General Mean						33.12

Table 4.2 Comparison of Categories in Pretest

Lay Pastor	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total
Categories that were constructive*	3	5	4	4	3	5	24
Categories that were unconstructive**	7	5	6	6	7	5	36

* Categories receiving either a 4 clear or 5 Very Clear

** Categories receiving either a 3 undecided or 2 unclear or 1 not evident

Further evaluation of the constructive and unconstructive scores and their relationship to each of the ten categories indicates few strengths that the selected lay pastors had before joining the BTE program and few weaknesses, too, that were consistent with each of them (see Table 4.3).

Overall, the evaluation showed that the lay pastors were strong in three areas, namely biblically oriented, Christ and Spirit empowered, and personally internalized. Their weakness was in four categories, namely culturally relevant, socially relational, contextual issues, and missiological basics. The data further indicated a general ability within the lay pastors that they can connect more relevantly with their audience in order to develop their churches and ministries; however, in addition the pretest revealed that equal strength and weakness was found in these three categories, namely relevant illustration, systematic presentation, and clear inference.

Table 4.3. Evaluation of Constructive and Unconstructive Categories in Pretest

Category*	Lay Pastor						Total	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	Const.	Uncon.
Biblically oriented	√	√	√	√	√	√	6	0
Culturally relevant	√	×	×	√	×	×	2	4
Socially relational	×	√	×	×	×	×	1	5
Contextual issues	×	√	×	×	√	×	2	4
Relevant illustrations	×	×	√	√	×	√	3	3
Christ and Spirit centered	√	√	√	√	√	√	6	0
Missiological basics	×	×	×	×	√	×	1	5
Personally internalized	√	√	×	√	√	√	5	1
Systematic presentation	×	×	√	×	√	√	3	3
Clear inference	×	×	√	√	×	√	3	3

√ indicates the constructive score i.e. scoring from 5 or 4 on the preaching evaluation form

× indicates the unconstructive score i.e. scoring from 3 or 2 or 1 on the preaching evaluation form

* For descriptions of 10 categories of preaching evaluation see Appendix A

The high scores in biblically oriented, Christ centered, and personally internalized revealed in the pretest evaluation describe a great deal of strength in the lay pastors' ability to preach effectively and communicate biblical truth with clarity and purpose. These areas were strong in their preaching. The pretest also indicates that the lay pastors are able to use relevant illustrations and present the sermon systematically and with clear inference. Though lay pastors were strong moderate in these areas but needed to develop. However, in the pretest the noted weaknesses are in the areas of being socially relational,

contextual oriented, and missiological in approach. Towards fulfilling this need, BTE helped them in their learning process in understanding the real challenge of preaching effectively in their own situations where their churches are existing, which was in their aptitude.

Comparison of the Evaluation of the Preaching

To ensure the standard of the data collection and methodical interpretation, I collected individual data recording from the evaluators of the pretest preaching as well as the posttest preaching of the lay pastors. They were carefully read and were put for discussion and for clarification by the evaluation committee. They were put together to find the average score (see Table 4.4 and 4.5 for samples). The tabulated average scores were compared for each selected lay pastor to find the rate of changes in their overall preaching by me and my secretary. Table 4.6 shows the pretest scores of the lay pastors' preaching.

Table 4.4. Evaluation of Sermon in Pretest: Lay Pastor A

Category*	Evaluator					Average
	1	2	3	4	5	
Biblically oriented	4	5	4	5	5	5
Culturally relevant	4	5	4	4	5	4
Socially relational	2	1	2	3	2	2
Contextual issues	2	2	1	2	2	2
Relevant illustrations	1	2	2	1	2	2
Christ and Spirit centered	4	5	5	4	5	5
Missiological basics	1	2	2	1	2	2
Personally internalized	3	4	3	4	5	4
Systematic presentation	2	2	1	2	1	2
Clear inference	1	2	3	2	2	2

* For descriptions of the ten categories of preaching evaluation, see Appendix A.

Table 4.5. Evaluation of Sermon in Posttest: Lay Pastor A

Category*	Evaluator					Average
	1	2	3	4	5	
Biblically oriented	4	4	5	5	4	4
Culturally relevant	4	5	4	5	5	5
Socially relational	4	3	3	5	4	4
Contextual issues	3	4	3	3	3	3
Relevant illustrations	4	5	4	3	4	4
Christ and Spirit centered	4	4	5	4	5	4
Missiological basics	3	4	3	3	4	3
Personally internalized	5	5	4	4	5	5
Systematic presentation	4	3	4	4	3	4
Clear inference	4	5	4	5	5	5

*For descriptions of the ten categories of preaching evaluation, see Appendix A.

Table 4.6. Overall Evaluation of the Pretest Scores

Category*	Lay Pastor					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Pretest	Pretest	Pretest	Pretest	Pretest	Pretest
Biblically oriented	5	4	4	4	5	5
Culturally relevant	4	2	2	2	2	3
Socially relational	2	4	2	2	2	2
Contextual issues	2	4	2	2	4	2
Relevant illustrations	2	2	4	3	2	4
Christ and Spirit centered	5	4	4	4	4	4
Missiological basics	2	2	2	2	4	2
Personally internalized	4	4	3	2	4	4
Systematic presentation	2	2	2	3	2	4
Clear inference	2	2	3	3	2	4

* For descriptions of the ten categories of preaching evaluation, see Appendix A.

Observed Changes in Lay Pastors' Preaching

The second research question was, "What was the effectiveness of preaching of the lay pastors' after the preaching module of the basic theological education program?" Sermons preached by the selected lay pastors showed different strengths and weaknesses in their pretest preaching. This data proved the fact that they were in need of serious help in order to help them preach effectively. All the participants preached on the given prescribed text to them. Matthew 28:18-20 and Luke 10:25-37 were selected New Testaments texts given to the participants to measure the effectiveness of preaching. The evaluation committee and I thought that these texts would cover all the categories of

evaluation. Among six randomly selected lay pastors, three preached on Matthew 28:18-20 and the others preached on Luke 10:25-37. In their posttest preaching, there were changes as well as developments in their presentations (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Overall Evaluation of the Posttest Scores

Category*	Lay Pastor					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Pretest	Pretest	Pretest	Pretest	Pretest	Pretest
Biblically oriented	4	5	4	5	4	5
Culturally relevant	5	4	4	4	3	4
Socially relational	4	4	3	4	4	3
Contextual issues	3	4	4	3	4	4
Relevant illustrations	4	3	3	4	4	5
Christ and Spirit centered	4	4	4	4	4	4
Missiological basics	3	3	3	3	5	3
Personally internalized	5	4	4	3	5	4
Systematic presentation	4	3	4	4	4	3
Clear inference	5	4	5	4	3	4

* For descriptions of the ten categories of preaching evaluation, see Appendix A.

Lay Pastors exhibited an overall constructive change in their posttest preaching after the BTE course (see Tables 4.7 to 4.12, pp 76-81). An important point to note here is that the ten evaluated categories either maintained or improved the previous score. However, two of the lay pastors showed a weakness in the biblically oriented and Christ and Spirit centered categories. As their concentration was more towards developing the

other areas, they paid less attention to these two categories. Apparently, the final scores were given to the selected lay pastors in order to help them develop their effective preaching further.

