

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Preach the Word: Moving Toward an Expository Preaching Model for Minnesota**

#### **Assemblies of God Pastors**

by

John A. Hubert

The Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God has many pastors who favor topical preaching over expository preaching. This pattern exists despite the expository preaching methods taught at Assemblies of God training institutions and the encouragement of national Assemblies of God leaders. Why the disparity exists was the focus of this research study.

The literature review of this study examined the biblical and historical/theological arguments for expository preaching and also examined arguments for expository preaching, topical preaching, and unique Pentecostal aspects which affect Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors. Lead pastors throughout the state of Minnesota were surveyed and interviewed to identify reasons for the topical preaching style of the state.

Findings from the study included pastors arguing for topical preaching over expository preaching as they thought topical preaching was more conducive to meeting the needs of the church and to cause church growth. However, there was also much admiration for expository preaching styles, which seemed to contradict the chosen topical preaching style. The project concluded that changes can be made to help pastors see the benefits of expository preaching and feel equipped to preach in an expository style.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

**PREACH THE WORD:**

**MOVING TOWARD AN EXPOSITORY PREACHING MODEL FOR  
MINNESOTA ASSEMBLIES OF GOD PASTORS**

presented by

John A. Hubert

has been accepted towards fulfillment

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Dissertation Coach

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Date

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Director, Doctor of Ministry Program

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Date

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Dean of the Beeson Center

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Date

PREACH THE WORD  
MOVING TOWARD AN EXPOSITORY PREACHING MODEL  
FOR MINNESOTA ASSEMBLIES OF GOD PASTORS

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Asbury Theological Seminary

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

by

John A. Hubert

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Overview of the Chapter**

In this chapter, I establish the foundation for the challenge of expository preaching in the Assemblies of God of Minnesota. I begin by relaying my history with the Assemblies of God, how I have seen preaching portrayed in a variety of circumstances, and my personal homiletical philosophy and strategy as an Assemblies of God pastor. From this background, I state the problem of the Minnesota Assemblies of God as a primarily topical preaching movement, which does not always insure that pastors are presenting the Bible as the main topic.

With this foundation laid down, I then summarize my purpose for this project, which is to research present preaching methods in the Minnesota Assemblies of God and propose ideas to increase the use of expository preaching. In addition, I propose my three research questions, which will guide and focus the research project, and I state my rationale for my project by presenting a brief summary of the state of preaching in the Minnesota Assemblies of God. Next, I define the key terms used in this project and the delimitations for the research as well as present a summary of the relevant literature and research methodology that was used to focus my research and insure valid findings and conclusions. Lastly, this chapter defines the research type, participants, data collection methods, data analysis, and generalizability, which was used in the research study.

### **Personal Introduction**

I am third generation Assemblies of God. My grandmother attended North Central Bible Institute (an Assemblies of God college that is now North Central University) in 1931 and came home to be one of the founding members of the Assemblies of God church in which I grew up. My mother and father were and are dedicated leaders in the local church, serving in almost every ministry and making sure I was at church every time it was open. Our family even once braved a snowstorm to make it to church only to find out the pastor had canceled the service because of the bad weather. I was saved, baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit in either our local church or our Bible camp. I have been discipled in Assemblies of God chartered children's and youth groups and Assemblies of God family, kids, and youth camps throughout my whole life. I have heard many local pastors and traveling evangelists at my local church and national speakers during my camp and youth convention experiences. I graduated from our Assemblies of God pastor training college at North Central University and heard chapel speakers every day that I was there. I performed many duties at Assemblies of God churches during my time at North Central and Bethel Seminary. I taught history and theology at North Central University, worked as a teacher at Teen Challenge, served as a lead pastor for the last fifteen years, and was elected for five years as the presbyter of the Northwest Section of the Minnesota Assemblies of God, which involves setting policy for the Minnesota Assemblies and interviewing new candidates for licensing and ordination. I have deep roots in the Assemblies and have seen it from a variety of levels.

During our license and ordination service every year, we hand new Bibles to each ordination candidate with the charge to "preach the word," and we insist that this is at the

core of who we are as a movement. However, much of the preaching that is promoted in our denomination does not rely on the Bible as the core of the message. The Bible is mentioned and even read at times, but the sermons, as a rule, do not rely on in-depth study of a particular passage or group of passages for the basis or structure of the sermon. The true measure of our sermons seems to be based on powerful storytelling, humorous illustrations, and throwing in the points that cause people to respond with an “amen,” instead of whether the message comes from the biblical text.

An instance in my college years helped me understand this issue in the Assemblies. First, I was taught in my homiletics classes at North Central to preach in an expository or textual manner with careful exegesis of the text. Even when we were taught the topical method of preaching, it was imparted to us that we needed to make sure that we examined the passages we refer to and not just use Bible verses as proof texts for our sermons. One of our assignments during my homiletic class was to go to local churches and outline and examine the pastors’ messages and compare them to what we had learned in class. There was an incredible disconnect between what I was taught and what I heard in the local churches. Furthermore, I did this same assignment for speakers in our daily chapels, who were held up to us as leaders in the Assemblies of God and found the same disconnect. The one story that stuck with me the most was learning in my homiletics class right before chapel that allegorizing in sermons was not good biblical preaching and did not reflect the true meaning of the text. During the chapel that followed this class, we had a speaker who was considered one of the best youth pastors and leaders in the Assemblies of God. She presented an allegorical sermon about the



“meaning” of an Old Testament character’s clothing and how it pertained to us. I became more conflicted about our denomination and what we stood for.

I have strived to make sure that my sermons are based on scripture and continued my education beyond the required levels to make sure that I am preaching to the power and truth of the Bible. I know that there are others within the Assemblies of God who feel as strongly as I about this, but the trend of the sermons that I am hearing within our churches, conferences, and camps is still to use the Bible as a secondary source for our preaching. I am impassioned to study why our movement, in spite of the great things God has accomplished through it, struggles to “preach the word” and not our message with the word added on.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Assemblies of God has typically had a much greater number of topical rather than expository preaching. The topical preaching method has not necessarily produced good biblical and theological literacy, but it seems to be preferred by many pastors and congregations. However, the Minnesota Assemblies of God denomination prides itself on being “preachers of the word,” but, in my experience, many Assemblies of God pastors preach in a way that does not base the main focus of the sermon on the Bible. I have consulted with the preaching professors and read the syllabi of our two main pastoral training institutions for Minnesota, North Central University in Minneapolis, MN and Trinity Bible College in Ellendale, ND. Both schools train pastors to preach in an expository fashion (Flippo, *Homiletics II Syllabus*; Flippo, *Homiletics I Syllabus*; Wadholm Jr., *Advanced Preaching Syllabus*; Wadholm Jr., *Principles of Preaching Syllabus*). However, the preaching method in our churches remains more topical.