Table 4.8. Comparison of Evaluation of Preaching: Lay Pastor A

Category*	Pretest	Posttest	Rate of Change +/-
Biblically oriented	5	5	0
Culturally relevant	4	5	+1
Socially relational	2	4	+2
Contextual issues	2	3	+1
Relevant illustrations	2	4	+2
Christ and Spirit centered	4	4	0
Missiological basics	2	3	+1
Personally internalized	4	5	+1
Systematic presentation	2	4	+2
Clear inference	3	5	+2
Total score	30	42(+12)	+12

* For descriptions of ten categories of Preaching Evaluation see Appendix A.

+/- indicates the positive and negative changes from pretest.

() Number in parenthesis indicates the change from the pretest.

Table 4.9. Comparison of Evaluation of preaching: Lay Pastor B

Category*	Pretest	Posttest	Rate of Change +/-
Biblically oriented	4	5	+1
Culturally relevant	2	4	+2
Socially relational	3	4	+1
Contextual issues	4	4	0
Relevant illustrations	2	3	+1
Christ and Spirit centered	4	4	0
Missiological basics	2	3	+1
Personally internalized	4	4	0
Systematic presentation	2	3	+1
Clear inference	2	4	+2
Total score	29	38 (+9)	+9

* For descriptions of 10 categories of Preaching Evaluation see Appendix A.

+/- indicates the positive and negative changes from pretest.

() Number in parenthesis indicates the change from the pretest.

Table 4.10. Comparison of Evaluation of Preaching: Lay Pastor C

Category*	Pretest	Posttest	Rate of Change +/-
Biblically oriented	4	4	0
Culturally relevant	2	4	+2
Socially relational	2	3	+1
Contextual issues	2	4	+2
Relevant illustrations	4	3	-1
Christ and Spirit centered	4	4	0
Missiological basics	2	3	+1
Personally internalized	3	4	+1
Systematic presentation	2	4	+2
Clear inference	3	5	+2
Total Score	28	38 (+10)	+11 -1

* For descriptions of the ten categories of preaching evaluation, see Appendix A.

+/- indicates the positive and negative changes from pretest.

() Number in parenthesis indicates the change from the pretest.

Table 4.11. Comparison of Evaluation of Preaching: Lay Pastor D

Category*	Pretest	Posttest	Rate of Change +/-
Biblically oriented	4	5	+1
Culturally relevant	2	4	+2
Socially relational	2	4	+2
Contextual issues	2	3	+1
Relevant illustrations	3	4	+1
Christ and Spirit centered	4	4	0
Missiological basics	2	3	+1
Personally internalized	2	3	+1
Systematic presentation	3	4	+1
Clear inference	3	4	+1
Total Score	27	38 (+11)	+11

* For descriptions of the ten categories of preaching evaluation, see Appendix A.

+/- indicates the positive and negative changes from pretest.

() Number in parenthesis indicates the change from the pretest.

Table 4.12. Comparison of Evaluation of Preaching: Lay Pastor E

Category*	Pretest	Posttest	Rate of Change +/-
Biblically oriented	5	4	-1
Culturally relevant	2	3	+1
Socially relational	2	4	+2
Contextual issues	4	4	0
Relevant illustrations	2	4	+2
Christ and Spirit centered	4	4	0
Missiological basics	4	5	+1
Personally internalized	4	5	+1
Systematic presentation	2	4	+2
Clear inference	2	3	+1
Total Score	31	40 (+9)	+10 -1

* For descriptions of the ten categories of preaching evaluation, see Appendix A.

+/- indicates the positive and negative changes from pretest.

() Number in parenthesis indicates the change from the pretest.

Table 4.13 Comparison of Evaluation of Preaching: Lay Pastor F

Category*	Pretest	Posttest	Rate of Change +/-
Biblically oriented	5	5	0
Culturally relevant	3	4	+1
Socially relational	2	3	+1
Contextual issues	2	4	+2
Relevant illustrations	3	5	+2
Christ and Spirit centered	4	4	0
Missiological basics	2	3	+1
Personally internalized	4	4	0
Systematic presentation	4	4	0
Clear inference	3	4	+1
Total Score	32	40 (+8)	+8

* For descriptions of the ten categories of preaching evaluation, see Appendix A.

+/- indicates the positive and negative changes from pretest.

() Number in parenthesis indicates the change from the pretest.

The overall scores of the preaching both in the pretest and posttest show significant development in the preaching ability of the lay pastors (see Table 4.6, p.75). However, a lack of coordination is found in each participant to incorporate all the ten categories equally in their preaching. This category can be ratified as they regularly make note of their preaching.

Table 4.14 Overall Scores of Lay Pastors Preaching

Category*	Lay Pastor											
	A		B		C		D		E		F	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Biblically oriented	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	5
Culturally relevant	4	5	2	4	2	4	2	4	2	3	3	4
Socially relational	2	4	4	4	2	3	2	4	2	4	2	3
Contextual issues	2	3	4	4	2	4	2	3	4	4	2	4
Relevant illustrations	2	4	2	3	4	3	3	4	2	4	4	5
Christ and Spirit centered	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Missiological basics	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	4	5	2	3
Personally internalized	4	5	4	4	3	4	2	3	4	5	4	4
Systematic presentation	2	4	2	3	2	4	3	4	2	4	4	3
Clear inference	2	5	2	4	3	5	3	4	2	3	4	4

* For descriptions of the ten categories of preaching evaluation, see Appendix A.

Evaluation of Ten Categories from General Observation

The evaluation committee members and I interacted with the lay pastors with regard to the BTE and preaching module in particular. The lay pastors gave their feedback and expressed learning and development in their preaching. They further opined that they had grown both in understanding and preparing sermons to preach effectively.

Table 4.13 summarizes the best learning of the categories of the lay pastors and the changes they found in their own preaching. The general observation is that their

willingness to accept their weaknesses and being ready to explore new ways in preaching points at reaching their hearers meaningfully. All the participants affirmed a positive answer and acknowledged that few categories helped them preach effectively, which was the main intention of BTE program.

Table 4.15. Assessment of Personal Changes through General Observation

Questions in Interaction	Lay Pastors' Explanation
Learning and development points	<p>Preaching a sermon using all the ten categories</p> <p>The categories socially relational and culturally relevant have great roles to play in building society.</p> <p>Missiological basics enhance the growth of the church.</p> <p>Personally internalizing category is an eye opener, thus making sermon preparation more serious.</p> <p>Preparing a sermon with ten categories leads towards both spiritual formation and moral formation.</p>
Personal changes	<p>BTE's preaching module brought a deeper understanding (Lay Pastor C).</p> <p>Relevant illustrations have made me connect with my congregation more closely (Lay Pastor A).</p> <p>Apply first and supply next is the motto I learned after learning about internalizing the sermon (Lay Pastor F).</p> <p>My church has become mission minded in its overall approach (Lay Pastor B).</p> <p>We are more open and are able to connect ourselves with others after improving our sermons with socially relational and contextual issues categories (Lay Pastors D & E).</p>

Evaluation of BTE from Exit Interview

At the end of the BTE program, the lay pastors gave feedback in the exit interviews dealing mostly with their personal growth and learning. 85 percent of the lay pastors were positive towards the BTE program and wanted it to be implemented at the state level first and later as it had enlightened them in their ministerial experience. However, 10 percent of the participants did not give any answer whereas a very small

group 5 percentage was negative about BTE. Ten questions were asked to the participated lay pastors in the exit interview—four were general and six personal (see Appendix D). Answers varied from person to person in the general category whereas in the personal category answers were consistent (see Table 4.16).