Furthermore, more and more pastors are forgoing college training for ministry and pursuing less academically rigorous paths to obtain credentials and positions within Assemblies of God churches. While topical preaching has some value and can be effective in communication, it has not always produced sermons that are biblical based or biblically accurate. Sermons are judged in the pew as quality if they use quality communication skills, have humorous illustration, and reinforce central Pentecostal doctrines. The danger of shallow or false doctrine and the danger of personality or technique over biblical accuracy is a problem in the Assemblies of God because of our lack of exegetical preachers.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this research was to explore current patterns of preaching with pastors in the Minnesota District Assemblies of God in order to make recommendations for an expository preaching model that works in the distinctive Assemblies of God context.

### **Research Questions**

To find the patterns of expository preaching which are used in the Minnesota Assemblies of God and to propose how its use can be increased, the research was guided by the following three questions:

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

What historical, theological, and practical factors are contributing to the present topical method of preaching in the Minnesota Assemblies of God?

## **Research Question #2**

What are Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors being taught about preaching in our formal and informal training institutions?

## **Research Question #3**

What disparities exist between training, modeling and the current preaching practices of Minnesota Assemblies of God preachers?

## **Rationale for the Project**

The first reason this study is important is that Assemblies of God pastors have a disconnect in preaching method between how they were taught and how they preach in their churches. As I stated earlier, the predominate preaching method taught in the four-year colleges and correspondence courses is expository preaching. In my experience, the most frequent method of preaching in a typical Minnesota Assemblies of God Sunday morning or camp service is topical. There are some pastors in the Assemblies of God in Minnesota who preach expositively, but they are in the minority. This research project will explore the disconnect between the training of pastors and the actual practice of pastors in the Minnesota Assemblies of God.

The second reason this study is important is to promote a more Bible centered approach to preaching. If our state denomination is to grow spiritually as well as numerically, we must find a way to emphasize the power of the Bible over the power of the words and talents of men and women alone. If we truly believe that the Bible is able to bring men and women to salvation (2 Timothy 3:15, ESV), then it must be the foundation of what we preach when we present the gospel message. Likewise, if we believe that the words of Scripture originate from God himself and the Bible is inspired

by God (2 Timothy 3:16), preaching from any other source does not carry the authority of the inspiration of God, weakens the pastor's appeal, and opens up the pastor to biblical error. In addition, as the apostle Paul argues, the power of the sermon derives from the power of the message of Scripture instead of the rhetorical skills of the presenter (2 Corinthians 2:1-5). Jesus, himself, quoted the Bible and stated, "it is written" as his authoritative response when he was confronted by Satan in the wilderness. Lastly, we must acknowledge that the Bible was chosen and inspired by God to accomplish "teaching, reproof, correction, and training for righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16), it would be irresponsible to not use the Bible in our preaching when we are striving to disciple and train believers.

A third reason this study is important is to help struggling pastors in the Minnesota Assemblies of God. As a leader in our state denomination, I have found many pastors struggling to preach because they feel like they have to make up their own material, add Bible verses to prove their points, and become a master communicator because they see this as the model of preaching promoted within the Minnesota Assemblies of God. There is constant pressure to come up with the technology and creative ideas to keep up with preaching trends. In the 250 plus churches in Minnesota Assemblies of God, most churches are single pastor churches. Many pastors are bi-vocational and have limited time for sermon preparation. He or she needs to learn methods to let the Bible be the main focus of his or her teaching and not feel he or she has to match the speaking method of a famous preacher. The limited time for sermon preparation should be spent on studying the truths of scripture and writing sermons to convey these eternal and powerful truths. Creativity, speaking talent, and technology

could be added to this sermon to help in the communication, but the pastor could know that his or her sermon has the power of Scripture behind it even if he or she does not have the budget, technology, or natural gifting to prepare a sermon he or she would like to prepare.

Furthermore, an expository approach to preaching shortens the time needed for preparation if a pastor follows a preaching series from a book of the Bible. The next sermon is the next section, and the flow of the sermons and the thought is the flow of the book of the Bible. This will save time and make for powerful preaching for pastors with limited time. This will then allow the busy pastor to have time to study homiletical methods that can help in sermon delivery.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Pericope:** The word pericope is derived from Greek and means section or the act of cutting. In expository preaching, the pericope pertains to the section of biblical text that is used for the sermon. The pericope must be long enough to encompass a stream of thought by the biblical author but short enough so the preacher can cover the pericope thoroughly in one sermon.

**Expository Preaching:** Expository preaching starts with the pericope and the pericope is the basis for all the points. The goal is to start with the biblical text and study the text to determine as well as possible the meaning of the original author to the original readers. After finding this meaning, the goal of the preacher is to transmit the truths of the passage to a contemporary audience in a manner, which stays true to the text, uses the personality of the preacher, and makes it relevant to the contemporary audience. All Scriptures used in the sermon need to be studied to make sure they are used in the way

the God-inspired authors of Scripture intended them. The expository sermon is not necessarily a preaching method and expository sermons can be about topics, in first person narrative and other preaching methods. Thus, expository preaching can be explained as a philosophy which guides the pastor to find and present the authorial intent of biblical text and apply it to the intended audience. The most common form of expository preaching is preaching through a book of the Bible, which allows the preacher to follow the thought of the author of the particular Bible book.

**Topical Preaching:** Topical preaching focuses on a topic, or a central idea, rather than a pericope. The preacher chooses a sermon topic based on his or her desire to preach on a subject or topic rather than coming from a pericope. Scripture texts are used in the preparation and delivery of the sermon to prove the topic or subject. The sermon may use Scripture and line up with biblical truth, but Scripture is not the starting point for the sermon. A danger of this method of preaching is that Scripture is used as a basis to support what the preacher wants to say rather than being used as the foundation to guide what the preacher says

**The Altar:** In the Assemblies of God, pastors refer to the altar as the central place where God does his work with people. Clarence St. John, Minnesota District Superintendent of the Assemblies of God, starts many addresses to pastors by stating, “we are people of the altar.” Many times, there is an altar call at the end of services, and people come to the front of the church, which is called the altar, and they pray and are prayed for by others. This is a given at camp meeting services and other statewide gatherings of pastors and/or laypeople. This is the place where people respond to salvation messages, calls for divine healing, and recommitments to Christ. Most pastors

in the Assemblies of God would identify that they were called into ministry during an altar time and were baptized in the Holy Spirit during an altar time, as well.

### **Delimitations**

This project focused on Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors and churches. The participants for this study were the primary preaching pastors at Minnesota Assemblies of God churches and congregants, district officials of the Minnesota Assemblies of God, and educators at our two primary training schools for Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors: North Central University in Minneapolis, MN and Trinity Bible College in Ellendale, ND. I chose pastors and churches that would be considered successful using a numerical growth parameter, which is the common measure of success in the Minnesota Assemblies of God.

To keep the subject pool for this study focused, pastors who are not primary preaching pastors for their churches are not included in the study nor are pastors who primarily speak to specialized groups such as youth pastors and children's pastors. It also did not cover pastors who have not been trained in an Assemblies of God endorsed school or correspondence system to make sure the study is not too broad and try to solve problems not controlled by the Assemblies of God. Furthermore, although my research showed that this issue spreads beyond Minnesota, the Minnesota Assemblies of God has over 250 churches with primary preaching pastors in almost all of them. This sample size allowed me to choose a sufficient pool of candidates for my study.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

The literature review for this project started with a definition and explanation of expository preaching. Definitions and arguments for expository preaching from scholars

Haddon Robinson, Bryan Chapell, and John Stott, as well as challenges to expository preaching from Andy Stanley and others are presented.

The biblical foundations section includes an analysis of how leaders of the Old and New Testaments used the Scriptures as their basis of authority in preaching and teaching. Old Testament priests were charged to teach the biblical text to the people of Israel (Leviticus 10:11, Deuteronomy 33:10, Malachi 2:6-7). They were not only to teach the Old Testament to the people of Israel, but they were called to expound, explain, and apply the text to people who were separated from the original authors of the text (2 Chronicles 17:7-9, Nehemiah 8:1-8).

In the Gospels, Jesus used the exposition and explanation of Old Testament Scriptures to answer his critics and teach truths to all who listened (Matthew 22) and showed that just quoting Scripture without the proper understanding and application of that Scripture was insufficient (Matthew 4:5-7). In Acts, Paul's preaching to synagogue of Thessalonica (Acts 17) is examined. Furthermore, Phillip, who was commissioned by the apostles, is examined for his explanation of the word of God while teaching the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-35). Finally, the Apostle Paul's instructions on preaching from the Pastoral Epistles (2 Timothy 4:1-5, Titus 1:9, 2:1) are presented and analyzed.

The theological foundations section starts with Justin Martyr's description of the role of preaching in the second century, moves to Chrysostom's careful exposition, and then extends to the Reformers, especially John Calvin who was considered an important figure in the development of modern expository preaching. The section continues with John Wesley's definition of biblical preaching and other key historical figures who argued for expository preaching. The section concludes with an analysis of the



theological issue of the authority and power of the Scriptures as the basis for preaching and how this view of Scripture lends itself to an expository preaching method.

In conjunction with research question one on the theology and history of the Assemblies of God, the literature review focuses on the history and theology of the Assemblies of God, beginning with the Azusa Street Revival in 1906. Pentecostal historians, theologians, and homiletic scholars provided background into the history of the Assemblies of God and the present state of Assemblies of God beliefs and practices.

Relating to research question two concerning the disconnect between the training of pastors in the Assemblies of God and the actual practice of Minnesota Assemblies of God preachers, several sources are investigated. The syllabi and preaching professors of Trinity Bible College and North Central University are referenced for their emphasis on expository preaching in their teaching and required reading. Furthermore, the General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God, George Wood, wrote articles on the benefits and advantages of expository preaching, which were analyzed, as well as works from other prominent Assemblies of God scholars and preachers who promote expository preaching. Various authors are consulted on the difficulties of combining Pentecostal practices and theology with expository preaching.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Type of Research**

This project was a mixed method, pre-intervention study, which researched the present preaching methods of Assemblies of God pastors in Minnesota and proposed ways to increase expository preaching. Both the quantitative method of a survey and the qualitative method of a semi-structured interview were used to collect data to insure

balanced and well-rounded research. Primary preaching pastors of Minnesota Assemblies of God were the subjects of all the research.

The research was done to find out what preaching methods Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors use and why they use these methods. The expository preaching method which was taught in almost all of the pastor training courses for Assemblies of God pastors was presented as the best form of preaching. Participants were asked to comment on why they used the methods that they did and why they either used or did not use the expository preaching method they were taught in their training. Suggestions for increasing expository preaching in the Minnesota Assemblies of God were developed from this research and the information from the literature review.

### **Participants**

My participants were the primary preaching pastors at Minnesota Assemblies of God churches. They were trained at Assemblies of God colleges or through the Assemblies of God correspondence school (Global University and Berean School of the Bible). Fifty-three lead pastors from the 191 lead pastors in the Minnesota Assemblies of God responded to the survey and ten pastors took part in the semi-structured interview. A random selection of pastors who had responded to the survey were interviewed in a semi-structured interview.

### **Instrumentation**

The Preaching Survey was used as a quantitative method, gathering data about preaching patterns and methods in the Minnesota Assemblies of God. The Preacher Interviews were used as a qualitative method to dig deeper into why Assemblies of God

pastors in Minnesota used the preaching methods they do and why they do or do not use expository methods.

The Preaching Survey was used to answer research questions number one and number two by identify preaching methods of pastors and also to identify how pastors were influenced by their pastoral training in expository preaching. The Preacher Interviews were used to answer research questions number one and two and also to help devise answers to research question three by digging deeper into why pastors chose the preaching methods they used and identifying barriers to expository preaching in the Minnesota Assemblies of God.

### **Data Collection**

Quantitative analysis in the Preaching Survey was done first to identify preaching patterns and general attitudes toward expository preaching and to furthermore identify what the participants remembered and applied from their training at Assemblies of God training institutions. The survey was designed by me and expertly reviewed by three reviewers. After reviewing the data from Preaching Survey, the qualitative analysis of the Preacher Interviews was performed to find the principal data and explore the underlying reasons for the issue at hand. The purposive sampling method was used to derive a set of pastors for the gathering of data and pastors were chosen from a pool of pastors who had at least five years preaching experience and were in numerically growing churches. An interview questionnaire was designed, and subsequent interviews were performed to show either a disconnection or a connection between preacher training methods and actual preaching practices in local churches. Furthermore, the interview

process was devised and performed to collect data on why preachers preach in their particular methods and why they do not preach in an expository method.

The interviews were performed in a semi-structured format and consisted of (insert number when known) questions. The interview questions were designed by me, and the interviews were administered by me either in person or by phone.

### **Data Analysis**

For this study, the expository preaching method was considered the best method of preaching for pastors who wish to preach biblically. The data from the Preaching Surveys and Preacher Interviews was compared against the expository standard of preaching, and the data was analyzed to show the disconnections and connections of the pastors' methods of preaching with the expository method. In addition, the methods of preaching of the surveyed/interviewed pastors and their rationale for them were analyzed for reasons why they thought their methods were better than expository methods in practical terms, such as time for preparation. The methods were also qualitatively analyzed against expository methods for effectiveness as well as biblical faithfulness.