Table 4.16. Description on General Questions in Exit Interview

Description of General Questions*	Lay Pastors' Explanation
Requirement of BTE for ongoing ministry	Highly required as it helps to understand the basics of theological education Helps to update ourselves with present trends Makes a way to develop our existing churches Motivates to give the right word to our congregation Challenges to administer our existing churches with proper administrative structure
Reasons for wrong interpretation of the Scripture	Lack of basic Bible knowledge Lack of basic theological education Self-sufficiency, all knowing attitude Confining to particular caste, creed, etc. Being closed minded
Some of the social issues that need to tackled with by the church	Caste system (in general and within the church) Women and children discrimination Dowry system and poverty Meaningless culture and superstition
The ways that Church need to make use of to tackle the issues	Through systematic and thematic Bible study programs Encouraging the believers to transcend the boundaries Making ways for inter-caste marriages Through ecumenism Being open-minded and to be ready to hear others and their views, leave alone accepting others Encouraging cell group concept among the believers Counseling and caring the people involved

Assessment of BTE Program

The third research question of this project was, “What aspect of the course was most effective in shaping the lay pastors’ understanding of mission and ministry of their nondenominational churches?” The final portion of this research was to determine the

change of the level of understanding in the lay pastors and to see what aspect helped them most in the given five courses. The further purpose of this question was to provide a framework to develop it for future feasibility.

BTE was designed to help the lay pastors learn different elements of theology, church ministry and administration, basic Bible doctrines, and preaching skills. BTE provided lay pastors an opportunity to learn, interact with teachers and fellow pastors, and apply new ideas for the development of their ministries. Every session in the BTE program was filled with lively teaching and discussion. BTE encouraged lay pastors to put in their own efforts through reading supportive material and also to apply the principles that they learned in the classroom. There were discussion on application part which were evaluated, to help each other strengthen their ministries.

Both in the instrumentation and in the general observation, open ended questions such as, “How far in your opinion is the BTE required for the ongoing ministry in the pluralistic Indian context?” and, “Do you think that BTE would activate your involvement in the mission and ministry of the church?” were asked. The responses of the lay pastors were overwhelming as BTE is the first ever program that paved a way for them to upgrade themselves. Further, the responses described that significant importance was placed in almost all the courses as they found them very useful in their ministry (see Table 4.14). However, when a general question was posed to the selection of three important courses that took deeper roots in them was asked, the answers were as follows. Out of thirty-five lay pastors, twenty-seven of them (77 percent) esteemed in higher degrees for the subjects communicating biblical messages, personal spiritual life, and church administration and ministry. Six lay pastors (16 percent) valued their priority to

methods of Bible study, communicating biblical messages, and church administration and ministry. The rest of the lay pastors (7 percent) appreciated their priority to methods of Bible study, communicating biblical messages, and Bible doctrine survey. Nevertheless, the prime goal of BTE was achieved as all of them voted for communicating biblical messages, the main focus of BTE.

Table 4.17. Assessment of BTE in General Observation

Description of Questions Assessing BTE	Observations from Lay Pastors
Requirement of BTE for the ongoing ministry in the pluralistic context	<p>BTE is “the” tool for the ongoing ministry in the pluralistic context in India, particularly in Vijayawada area</p> <p>BTE if provided to all who are involved in ministry without theological education, can bring them together for the same cause of the gospel</p> <p>BTE is required to bring unity in diversity</p> <p>BTE enhances the quality of the Lay Pastor and the church</p>
BTE and its involvement in your church	<p>BTE’s training and material motivates congregation to be missional in their Christian living</p> <p>Every lay member of the church should have basic theological knowledge</p> <p>Church members have seen change in us and in our preaching</p> <p>BTE trained lay pastors’ church can be a blessing in the community where it exists</p>

Summary of Major Findings

The majority of the lay pastors participated fully in undergoing BTE program as they were encouraged to share the learning with one another in their groups.

Significant, positive changes were noted in the lay pastors as they underwent the BTE program. These changes were increasing during the course of their program in adopting the BTE material to their ongoing ministry.

The necessity of BTE for lay pastors has been emphasized by themselves, primarily to preach the Word effectively and lead their existing congregation in their own contexts successfully. All the participants believe that BTE guides them towards that extent.

Various issues such as casteism, gender matters, globalization, child labor, poverty, problems of the aged, and political issues need addressing, and BTE paves the way for doing so. This addressing would nurture the vision and mission of the lay pastors who undergo training.

The communicating biblical messages course with its elaborated ten categories enabled the lay pastors to recognize their weaknesses and to correct and strengthen themselves for effective preaching.

Lay pastors opined that effective preaching transcends the boundaries of multicultural, multireligious, and multi-lingual contexts and help in bringing the lost into the fold of Jesus Christ.

BTE as offered was strongest in three areas: in helping the lay pastors to be theologically learned, to preach the Word effectively as to avoid the agitation from people of other faiths towards Christianity, to tackle the existing social evils in order to create a peaceful society through the ministries of their churches.

In the following chapter, clarification, suggestions, applications, and limitations of these findings are explored in greater detail.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This project originated out of a desire to provide theological education at the local level according to the dire need in India. Though theological education is provided at other levels for clergy of certain denominations, the laity and lay pastors are mostly a forgotten mass to whom this study is dedicated. This study sought to make basic theological education available to nondenominational pastors. While the previous chapters have laid out the research methodology, the details of the project, and the findings of the study, this chapter discusses the summary observations.

The BTE program, as a whole, proved to be an effective tool for providing basic theological education to the lay pastors at various levels. Though the ultimate goal of this project was to measure the impact of BTE on the lives and ministries of lay pastors, the immediate purpose was to enable the lay pastors in using ten categories of effective biblical preaching. While the data revealed an encouraging positive impact, one cannot imagine that effective preaching has been fully taught and practiced unless it is regularly implemented and observed.

Given the challenge of BTE, five summary observations are made in this chapter. Firstly, expressing the further clarification for the BTE program, the importance of having a new way of training lay pastors for the growth of the church is discussed, under the title training to serve effectively. Secondly, the limitations for this study are highlighted. Thirdly, unexpected observation is noted during the program. Fourthly, recommendations for application in ministry contexts are considered; whereas, fifthly,

further recommendations and changes are made to the program and sixthly and finally ministry intervention and application of this program are explained.

Training to Serve Effectively

The primary goal of BTE was to train the lay pastors for a short period of six weeks and to note the validity of the program for the future. The research showed that this goal was achieved as the lay pastors were encouraged by the program and adopted many of the qualities that they have learned in this short program. However, three things emerged out of this training program.

BTE and Effective Preaching

The ultimate goal of the BTE was to see the incorporation of all the ten preaching categories implemented in the preaching of the lay pastors (see Appendix A). The research showed the lay pastors that gained a new understanding of these ten categories required a learning situation. This learning would further help them to transmit their skill and knowledge to someone else, so that they were empowered to do what previously they were unable to do. BTE created that situation and helped the lay pastors to do two things: to learn the ten preaching categories and to apply them immediately.

As I have observed, BTE's approach became more of a "relational experience" (Young 21) than a "relational process" (Clinton and Stanley 40). The whole process of the course communicating biblical messages was flexible. The participants were encouraged to discuss, debate, and deliver their views. This progression of study impacted the program the most. The inner, hidden qualities of the lay pastors were brought forth through this procedure, which they had never considered. However, BTE

paved the way for the lay pastors to learn, practice, and preserve effective preaching for the growth of the churches.

Of the ten categories for effective preaching, lay pastors placed greater emphasis on biblically oriented, Christ and Spirit centered, and personally internalized when they joined the course, but after the initial classes of BTE's communicating biblical messages course, they began to pay attention to the rest of the categories, thus making their messages more effective. One of the participants opined, "BTE's preaching classes were eye openers and now I am ready to preach anywhere since I know how to prepare a sermon and practice it and then present it to others." This kind of statement takes BTE to the next level and makes it available to the entire state.

The ten suggested categories were well debated and discussed by the group. Initially though lay pastors seemed negligent to adopt the categories such as socially relational and culturally relevant; however, some of the incidences (such as being a part of the group with no other participants from their previous religious or cultural background) helped them not only adopt such categories in the sermons but also practice them regularly.

The Practice of BTE

The practice of BTE can begin with three motivational initiatives. The nature, the process, and the content of BTE should lead lay pastors to motivational initiative in their journey of faith.

Rising expectations. Lay pastors who underwent BTE training need to keep their expectations high to promote their leadership for better results in their ministry.

Leadership begins with a vision or dream. Leaders then have to believe the dream

themselves. Then, the leader need to be prepared for the rough road that leads to accomplishing the vision. When inspired lay pastors go through the BTE program, the trainers should aim to enable them to enjoy a unique experience. A famous saying of William Carey declares, “Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God.” Lay pastors need to keep their expectations high and strive to achieve them.

Building better rapport. BTE’s program helps lay pastors build rapport between one another at the same with people of other faiths. One thing that will always be a demand in church ministry is enriching and deepening relationships. The program needs to work on maintaining and extending demand of building rapport so that lay pastors find great resource and satisfaction in their ministry. The BTE can help lay pastors constantly exercise themselves in maintaining and building rapport and passing it on to their church members.

Promoting value. BTE encourages lay pastors to promote the values that form character and spirituality. Moral and spiritual formation feed one another and helps believers to grow deeper in their faith. As values are experienced, God will inspire to promote them. Moral formation is a continued exercise and spiritual formation should be a continued experience. These values when promoted in the church and society, peaceful atmosphere can be prevailed. Moral and spiritual values stimulate lay pastors to grow, enable them to find strength, and find help in times of need.

Having said that, BTE in its fullness has helped lay pastors of Vijayawada to maintain their churches more successfully and to preach effectively by which they can grow in numbers. BTE program was not tough and strict but was more easy and flexible where lay pastors could feel comfort and freeness. This easy system helped lay pastors

accept one another, work with one another, and transcend their boundaries for the cause of the gospel. Keeping the constraints of the lay pastors, this program was designed in such a way that they could not miss any of the classes; thus, BTE was successful in its first attempt to train the lay pastors.

BTE will continue to repeat this program as it has seen fruitful results. The curriculum may be strengthened further, incorporating more relevant lessons and contemporary issues. BTE's hundred-day course helped the lay pastors have the basic knowledge about theology and challenged them further to be more knowledgeable as their churches face the constant test of new situations, new information, new apprehension from people of other faiths, and even new plans of persecution from fundamentalists.

Limitations of the Study

Theological education itself is a complex issue in contexts such as India, as it is filled with diversity in all aspects. This issue further makes theological educators to produce what is called Indian Christian theology. However, looking back at the project of BTE, producing curriculum was not that difficult. Instead, it was easy as the project was limited to one particular area. Still, limitations are part of life, and one has to take them positively and work on them for a better future.

Nonetheless, I see three primary areas that limited my study. One was the time frame of the BTE program, which was a bit shorter. The second was the number of sermons preached by the lay pastors for evaluation, and the third was the limited participation of the lay pastors.

Basically the program was set for one hundred days with five courses. Each course ran for two to three weeks. As I saw the interest and openness in the lay pastors, BTE could have run for at least six months or for two hundred days to give the lay pastors more learning. More time would have allowed for interaction and discussion as it brought fine results in their understanding of basic theology and also ways for effective preaching.

The lay pastors indicated their deep interest in the extension of the timings and days, but the time frame for this research project was short with hundred days. This assessment by the lay pastors is a fair one, but the purpose of this research would have not been completed. However, in the longer run this evaluation will be taken seriously and the strategy will be redesigned to meet this need.

This research project evaluated only two sermons by the lay pastors to appraise the impact of the BTE on the skills of their preaching. At least two or three could have been considered to assess, which would have given still better results to assess the program's impact. Though lay pastors preached more than four sermons, only two were evaluated due to a schedule conflict for all the evaluators. In the future BTE will assign its own faculty to assess the preaching of the lay pastors; therefore, more sermons can be reviewed to help the lay pastors further.

The limited participation of lay pastors with the context of the study suggests a potential weakness. In the initial stages, fifty lay pastors contacted for participation, and all of them registered to attend the BTE program. Only thirty-five responded and attended regularly. Ten out of thirty-five lay pastors were selected for the evaluation of preaching but only six were prompt in all the presentations. This change in the number, though,

presented good results, but the fuller participation would have expressed more on the program, particularly with preaching evaluation. Finally, I believe that all the limitations will help shape the future work. The effort of this BTE research for lay pastors has just begun. I am sure, I will give my best to improve this research and help many independent churches' pastors benefit from this program. The learning has begun and it will continue to grow for the glory of God and for the extension of his kingdom. This program will certainly be suited overall the country and thereby the need of the hour of encouraging the laity and lay pastors is met.

Unexpected Observations

The BTE project with the lay pastors provided some unexpected observations. For the immediate course of action, one observation will certainly be taken seriously for the further development of the program.