The analysis of the Preaching Survey involved demonstrating patterns of preaching methods in the Minnesota Assemblies of God, identifying common attitudes towards expository preaching methods, and examining the connection between preaching training and practice. The analysis Preaching Survey led to the in-depth qualitative Preaching Interviews, which showed the feelings and intentions behind the preaching approaches of the pastors and why they did or did not line up with their training. It also analyzed the reasons why pastors preach the way they do.

**Generalizability**

This study was done in such a way to allow other researchers to reproduce the study within Assemblies of God districts within the United States who share a common core of beliefs and similar training methods for preachers. The purposive sampling method laid out in this project would require another researcher to have extensive training in expository preaching and other preaching methods plus a high level of knowledge of the pastors and churches in his or her district in order to pick and analyze a group of participants. The data collected by this study can be used by other Assemblies of God districts to learn about how expository preaching is not necessarily carried on by pastors after receiving training in our Assemblies of God schools and the general attitudes of Assemblies of God pastors toward expository preaching.

The preaching training methods of other denominations would differ from the Assemblies of God as would their denomination's history and theology. In addition, the cultural norms of this United States based survey would not necessarily translate to cultural norms of cultures outside of the United States. The basic formula of analyzing preaching methods from a chosen group of pastors is reproducible, but the research questions, questionnaire, and interview would require modification to match the different methods and history of another denomination and/or culture.

**Project Overview**

Chapter 2 of this study demonstrates the biblical and theological foundations of expository preaching as well as a historical review of literature on preaching to show the arguments for the expository method. Chapter 3 presents the research design, methods of research, and data analysis methodology. Chapter 4 shows the results of the research and

analysis of the collected data. Chapter 5 offers the interpretation of the research findings as well as observations and suggestions for improving sermon preparation and delivery practices.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter first shows the biblical foundations of expository preaching as the leaders of God's people are told to expound the God-breathed Scriptures and apply them to the lives of people. Second, it shows how, throughout church history, there has been a solid stream of scholars and pastors who followed and taught the principles of expository preaching. Third, the arguments for the reasons expository preaching best follows the biblical mandate to "preach the word" are presented, as well as arguments for topical preaching and how they are answered by expository preaching arguments. Fourth, this chapter demonstrates that the Assemblies of God teaches expository preaching in their preaching training courses and in their publications for preachers. Fifth, two factors, the uniqueness of Pentecostal preaching and the primary influence of mentors, show possible reasons for why many Minnesota District Assemblies of God preachers do not preach expositively like they are trained and encouraged to do.

#### **Definition of Expository Preaching**

Before examining the relevant literature to this project, it is important to reiterate the stated definition of expository preaching and emphasize that expository preaching is not a method that excludes new communication methods or styles that may work to relate to a twenty-first century world. Expository preaching starts with the periscope, and the periscope is the basis for all the points. The goal is to start with the biblical text and study the text to determine as well as possible the meaning of the original author to the original readers. After finding this meaning, the goal of the preacher is to transmit the truths of

the passage to a contemporary audience in a manner which stays true to the text, uses the personality of the preacher, and makes it relevant to the contemporary audience. All Scriptures used in the sermon need to be studied to make sure they are used in the way the God-inspired authors of Scripture intended them. The expository sermon is not necessarily a preaching method, and expository sermons can be about topics, in first person narrative, or use other preaching methods. Thus, expository preaching can be explained as a philosophy that guides the pastor to find and present the authorial intent of biblical text and apply it to the intended audience. The most common form of expository preaching is preaching through a book of the Bible, which allows the preacher to follow the thought of the author of the particular Bible book.

### **Biblical Foundations**

The expository preaching method is demonstrated and argued for throughout the entire Bible. Furthermore, the Bible itself argues for using the Bible as a tool for teaching and preaching (2 Timothy 3:15-17, 4:1-2). The following section will show the use of expository preaching in the Old and New Testaments and the biblical arguments for expository preaching.

#### **Old Testament**

One of the main functions of the Old Testament Levitical priesthood was to teach the biblical text to the people of Israel. According to Thompson, “the teaching duty of the cultic personnel is well known in the Old Testament” (Thompson 279). The Lord spoke directly to Aaron and instructed him that his role as priest was to “teach the people of Israel your law” (Leviticus 10:11). In Moses’ final blessing to the people of Israel, he instructs the Levites to “teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law” (Deuteronomy



33:10). C. J. H. Wright argues that as teachers of the law, the priests particularly represented God to the people. In addition, he states that the teaching function is mentioned before the sacrificial responsibilities in Moses' blessing in Deuteronomy 33:10 and is "the sole, almost proverbial, function" which defines them in Jeremiah 18:18 (Wright 134, 141-42).

In Malachi 2:6-7, the priests' role of teaching is laid out in verses 6-7 as they are rebuked by God for not fulfilling their role as teachers. Verse 6 begins with "true instruction" (*tôrat 'ěmet*) as the function of the priest within ancient Israel. According to Taylor and Clarendon, *tôrat* can be understood either as the substance of God's word to his people or the "process of teaching itself" (310). The context of Malachi 2:6 favors the process of teaching because "'Torah of truth' would be somewhat redundant" (310). However, the "truth" here refers to God's word to his people through his designated spokesperson, such as Moses (Taylor and Clarendon 310).

The word *'ěmet* refers to something that is true and stable and also reliable and faithful (Brown et al.). Taylor and Clarendon state that this definition coincides with the text because nothing in the world is more "reliable as the revealed truth of God's written word" (312). Knowledge of the Word of God and its truth allowed the priests to perform their function as teachers as well as judges and arbitrators of disputes. In addition, they conclude that the priests must teach from the truth that is the revelation of God through the Bible, and their "true instruction" is based on their faithfulness to the word of God in their teaching. Taylor and Clarendon concluded that the priests had the responsibility "to make sure Israel knew what God required of them – how they were to live as members of his covenant community and how to avoid defiling his dwelling among them" (Taylor

and Clarendon 312). The priesthood needed to make sure that they knew the truth of the Word of God and were able to take this truth, apply it to the situation of the people of Israel, and teach it to the people so that by their teaching work many would be “turned from iniquity” (vs. 6) and stay true to their covenant with God.

In verse 7, God lays out further the role of a priest and their responsibility to the people of Israel that they are to be “messengers of the Lord of hosts” and “guard knowledge” and that “people should seek instruction from his mouth.” The word for messenger, *mal’ak*, is translated angel in other passages (Genesis 19:1, 24:7, 48:16, 2 Samuel 24:16, and as a prophetic messenger in Isaiah 44:26). In line with an expositional preaching approach, Malachi teaches that the priests were not supposed to bring their own word to the church, but instead “were his messengers in that they informed his people of the words of his law previously revealed and also applied that law to their lives and situations” (Taylor and Clarendon 314). The priests were called to “guard” the “knowledge” of God’s revelation through Scripture and instruct the people on behalf of the “Lord of hosts” (Malachi 2:7).

There are two examples of the Levite priests teaching the Bible, and in particular the Book of the Law, to the people of Judah and, later, to the remnant who returned to Jerusalem after captivity. Both examples illustrate a function of the priests as those who read the biblical text, but then, similar to an expositional preaching method, they are charged to explain the text to the hearers who need help to understand the text.

The first example was during the reign of King Jehoshaphat, one of the few kings of Judah who sought to follow God’s ways. In 2 Chronicles 17:7-9, he endeavored to set up a teaching program throughout Judah. In his efforts to continue the mission begun by

his father, King Asa, to rid Judah of the foreign idol worship, Jehoshaphat commissioned Levites and officials to teach the “Book of the Law” to strengthen the faith of people of Israel. Keil and Delitzsh summarize it this way,

Mosaic law contains a number of merely civil precepts, as to which laymen learned in the law might impart instruction; and consequently the teaching probably consisted not merely in making the people acquainted with the contents of the law, but at the same time of direction and guidance in keeping the law, and generally in restoring and confirming the authority of the law among the people. (Keil and Delitzsh 627)

Thus, the group of priests and officials were to take the text of the law, which may or not have been well known, and apply it to specific needs of the people. They started with the authority of the law, which gave them authority in teaching, because their instruction was not based on themselves and their own skills, but the authority of the “Book of the Law,” which ultimately is the authority of God.

Second, and perhaps a clearer example of leaders and priests expounding on the teachings of the Old Testament, especially the Law of Moses, takes place in Nehemiah 8:1-8. Ezra, the scribe, read the “Book of The Law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel” (vs. 2). Marvin Breneman interprets this verse in the context of the Old Testament emphasis on God’s Word to be “known and used by all the people not only the priests and leaders” (225). The people in verse three are summarized as “the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.” This is interesting because as verses seven and eight show, the people did not necessarily understand what was read. They listened attentively to what was read because of their respect for the authority of the Book of the Law, but they still needed priests to help them understand and apply the Bible to them, which is a good example of expository preaching.

Two factors required give further explanation to help the people understand the Book of the Law, and Breneman summarizes these factors. First, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and because the people had lived in foreign lands during their lives, they most likely had lost their ability to understand the Hebrew language. Second, because of their foreign experiences, the people experienced a “cultural gap between the last seventy years in Babylonia with their cultural heritage as found in Scripture” (Breneman 226). If the people of Israel, who had only been gone a short while, needed explanation and understanding of the Old Testament, it is clear that people in this area who are separated by thousands of years and a western, rather than an eastern, worldview are in need of help by trained pastors who can study the context of the original Scripture and explain it to a contemporary audience.

Nehemiah 8:7-8 explains how the priests helped the people understand the Book of the Law. The Levites in verse seven helped the people to “understand the Law.” The root word for understand is *byn*, which means to “to cause to understand, here to instruct, by expounding the law” (Keil and Delitzsh 145). They presented the Scriptures and then went on to explain it to the people. Verse eight expands on the priests’ work of helping the people understand the law by explaining the law and “gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.” The priests again did not come up with new meanings for the Book of the Law, but they took the original text, which was written in the Hebrew language and a culture not readily understood by the people and applied it to the situation and culture of the people who had returned from captivity and were facing new situations and needs, which were not present at the writing of the text. This explains well the role of an expository preacher, whether in the time of Nehemiah or in a contemporary

situation. Breneman summarizes the priests' and contemporary preacher's teaching and preaching by stating "the exposition helps students of the Word understand the overall message and the implications of the text for doctrine and practice. Furthermore, although the message and content of Scripture does not change, it does need fresh application in every situation" (226).

### **New Testament**

We can also find the value of expository preaching through New Testament examples. However, most of the examples of preaching in the New Testament are done by Jesus and the apostles, who are not just expounding on the Old Testament, but their sermons and teachings were inspired by God to later become the New Testament. Jesus was himself the Word (John 1:1) and came to earth to bring God's truth to the world (John 1:9, 14). The original eleven disciples were witnesses of Jesus and his resurrection (Acts. 1:21-22), and they preached what they heard during their time with Jesus. Paul was "appointed" by Christ to be Christ's witness (Acts 22:14-15). Joseph Fitzmyer states that pastors today are different than the apostles in that we are in the "subapostolic age," when preachers must rely on the writings of the eyewitnesses and not express firsthand teachings (19–20). This study of the New Testament helps contemporary preachers find examples and principles that apply to pastors and teachers who were given the task of presenting the gospel message after the age of the apostles (Ephesians 2:20, 2 Timothy 4:2).

### **Gospels**

The Gospels present many examples of Jesus' teaching and preaching in a variety of circumstances and a variety of methods in which the authority of the Old Testament, or

new truths and explanations based on his own authority as the Son of God, were always the basis. Walter Kaiser states, “The foundation of Jesus’ teaching was the Old Testament” and concludes that nothing Jesus taught contradicted the teachings of the Old Testament (Kaiser Jr. 27–28).

Richard Mayhue identifies examples of Jesus’ preaching in an expository manner as “Jesus’ expounding of Isaiah 61:1-2 in the synagogue (Luke 4:16-22)” and his “thematic exposition of Himself to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:27, 32, 44-47)” (Mayhue 13). Present day pastors do not have this authority of Jesus, but pastors can follow the principle of Jesus is his pattern of using the Old Testament scriptures as authority for his teaching. Jesus quoted liberally from most of the books of the Old Testament in his ministry, and his use of the Old Testament astonished even the Jewish teachers (Matthew 22:33-34; Luke 2:47).

An illustrative example of Jesus’ teaching of the Old Testament is found in Matthew 22. The Pharisees and the Sadducees attempted to “entangle him (Jesus) in his words” (vs. 15). The Sadducees attempted to trip up Jesus on the resurrection by asking him about the situation after the resurrection and which brother would be married to a wife a group of brothers had widowed. Jesus questioned the Sadducees’ understanding of scripture and used scripture to answer the question by quoting and applying Exodus 3:6. The crowd gathered to hear the response was “astonished at his teaching” (vs. 33), and Jesus’ response “silenced the Sadducees” (vs 34).

The Pharisees then attempted to argue with Jesus and to “test him” (vs. 35) by asking Jesus which commandment was the greatest. Jesus did not answer just with his own authority, but instead quoted from the Pentateuch in stating from Deuteronomy 6:5

in vs. 37 “...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” and from Leviticus 19:18 in vs 39 “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” as the first and second greatest commandments. Thus, Jesus showed the teachers the truth of what he was saying and backed it up with the authority of Scripture.