The major observations the evaluation committee and I noticed was the interest the lay pastors had in interaction. The act of discussion made them forget about the differences in their backgrounds. In the beginning classes, they had resentment toward each other, but as the second week approached and when they were divided into groups for discussion on the subjects, we observed that they were welcoming each other's opinions. Their reporting at the end of the class was thought provoking and helpful for the others' learning. After the classes, in their personal conversations, they were immersed in sharing their ideas and plans. Therefore, the interaction and discussion sessions helped the lay pastors come better prepared to share their thoughts. Being a part of the group and as a facilitator, I was thrilled to see the work of the gospel uniting the shepherds together for a better ministry in the future.

Recommendations for Application in Ministry Contexts

This study has produced a great deal of information that could be helpful to the Indian Christian church in general and to mainline denominations in particular. In order to make best use of this study, a number of recommendations may be appropriate.

1. The denominational seminaries need to give preference to train such lay pastors rather than training only their own pastors and neglecting these pastors who founded their own churches.
2. The prejudices regarding the lay pastors by the denominational churches need to be removed in order to help the lay pastors continue their ministry through proper theological training.
3. The already existing interest of the lay pastors in the mission and ministry of the church must be encouraged and motivated.
4. The lay pastors who are involved in the ministry must be open-minded and ready to be equipped for the ministry of the church through training.
5. As much as possible, the lay pastors should be involved in all forms of ministry. Compartmentalization of ministry brings trouble for themselves from the people of other faiths.
6. In Indian contexts, lay pastors need to open their eyes to see and their ears to hear the atrocities against Christians and respond to such situations rather than remaining in their comfort zones.
7. Lay pastors should interpret the Word of God more systematically in order to avoid confrontation of and counteraction from Hindu fundamentalists.

8. A clear distinction has to be maintained by the lay pastors in preaching about culture and religion.

9. Continued education needs to be developed by the lay pastors in order to feed their congregation spiritually and help the believers deeply rooted in the Word.

10. Lay pastors need to take preaching sermons seriously and prepare them more qualitatively.

Recommendations and Changes to the Program

This project has produced a great deal of results which could further strengthen the program. In the long run of the program, the following recommendations and changes can be observed and implemented for its betterment.

1. Along with the subjects that were covered a few more courses could be added such as a detailed study on the Old Testament, a detailed study on the New Testament, a general survey of church history, missionary biographical studies, and evangelism and missions.

2. The number of days of classes can be increased to complete all the subjects in order to help the lay pastors for better service in the church in their given contexts.

3. A few more categories to evaluate the effectiveness of their preaching can be added such as creativity in the sermon to help the listeners be more attentive, and creativity even in their approach toward nonbelievers, creativity with visual images to help the congregation grasp the message clearly, creativity in dialogue to involve the members of the church in the sermon and help them participate in the sermon instead of making them be listeners only but letting them engage in the sermon.

Some Important Concerns

In the course of facilitating the BTE program for the lay pastors, I ran across some important concerns. For the betterment of the program and for the successful ministry of the lay pastors, these concerns need to be addressed.

Emphasis on Perspectival Change

Perspective is the way one looks at things. The evaluation committee and I have indeed indicated the change of perspective in theology, mission, and education in BTE. It can be summed up as liberative and ecumenical. Both presuppose an intense awareness of the context in which BTE should be done. In fact, it is the prerequisite for a meaningful basic theological education.

The Indian context is pluralistic and multifarious. It has trends and issues that are common but at the same time complex—the elite domination, continuing misery of the poor, rise of religious fundamentalism, impact of new economic policies, ecological crisis, and so on. However, there are problems that are specific to each region. In analyzing such context, Christian leaders and lay pastors need to pay more serious attention to addressing these regional variations and issues. The BTE program concentrates on training lay pastors at the local level and needs to undertake further steps to enlighten the minds of the lay pastors so that their ministry can be holistic. Emphasis on perspectival change in the BTE program needs careful attention.

Missional Thrust

Missional thrust is transformative. With a critical awareness of the oppressive structures in Indian situation, lay pastors should be transformed. BTE should be examined to find out how it can be used as a change-oriented and committed form of

learning in the area of missional thrust. The need to reflect on theological praxis as methodology for the BTE is to be considered. The data of the research clearly shows that lay pastors lack in taking missional thrust seriously.

The biblical interpretations should be shaped by praxis and contextual realities. We need biblical research into the literary genre of the text and its immediate context, but the need is for better understanding of the text in terms of its praxis for the people in that context. Questions need to be raised and answered about how the text has helped enhance their vision of God's transforming act. The BTE program needs to develop in this area and help the lay pastors be more missional in the ministry.

Formation

The BTE program is also designed for ministerial formation. Spirituality and learning are two goals. Spirituality must be understood as a process whereby every believer internalize the faith—its vision and values—that will decisively shape lifestyle. Discipline, prayer, worship, and contemplation are all part of this formation. Many aspects of development need to be considered.

I suspect that many of the lay pastors' spirituality is shaped by individualistic and other-worldly concerns as most of them are offshoots from denominational churches. When they are exposed to newer challenges in the BTE, they tend to react differently. As I have observed, a minor portion of the participants even develop a form of double existence—one for the sake of course assignments and the other for pastoral ministry. They do not internalize the newly found enlargement of their faith, whereas the others take this newfound educational program seriously. These lay pastors still want to be

babes in faith. A conscious attempt should be made to develop a spirituality that is responsive to God's call, vision, and mission.

Commitment

The cornerstone of the BTE program is the commitment of teachers and lay pastors to the gospel. The gospel in the ultimate sense is a mystery, which cannot be exhausted by response and interpretation. BTE commits to this ever-deepening mystery in faith, but the response, however imperfect, should have a concrete shape. All along I have tried my best to be committed to the task of BTE, and this aspect of commitment and accountability has to be maintained in order to see the transformation taking place among the lay pastors through this program. Every Christian leader and lay pastors are called to commit to this form of witness with openness to the newer challenges of the mystery of God's grace.

The work of the BTE is inextricably linked to the church, which good theological education understands. The church situations are changing, but some things remain unalterably the same. Theological education in such changing situations should be as mindful of things that will not change as of things that will. The fact is that people of the church want a pastor who loves God and who can meet their spiritual needs. In addition, they want their pastor to solve the issues that arise in their community. Theological institutions need to teach everything that relates to the whole person or being. BTE attempts this end but needs further development.

Lay pastors who are committed to leading their churches need to understand that people want someone who can guide them in a proper way. Particularly people of the lower strata call for someone who will always be willing to guide them for betterment;

therefore, they need to be educated and prepared for the challenges ahead. A genuine faith and positive human spirit alone cannot carry the church through the future it is facing. Theological integrity, biblical understanding, and ministerial capacity would take the church into the future. None of these characteristics is new, and I do not think they are going away any time soon.

I am hopeful about a very demanding future for the church in India, particularly in Vijayawada. As far as the Indian situation is concerned, I believe that only the Christian message can compel and hold the secular, religiously plural culture. The world needs the sensitivities, values, and commitments that grow from thoughtful and faithful Christian practices. I think that new expressions of congregational vitality are emerging and that the BTE can make a difference for the future. Lay pastors who are part of this BTE will make a difference and bring glory to God.

My Ministry Intervention

The BTE program making an impact in the lives of the lay pastors has not only placed joy in my heart but has left a great lesson in my own growth and understanding. The very important fact is that the pastors of different churches should come together to learn from one another, which has been a long dream in my ministry. The BTE program fulfilled this dream as it brought about thirty-five lay pastors together for about one hundred days to learn basic theology that helps their ministry grow better.

Being a teacher in the seminary for the past twelve years, I have had the burden of helping the lay pastors to be educated as they were not encouraged for theological training. Sensing this need of the hour and as the Lord placed this burden in me, I began to work on this project. Not finding a real place and time to put everything in writing, I

was struggling within myself. The Beeson program came available to me and made this project possible to provide a small effort in helping lay pastors. This entire endeavor began with fear and trembling, and project became realized when thirty-five lay pastors were involved and finished their program with the BTE.

The growth of the curriculum began out of my experience at the Beeson program, though I had the basic idea in mind for several years. It finally came out in the form of five subjects that covers most of the basic theology in a short period. These five subjects have their own history of their evolution. Methods of Bible study is the course designed for the personal growth of the lay pastor. This course was developed in line with the *lectio divina*.

Communicating biblical messages is the course that gives more importance to preparing and communicating the messages from God's Word. The ten categories that help lay pastors preach an effective sermon are the outcomes of the reading on preaching. Much importance is given towards the interpretation of the Word, as I have seen many pastors and lay pastors interpret the Word according to their convenience. Personally these ten categories helped improve my preaching. Survey of Bible doctrines is an essential course as it helps look at the outlines of all major doctrines. The personal spiritual formation course helps towards the formation of character and helps lay pastors walk into spiritual maturity, which is very essential as they lead churches. Church administration and ministry is the last course that talks about accountability. All these courses have personally helped me in my spiritual journey.

The whole inspiration behind this project was a word from the Scriptures that "equip the saints" (Eph. 4:12). Equipping the saints is the major task that the Lord has

given me. Keeping this command in mind and sensing the need, God enabled me to think on this kind of theological education that reaches lay pastors at the local levels. BTE has played a significant role in my personal ministry and has helped me grow to be a better preacher, communicator, teacher, and, above all, servant of the Lord.

APPENDIX A

Description of Ten Categories of Preaching Evaluation and Guide to the Evaluation Committee to Assess the Effectiveness of the Preaching of the Lay Pastors

Name of the Lay Pastor:

Date:

Given Scripture:

Time:

Title of the Sermon:

Form of Sermon:

This instrument evaluates the effectiveness of preaching of the randomly selected lay pastors before and after the preaching module of the BTE. Below are listed the ten categories identified as suitable to the Indian context for effective biblical preaching. The evaluation and comments are based on the ten categories and observation of the sermon preached.

Description:

Biblically oriented: The message demonstrates that it is biblically oriented, its authority and evidence lies in the Scripture and it is explained with the original context.

Culturally relevant: The interpretation of the passage seeks to be culturally relevant in order to connect with the hearers.

Socially relational: The message connects people irrespective of their differences in any forms. Further it proclaims love and peace within the society leading towards spiritual maturity.

Contextual issues: The message addresses the burning issues like caste, child labor, women discrimination, poverty, etc, and relates to bring solution to the issues.

Relevant illustrations: The sermon builds interest of the hearers, helps make the sermon clear and draws them for active listening and provides relief from the intense listening.

Christ and Spirit empowered: The sermon preached has a sense that it is from the Lord and with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The preacher seems to be dependent on the power of the Triune God for the delivery of the Word.

Missiological basics: The message preached stimulates the hearers for an action of getting out to carry out the plan of God and fulfill the Great Commission.

Personally internalized: The preacher communicates the message with a sense of commitment, and modesty. The clarity and passion are seen in the delivery of the sermon.

Systematic presentation: The preacher makes appropriate gestures and shows proper behavior during the delivery of the sermon. His personality helps the listeners to accept the message.

Clear inference: The message leads people towards a clear conclusion and calls the attention for positive application of the Scriptures in their daily lives.

APPENDIX B

Preaching Evaluation Form

The evaluation of effective preaching is based on the following 5-point scale

1-Not evident 2-Unclear 3-Undecided 4-Clear 5-Very Clear

Ten qualities

Evaluation

Remarks

1. Biblically oriented	1	2	3	4	5
2. Culturally relevant	1	2	3	4	5
3. Socially relational	1	2	3	4	5
4. Contextual issues	1	2	3	4	5
5. Relevant illustrations	1	2	3	4	5
6. Christ and Spirit centered	1	2	3	4	5
7. Missiological basics	1	2	3	4	5
8. Personally internalized	1	2	3	4	5
9. Systematic presentation	1	2	3	4	5
10. Clear inference	1	2	3	4	5

Overall evaluation and comments:

APPENDIX C**Questionnaire of Demography**

An instrument of demography of the lay pastors and instrument of BTE evaluation.

1. Name:

2. Sex: Male ☐

Female ☐

3. Age group: 21-30

31-40 ☐

41-50 ☐

51-60 ☐

61-70 ☐

4. Address:

5. Qualification:

High School ☐

Graduate ☐

Any other _____

6. Marital Status:

Unmarried ☐

Married ☐

Widowed ☐

7. Please tick the correct answer regarding your religious background

(a) Both the parents are Christian ☐

(b) One parent is converted Christian ☐

(c) Both parents are non-Christian ☐

(d) One parent is a non-Christian ☐

8. The length of service in your church

(a) 1 – 5 years ☐

☐

(b) 6 – 10 years

(c) 11 – 15 years ☐

(d) 15 – 20 years ☐

(e) More than 20 years ☐

9. In your opinion, the primary ministry of the church is

(a) The ministry to all members ☐

(b) The ministry to the elected / selected members ☐

(c) The ministry to only clergy ☐

(d) The ministry to the born-again ☐

10. Does your church take a holistic approach in ministry?

(a) Yes ☐

(b) No ☐

If yes, in which areas? (tick all that apply)

(a) Preaching ☐ (b) Teaching ☐ (c) Conducting Bible Studies ☐

(d) Conducting prayer meeting ☐ (e) Outreach ministries ☐

(f) Conducting Worship Services

☐

(g) Assisting Communion

☐

(h) Any other (Please Specify)

11. How long do you spend time in your personal devotion? _____

12. In your opinion what motivates for your spiritual formation? _____

13. Name the type of sermons that you preach.

14. How long do you prepare your sermon

(a) One day

☐

(b) Two days

☐

(c) Three days

☐

(d) More than three days

☐

15. Do you follow any methods in preparing your sermons?

Yes

☐

No

☐

If yes specify _____

16. Do you think that BTE would activate your involvement in the mission and ministry
of the church?

(a) Yes

☐

(b) No

☐

If yes, in what ways? (Please write in your own words)

17. Why do you think BTE is necessary for?

- (a) To understand the Bible ☐
- (b) To have right faith ☐
- (c) To preach the Word of God ☐
- (d) To be helpful to the pastor ☐
- (e) To actively participate in church activities ☐

18. Do you think that BTE should also have social awareness training in its strategy?

- (a) Yes ☐
- (b) No ☐

If yes, what are some of the issues that you would like to have in BTE program?