Lastly, in the Matthew 22 sequence, the Pharisees again attempted to challenge Jesus, but Jesus challenged them by asking them “the Christ? Whose son is he?” (vs. 42). The Pharisees answered, “the son of David” (vs. 43), which is the agreed upon answer from the Old Testament. Jesus then challenged them at their point of understanding by asking those who have studied the Scriptures and claim to follow its teaching what their interpretation was of a text from the Scriptures. He quoted from Psalm 110:1, where David states, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet’”? (vs. 44) and asked the Pharisees the clear understanding of the verse “If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” (vs. 45). Jesus used the interpretation of the Scriptures to prove his point and to show his authority came from God himself. Due to this interchange between the Sadducees and Pharisees with Jesus, which built on the earlier interchanges and challenges, Matthew closes the chapter in verse 46 by stating “And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.” Craig Blomberg summarizes what Jesus did in properly expounding Psalm 110: “All the traps have failed, and Jesus’ listeners have in fact been trapped” (337). The power of Scripture expounded and applied was too much for the enemies of Jesus to handle, and it “astonished” the crowds (Matthew 22:33, 46).

Another principle of expository preaching, which can be learned from the ministry of Jesus, is that quoting a Scripture to prove or argue for a point is not necessarily proper use of the Bible. Many pastors have taken Bible verses out of context to prove his or her point, and the use of the Bible in the sermon makes the preacher and his audience believe that they are hearing the truth of the Bible. According to Haddon Robinson, “Inappropriate application can be as destructive as inept exegesis.” (H. W. Robinson 28). Robinson uses the example of Satan, recorded in Matthew 4:6, misusing Psalm 91:11-12 when he says, “it is written ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone,’” when he tempted Jesus to throw himself from the temple so the angels would rescue him. It was not that Satan misquoted the passage. On the contrary, Robinson concludes that Satan whispered Psalm 91:11-12 with “admirable precision” (28).

Jesus did not dispute Satan’s recitation of the verse. Instead, his response indicates that Satan was applying that verse to a situation to which it did not pertain. Jesus responded with the appropriate “it is written” and quoted Deuteronomy 6:16 in Matthew 4:7 when he stated, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Both passages are grammatically correct quotes from the Old Testament and represent the word of God. However, Satan’s use of Psalm 91 is taken out of context and applied improperly and became an invitation to sin instead of the proper application of an assurance of God’s care (Robinson 28). Proper understanding of a text in its context and application needs to take place for a preacher to properly teach and expound on the Bible. Without this proper understanding and application, a sermon with many Scriptures will



not necessarily be a Biblically sound sermon and may, in fact have the opposite meaning intended by the biblical author.

### **Acts**

The book of Acts describes the Holy Spirit empowered activities of the Apostles and Christian church as the Christian message is carried in the pattern related in Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” The known world received the message, and the book closes with the Gospel message going to the center of the Roman Empire at Rome by the Apostle Paul. This book is a source for many pastors’ sermons, and it gives pastors some vital truths in how to construct sermons, which are important in presenting the Gospel message. Again, it is important to note that the Apostles were empowered to preach and write what would become the New Testament and to interpret the Old Testament by divine inspiration, and it is important to distinguish patterns that are reproducible for contemporary preachers who are not apostles. According to Joseph Fitzmeyer, the book of Acts shows apostolic preachers like Paul, who received their commission to preach from their experience with the risen Christ and subapostolic preachers like Phillip and Steven, who preached with authority without the experience or status of apostleship. Both relied on the authority of the Bible in the Old Testament and the authority of the apostles’ teachings (Acts 2:42) as the basis for their preaching and exposition (19–31).

Acts 2:42-47 is presented by Luke as the ideal for the early church in Acts (Pohill 122). There are at least five different priorities of the church which are emphasized with verse 42 beginning with the fact that that the church “devoted themselves to the apostles’

teaching.” F.F Bruce expounds on the importance of the devotion to the apostles’ teaching by stating,

The apostolic teaching was authoritative because it was the teaching of the Lord communicated through the apostles. In due course this apostolic teaching took written shape in the NT scriptures. To this day the apostolic succession, on which many ecclesiologists lay such emphasis, is most readily recognizable in those Christian churches which continue steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching. (Bruce 79)

Even though what the apostles taught would become the New Testament, the teaching of Jesus was always the basis of their teaching, and this is what gave it authority in the church and the priority in the life of the church. In addition, the apostles’ teaching, like Jesus, expounded on the Old Testament, which was regarded as their Scriptures and authority (2 Timothy 3:16). Keener argues that the content of the “teaching (διδάχῃ) in Acts 2:42 and throughout the book of Acts was most likely Scripture exposition similar in form to the Midrashic teaching of the synagogues. Also, the verb for preaching and teaching (διδάσκω) used throughout the book of Acts indicates Scripture exposition and instruction” (Keener 1002). Likewise, the emphasis for current preachers should also be to base teaching and preaching on expounding on the authority of the apostles’ teaching (the New Testament), which was based on the teachings of Jesus, who based much of his preaching on the Old Testament. If this emphasis is maintained, modern preaching will have the apostolic authority that accomplished the goal of Acts 1:8 and helped the apostles receive the accusation that “they turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6).

### **Example of Phillip and the Ethiopian**

Richard Mayhue and Greg Scharf both identify the story of Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts as a clear example of expository preaching in the book of Acts (Acts 8:26-33) (Greg R Scharf 74) (Mayhue 13). The Ethiopian is reading Isaiah 53 and

is unable to understand what Isaiah is saying. He expresses his need when he answers Phillip's question "Do you know what you are reading?" (Acts 8:30) with "How can I, unless someone guides me?" (Acts 8:31). John Calvin argues that this passage of Isaiah would need exposition and a trained teacher to help someone like the Ethiopian who is far separated both from the Isaiah context and the fulfillment of the passage in Christ (Calvin and Beveridge 353).

Furthermore, this passage illustrates Phillip's expository teaching method when Acts 8:35 states, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and *beginning with this Scripture* [emphasis added] he told him the good news about Jesus." Phillip started with the Scripture and used it as the basis for his entire message to the Ethiopian, who was confused on the meaning of the Isaiah 53 passage he was reading. In addition, Phillip helped the Ethiopian understand the good news of Isaiah 53, though the Ethiopian was far removed from the context and language of Isaiah 53, and explained and applied the passage so well that the Ethiopian came to a saving knowledge of Jesus and asked to be baptized (Acts 8:38).