(Tick all that are applicable).

- (a) Casteism ☐
- (b) Gender inequality issues ☐
- (c) Ecological Issues ☐
- (d) Globalization ☐
- (e) Child Labour ☐
- (f) Poverty ☐
- (g) Problems of the Aged ☐
- (h) Political Issues ☐
- (i) Any other (Please Specify) _____

19. How far the BTE has helped your local church?

(a) More effective

☐

(b) Effective

☐

(c) Satisfactory

☐

(d) Not Satisfactory

☐

20. General comments for BTE: (If any)

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

APPENDIX D

Semi-Structured, Open-Ended Interview Questions

These questions were asked of the leading lay pastors to find two very important aspects, first to know the depth of their understanding of BTE and second to understand the issues of the society that the church is facing, such as casteism, child labor, poverty, and women's discrimination.

Questions:

What is your understanding of BTE?

How far in your opinion is the BTE required for the ongoing ministry in the pluralistic Indian context?

What are the reasons for wrong interpretations of the Scripture and the agitation of the people of other faiths towards Christians?

In your opinion what are some of the social issues that your church is tackling? Describe them and how they hinder your ministry?

Should the church address these issues and find ways to overcome them? If so, what ways do you suggest?

Please describe your own journal of moral and spiritual formation.

Please describe your sermon preparation, the tools that you use, and your style of delivery?

What are the steps that you take to make your sermon more relevant to the context?

What are the challenges that you face after the delivery of the sermon?

What are the ways that you thought to make your preaching better?

APPENDIX E

Description of the Curriculum of the Five Subjects

The following is the translation of description of the course outline of the five subjects that were taught for the lay pastors in BTE program.

METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY

Course Outline

I. Introduction

II. Procedure for systematic Bible Study

- a. Getting started
- b. A clear focus
- c. Inductive reading

III. Different Methods of Bible Study

- a. The chapter summary method
- b. The devotional Method
- c. The thematic Method

IV. A Suggested Plan for Systematic Bible Study – Lectio Divina

- a. *Lectio*–Reading and listening
- b. *Meditatio*–Meditation
- c. *Oratio*–Prayer
- d. *Contemplatio*–Contemplation

V. Bible study for plan of Salvation

**TELUGU VERSION OF THE COURSE OUTLINE FOR THE SUBJECT
MEHODS OF BIBLE STUDY**

బైబిల్ అధ్యయన పద్ధతులు

- 1 పరిచయము
- 2 క్రమ బద్ధమైన బైబిల్ అధ్యయన విధానము
 - i) ప్రారంభపు సిద్ధపాటు
 - ii) స్పష్టమైన కేంద్రీకరణ
 - iii) సామూహిక పఠనము
- 3 వివిధ రకములైన బైబిల్ అధ్యయన పద్ధతులు
 - i) అధ్యాయపు సంగ్రహ పద్ధతి
 - ii) భక్తి విధాన పద్ధతి
 - iii) అంశపూర్వపు పద్ధతి
- 4 క్రమబద్ధమైన బైబిల్ అధ్యాయానికి ఒక యోగ్య ప్రణాళిక - లెక్టియో డివైన్
 - i) లెక్టియో - చదువుట మరియు వినుట
 - ii) మెడిటేటియో - ధ్యానించుట
 - iii) ఒరేటియో - ప్రార్థన
 - iv) కంటెంట్టేటియో - సమగ్ర అధ్యయనం
 - v) రక్షణ ప్రణాళిక కొరకైన బైబిల్ అధ్యయనం

COMMUNICATING BIBLICAL MESSAGES

Course outline

I. Introduction

- What is Preaching?
- Role of the Preacher

II. Kinds of Sermons

- Expository Sermon
- Topical Sermon
- Biographical Sermon
- Exegetical Sermon
- Narrative Sermon

III. Preparation of Biblical Messages

- Listening to God's voice
- Determining the subject
- Selection of the passages
- Formulating a proposition
- Developing the idea based on Scripture
- Preparing introduction and conclusion

IV. Incorporating Ten Important Categories

1. Biblically oriented
2. Culturally relevant
3. Socially relational (or harmonic)
4. Contextual issues
5. Relevant illustrations
6. Christ and Spirit centered
7. Missiological basics
8. Personally internalized
9. Systematic presentation
10. Clear inference

V. Delivering the Messages

**TELUGU VERSION OF THE COURSE OUTLINE FOR THE SUBJECT
COMMUNICATING BIBLICAL MESSAGES**

బైబిల్ సందేశములను ప్రసంగించుట

- 1 పరిచయము
 - i) ప్రసంగము అనగానేమి?
 - ii) ప్రసంగికుని బాధ్యత
- 2 ప్రసంగములలోని రకములు
 - i) పాఠ్యభాగ సంబంధ ప్రసంగము
 - ii) అంశ ప్రధాన ప్రసంగము
 - iii) జీవిత చరిత్ర ప్రసంగము
 - iv) వివరణాత్మక ప్రసంగము
 - v) ఉపమాన రీతి ప్రసంగము
- 3 బైబిల్ సందేశముల సిద్ధపాటు
 - i) దేవుని యొద్దనుండి వినుట
 - ii) ముఖ్యాంశాన్ని నిర్ణయించుట
 - iii) బైబిల్ భాగము ఎన్నుకొనుట
 - iv) విషయాన్ని సంక్షిప్తీకరించుట
 - v) ఆలోచనలను వాక్యమునకు అన్వయించుకొనుట
 - vi) పేరిక ముగింపును సిద్ధపరచుట
- 4 ప్రాముఖ్యమైన పది అంశాల ప్రసంగం
 - i) బైబిల్ సంబంధమైన
 - ii) సామాజిక సంబంధమైన
 - iii) సాంఘిక సంబంధమైన
 - iv) ప్రస్తుతవిషయ సంబంధమైన
 - v) సమభావ ఉపమానములు
 - vi) క్రీస్తు మరియు ఆత్మ కేంద్రకమైన
 - vii) సేవాభావ పునాదియైన
 - viii) వ్యక్తిగతముగా ప్రభావితమైన
 - ix) క్రమ వివరణయైన
 - x) స్పష్టమైన గ్రహింపు
- 5 దేవుని వాక్యమును అందించుట

SURVEY OF BIBLE DOCTRINES

Course Outline

I. Introduction

a. Nature of Theology

- Definitions

b. Kinds of Theology

- Systematic
- Biblical
- Historical

II. Ten Major Bible Doctrines

- a. Theology–Study of God
- b. Christology–Study of Christ
- c. Pneumatology–Study of Holy Spirit
- d. Bibliology–Study of the Bible
- e. Anthropology–Study of Man
- f. Angelology–Study of Angels
- g. Soteriology–Study of Salvation
- h. Hamartiology–Study of Sin
- i. Ecclesiology–Study of the Church
- j. Eschatology–Study of Future Things