### **Paul in Thessalonica**

In Acts 17:2-3, Paul expounds on Scriptures in the synagogue for three Sabbath days. The result of Paul's preaching in Thessalonica was some Jews, devout Greeks, and leading women became followers of Christ, and they received a negative reaction from some Jews who formed a mob and forced Paul and Silas out of Thessalonica. Paul recounts his ministry in Thessalonica: "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the

word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Paul's ministry of the word that spanned three Sabbaths could be easily summarized. He reasoned with his listeners from the Scriptures (διέλιξατο αὐτοῖς ἀπο τῶν γραφῶν). His subject was the Messiah... Paul opened (διανοίγων) biblical texts and laid before them his case from those texts that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and rise from the dead (καὶ παρατιθέμενος διὰ τοῦ χριστοῦ ἔδει παθεῖν καὶ ἀναστῆναι ἐκ νεκρῶν). (Greg R Scharf 77)

According to Ben Witherington, the style of teaching that Paul was using was a dialogical method of presenting the Scriptures. The word that is used here for Paul's presentation “does not mean preach but refers rather to the presenting of arguments using Scripture as a basis or the engaging in dialogue and debate over the meaning of scriptural texts” (504–505). Although this may not be the traditional form of preaching that is used in contemporary methods of preaching, which usually is a monologue, Jeffrey Arthurs contends that this form of preaching fits into the general biblical portrayal of preaching as “a general term like biblical communication or speaking on behalf of God” (54). Thus, the example of Paul in Thessalonica shows another example of expository preaching by the apostles in the book of Acts.

### **Pauline and Petrine Epistles**

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul “gives thanks” (1 Thess.1:2) for what God had done in the lives of the Thessalonians who had earlier received the Gospel through the ministry of Paul. He reports what happened by stating,

<sup>9</sup> For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,<sup>10</sup> and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Thess. 1:9–10)

In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul argues that the preaching of the word of God and the word's effect on the people was a big part in accomplishing what was reported in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10. Paul states, "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (1 Thess. 2:13). John MacArthur explains that the term λόγος θεοῦ ("word of God") that is used in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 is used over forty times in the New Testament. MacArthur states that the term was "equated with the Old Testament (Mark 7:13), what Jesus preached (Luke 5:1), and was the message the apostles taught (Acts 4:31 and 6:2)" ("The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching" 27). Paul states that the "word of God" was the source of his preaching here in 1 Thessalonians and at other points in the New Testament.

MacArthur concludes that teachers today must follow the example of Christ and the apostles "so Scripture is also to be delivered by preachers today in such a way that they can say, 'Thus saith the Lord.' Their responsibility is to deliver it as it was originally given and intended" (The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching 27). Likewise, Scharf uses 1 Thessalonians 2:13 and argues it is important for a preacher to follow the author's original intent of the biblical text in both meaning of the text and the desired response the author is intending. When the preacher does this, Scharf concludes, "When preached as God's Word, the Bible goes to work in those who receive it as it is (1 Thess. 2:13)" (231). By preaching in an expository manner, a preacher presents the Bible with the author's intended meaning and allows the Bible to work in the lives of people.

This concept of the λόγος θεοῦ (“word of God”) continues into the book of 1 Peter, where Peter states, “whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God...in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Pet. 4:11). Peter is instructing his audience to use their gifts they have received in the proper manner (1 Pet. 4:10). For the speaking gifts, he is instructing them in verse 10 to speak “as one who speaks oracles of God.”

According to Thomas Schreiner, the term “oracles of God” refers to the “words God has given his people (cf. Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12),” and it is established in the Old Testament use of “oracles of God” (LXX Num. 25:4,16; Ps. 106:11) and “oracles of the LORD,” *logia kyriou*, LXX Pss 11:7; 17:31) and “your oracles” (LXX Pss 118:11, 103, 148, 158, 162) (215). Schreiner warns that,

Using speaking gifts to minister to others means that the one speaking endeavors to speak God’s words. How easy it is to think that we can assist others with our own wisdom, but those who are entrusted with the ministry of speaking should be careful to speak God’s words, to be faithful to the gospel (cf. 1 Cor 4:1–2; 2 Tim 4:1–5). (215)

Thus, Peter is imploring his readers with speaking gifts to make sure they are faithful to the God-inspired words of the biblical text, which is the gospel.

### **Pastoral Epistles**

Paul composed the Pastoral Epistles to instruct his younger co-workers, Timothy and Titus, on the work of pastoral ministry Paul had assigned them in Ephesus (Timothy) and Crete (Titus). One of the areas in which Paul wanted to aid them was preaching, and several verses in the Pastoral Epistles address this vital subject. These instructions by Paul also point to Paul’s preference for expository preaching for both Timothy and Titus.

The first thing Paul instructed Timothy was the place of teaching in the work of a pastor or overseer. In 1 Timothy 3:2, Paul states that an overseer must be “able to teach.” Later, in 1 Timothy 4:13, he instructs Timothy to “devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.” Paul’s instruction to do these three things was a vital tool in Timothy’s battle against false teaching. Stott states that like Timothy, all pastors are called to both “read the Scriptures to the congregation and to draw all our doctrinal instruction and exhortation out of it” (26). MacArthur interprets this text as expository preaching in that Paul instructs Timothy to “read the text, explain the text, and apply the text. That verse (1 Tim. 4:13) is a call to persuasive, expository preaching” (MacArthur, *Frequently Asked Questions About Expository Preaching* 345).

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul continues to instruct Timothy on the importance of preaching the word of God correctly. In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul instructs Timothy: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” Paul begins by instructing Timothy to the quality and effort asked for in his ministry. Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin state that “Timothy was to make it his supreme ambition to obtain God’s approval” and was to “work with such diligence that he would have no fear of shame for poor quality work” (215). With this ambition and diligent, quality work, Timothy is to make sure he is “rightly handling the word of truth” (v. 15). Gordon Fee states that Paul is contrasting Timothy’s charge as a teacher to the false teachings and practices of the false teachers. In Fee’s interpretation, Paul is instructing Timothy that “he truly preach and teach the gospel, the ‘word of truth,’ in contrast to the ‘word battles’ (v. 14) and ‘godless chatter’ (v. 16) of the others” (255). Finding and presenting the truth of the

gospel must be the goal of every preacher. Jay Adams summarizes the importance of this verse for preachers when he says, “To be faithful to the text and the Holy Spirit who caused it to be written is our fundamental concern. In this connection, conscientious ministers keep 2 Timothy 2:15 before themselves at all times” (34).

Paul’s second letter to Timothy included his instruction about the inspiration, importance, power, and utility of the Scriptures. Paul states these qualities of Scripture, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16–17). This is an important text for expository preaching as it establishes the value and power of Scripture for use by a preacher. John Koessler remarks that

the power of the sermon is rooted in the text. Second Timothy 3:16-167 says the Scriptures are inspired, they are God-breathed, they are useful for equipping the believer for every good work. We work so hard on our sermons that we sometimes forget the power of the message is the Word. (221)

Not only is the power of the God-breathed nature of Scripture emphasized by this verse, the proper use of the powerful Scripture is emphasized for teachers and preachers. Don Sunnukjian looks at this text for preachers and concludes, “Our primary intent is not that our listeners learn something, but that they use the Scripture for all the practical ways intended in everyday life (2 Tim. 3:16-17)” (349).