III. Five fundamentals of Christian Faith

- a. Saved by Faith, not by works
- b. The Bible is the Truth
- c. The Trinity
- d. The Humanity and Divinity of Jesus Christ
- e. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

TELUGU VERSION OF THE COURSE OUTLINE FOR THE SUBJECT
SURVEY OF BIBLE DOCTRINES

బైబిల్ సిద్ధాంత అవలాకనము

1 పరిచయము

- i) దైవశాస్త్ర స్వభావములు
 - (a) నిర్వచనములు
- ii) దైవశాస్త్రము యొక్క విభాగములు
 - (a) క్రమబద్ధమైన
 - (b) బైబిల్ సంబంధమైన
 - (c) చరిత్రాత్మకమైన

2 పది ప్రధాన సిద్ధాంతములు

- i) దైవశాస్త్రము - దేవునిగూర్చిన చదువు
- ii) క్రీస్తుశాస్త్రము - క్రీస్తును గూర్చిన చదువు
- iii) పరిశుద్ధాత్మ శాస్త్రము - పరిశుద్ధాత్మును గూర్చిన చదువు
- iv) బైబిల్ శాస్త్రము - బైబిలును గూర్చిన చదువు
- v) మానవ శాస్త్రము - మానవుని గూర్చిన చదువు
- vi) దూతల శాస్త్రము - దూతలను గూర్చిన చదువు
- vii) రక్షణ శాస్త్రము - రక్షణ గూర్చిన చదువు
- viii) పాప శాస్త్రము - పాపమును గూర్చిన చదువు
- ix) సంఘ శాస్త్రము - సంఘమును గూర్చిన చదువు
- x) భవిష్య శాస్త్రము - భవిష్యత్తును గూర్చిన చదువు

3 క్రైస్తవ విశ్వాసమునకు ఐదు మూలాంశములు

- i) రక్షణ విశ్వాసముద్వారానే, క్రియలచేతకాదు
- ii) బైబిల్ సత్యమైయున్నది
- iii) త్రిత్వము
- iv) యేసుక్రీస్తు యొక్క మానవత్వము మరియు దైవత్వము
- v) యేసుక్రీస్తు రెండవ రాకడ

Course Outline

I. Introduction

1. What is personal formation?
2. What is spiritual formation?
3. Incorporation of personal and spiritual formation

II. Principles of Personal and Spiritual formation

- a) Definition and nature
- b) False concepts of Personal and Spiritual life
- c) Relationship to salvation
- d) Results of salvation
- e) Role of the Holy Spirit
- f) Real goal of Personal and Spiritual formation

III. Practice of Personal and Spiritual formation

- a) Rudiments of practice
 - *Lectio Divina*
 - Daily journal
- b) Responsibility to God
- c) Requirements for growth
 - Know the truth
 - Admit the truth by faith
 - Surrender
 - Follow the truth in God's power
- d) Responding daily to
 - God the Father
 - The Holy Spirit
 - Jesus Christ
 - The Word of God
 - Family
 - Church and community

**TELUGU VERSION OF THE COURSE OUTLINE FOR THE SUBJECT
PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

వ్యక్తిగత మరియు ఆత్మీయజీవిత నిర్మాణం

- 1 పరిచయము
 - i) వ్యక్తిత్వ నిర్మాణము అనగానేమి?
 - ii) ఆత్మీయ నిర్మాణము అనగానేమి?
 - iii) వ్యక్తిగత మరియు ఆత్మీయ నిర్మాణము యొక్క ఐక్యత
- 2 వ్యక్తిత్వ మరియు ఆత్మీయ నిర్మాణ నియమాలు
 - i) నిర్వచనము మరియు విధానము
 - ii) వ్యక్తిత్వ మరియు ఆత్మీయ నిర్మాణము గూర్చిన తప్పుడు అభిప్రాయాలు
 - iii) రక్షణ సంబంధమైన
 - iv) రక్షణ ప్రతిఫలములు
 - v) పరిశుద్ధాత్ముని పని
 - vi) వ్యక్తిగత మరియు ఆత్మీయ జీవిత ముఖ్య ఉద్దేశ
- 3 వ్యక్తిగత మరియు ఆత్మీయ జీవిత నిర్మాణపు సాధన
 - i) అతిప్రాముఖ్యమైన సాధన
 - (a) లెక్టియో డివైన్
 - (b) అనుదిన ప్రకటన
 - ii) దేవునికి లెక్క అప్పగించుట
 - iii) అభివృద్ధి కారకాలు
 - (a) సత్యమును ఎరుగుట
 - (b) విశ్వాసముతో సత్యమును అంగీకరించుట
 - (c) సమర్పణ
 - (d) దేవుని శక్తితో సత్యమును వెంబడించుట
 - iv) ప్రతిదిన భాధ్యతగా
 - (a) తండ్రయైన దేవుడు
 - (b) పరిశుద్ధాత్మ
 - (c) యేసుక్రీస్తు
 - (d) దేవుని వాఖ్యము
 - (e) కుటుంబము
 - (f) దేవాలయం మరియు సమాజము

CHURCH ADMINISTRATION AND MINISTRY

Course Outline

I. Introduction

Definitions of administration and ministry

II. Church Administration

- a. Church as the Body of Christ
- b. Church as the community of people
- c. Church as a structural institution
 - Organizational culture
 - Church committee
 - Decision making
 - Planning and leading
 - Delegation and team building
 - Accountability and transparency

III. Church Ministry

- a. Church as the Spiritual organism
- b. Church as the edification organization
- c. Church as the centre of Ministry
 - The values of ministry
 - The vision of ministry
 - The mission of ministry
 - The strategy of ministry

TELUGU VERSION OF THE COURSE OUTLINE FOR THE SUBJECT
CHURCH ADMINISTRATION AND MINISTRY

సంఘ పరిచర్య మరియు పరిపాలన

- 1 పరిచయము
 - i) సంఘ పరిచర్య, పరిపాలన నిర్వచనము
- 2 సంఘ పరిపాలన
 - i) సంఘము క్రీస్తుయొక్క శరీరము
 - ii) సంఘము ప్రజల సమాజము
 - iii) సంఘము ఒక నిర్మాణాత్మక పాఠశాల
 - (a) నిర్వహణ విధానము
 - (b) సంఘ సభ
 - (c) నిర్ణయ సభ
 - (d) ప్రణాళిక మరియు నడిపింపు
 - (e) సభ్యులు మరియు సమూహిక కట్టడ
 - (f) బాధ్యతాయుత మరియు వివరణాత్మకం
- 3 సంఘ పరిచర్య
 - i) సంఘము ఒక ఆత్మీయ సాధనము
 - ii) సంఘము ఒక సిద్ధపరచు సంస్థ
 - iii) సంఘము ఒక పరిచర్యకేంద్రము
 - (a) పరిచర్య యొక్క విలువలు
 - (b) పరిచర్య యొక్క దర్శనము
 - (c) పరిచర్య యొక్క పని
 - (d) పరిచర్య యొక్క పద్ధతి

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