In 2 Timothy 4:1-2, Paul gives one of the most important commands for Timothy and for all preachers to follow. This is the Scripture which is read to all license and ordination candidates when they receive their credentials from the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God. Paul states in 1 Timothy 4:1-2:



I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

Paul starts in verse 1 to state the serious duty that he is giving to Timothy in his task to “preach the word” in verse 2. William Mounce expresses this seriousness by stating, “As Timothy discharges his duties as an evangelist, he does so in full sight of God and of Christ, who is the eschatological judge, and in recognition of Christ’s second coming and of the eschatological consummation of Christ’s kingdom” (chap. Encouragement and Proclamation (2 Tim 3: 10— 4: 8)). The command to “preach the word” stands out as a vital task for the pastors who will follow after the apostles like Paul.

After expressing the seriousness of the charge, Paul charges Timothy to “preach the word” with the three imperatives “reprove, rebuke, and exhort,” which relate to different elements of the command to “preach the word.” Furthermore, Timothy is to “preach the word” with the attitude and manner of “complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:1-2). The question that is important for Timothy and for preachers today is what is the “word” that is to be preached. Mounce identifies the “word” when he states,

Timothy learned the gospel (3: 14) along with the OT (3: 15); it is from God and is profitable for his ministry (3: 16– 17), and therefore Timothy must preach it. Once again Paul is repeating his central theme of the role Scripture and the gospel are to play in Timothy’s ministry (cf. 1 Tim 4: 6– 16; 6: 20; 2 Tim 1: 13, 14). The anaphoric definite article identifies τὸν λόγον, “the word,” specifically as the Scripture in 3: 16– 17 (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 220) and strengthens the contrast with the heresy described in the following verses. (chap. Encouragement and Proclamation (2 Timothy 3:10-4:8))

Thus, the preacher who “preaches the word” brings the life-changing message of the gospel and the written Scripture and must follow, as closely as possible, the intent of the biblical authors who wrote the word. George Zemek summarizes this point when he

concludes, “Preaching the Word entails far more than sermonizing *about* it or spring boarding *from* it. We must herald its total content in all its multifaceted dimensions” (176).

### **Theological and Historical Foundations**

The theological foundations of expository preaching were developed and taught through over 2000 years of church history. The Christian church, of course, has a varied record on staying true to the mission God called the church to do, and this is not different in preaching philosophies and methods. Following Christ and the Apostles, there are a few documents that show the use of the Bible in preaching and meetings of the church and what standards were to be followed in the teaching of the Bible. Some show a desire to follow the patterns that the Bible laid out for teachers while others strayed into a less literal use of the Bible. However, in most eras, there are biblical based teachers arguing to use the expository philosophy of preaching the Bible’s intended meaning and applying it to the lives of people in need of the preached word.

### **Patristic Period**

For some authors, the post-apostolic church took a substantial step back from the expository methods argued for in the Old and New Testaments. James Stitzinger argues that the post-apostolic church was in “rapid deterioration” in many areas, including expository preaching. He blames most of this deterioration on the infusing of Greek ideals into Christian thought and practices such as allegorizing of Scripture and Greek rhetorical styles over biblically substantive preaching. Stitzinger concludes that “the first four hundred years of the church produced many preachers but few true expositors” (12–13). In contrast, Craig Satterlee finds great inspiration in how some of the third and

fourth century preachers properly used the Bible to reach a world that was hostile to the Christian message. Furthermore, he states that they can be a great encouragement to preachers today who are seeing a world increasingly hostile to the Christian message. He believes that we need to rediscover what these preachers knew, which was that the word of God is powerful in preaching and can break through any barriers (268–275).

One example of the early church valuing the proper use of the Bible is contained in the *Didache*.<sup>1</sup> The *Didache* is thought to be written in the time period of the late first century to the early second century, and it contained instructions for the early churches. Concerning preaching the Bible, it gives several instructions. First, the church is instructed to honor those who bring them the message of the word of God: “My child, him that speaks to you the word of God remember night and day; and you shall honour him as the Lord; for in the place whence lordly rule is uttered, there is the Lord” (chap.4). Later a warning is given to the church to watch out for those who teach something opposite of the message given to them by the Apostles: “Whosoever, therefore, cometh and teacheth you all these things that have been said before, receive him.”<sup>2</sup> But if the teacher himself turn and teach another doctrine to the destruction of this, hear him not; but *if he teach* so as to increase righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord” (Roberts et al.).

The next example of the use of the Bible in the worship services of the early church comes from Justin Martyr in his *First Apology*, which is believed to be from the middle of the second century. Martyr lays out a worship service format of the churches at his time. His instructions for the preaching fit well into most definitions of expository preaching and where it fits into Sunday service. He instructs,

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability,<sup>2</sup> and the people assent, saying Amen. (Martyr, chap.67)

Martyr called for the reading of the “memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets,” and then a leader to “instruct” and “exhort” the church on the “imitation of these good things.” This indicates that the leader was to help the readers understand the meaning of the text and then the leader was to apply it to their daily life, which is a standard definition of expository preaching.

Tertullian likewise relates how the church handled the Scriptures when they gathered in his *Apology* written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century. He states,

We assemble to read our sacred writings, if any peculiarity of the times makes either forewarning or reminiscence needful. However, it be in that respect, with the sacred words we nourish our faith, we animate our hope, we make our confidence more steadfast; and no less by inculcations of God’s precepts we confirm good habits. In the same place also exhortations are made, rebukes and sacred censures are administered. (chap.39)

Notice again the respect for the “sacred words” of Scripture that are used to “nourish our faith” and “animate our hope.” He goes on to say that the constant instruction or “inculcations of God’s precepts” is helpful for the purpose of helping to “confirm good habits” in people. He concludes by stating that the Scripture is used for “exhortations,” “rebukes,” and “sacred censures” are made to apply the truth of the Scripture to the church.

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons in the second century, wrote an extensive document called *Against Heresies* where he defended the Christian faith against the gnostic

heresies. In this document he lays out the responsibilities of the presbyters when he states,

For these also preserve this faith of ours in one God who created all things; and they increase that love [which we have] for the Son of God, who accomplished such marvellous dispensations for our sake: and they expound the Scriptures to us without danger, neither blaspheming God, nor dishonouring the patriarchs, nor despising the prophets. (chap.26)

Irenaeus emphasizes their responsibility to “expound the Scriptures,” but to stay true to the original meaning of the Scriptures by making sure they are “neither blaspheming God, nor dishonouring the patriarchs, nor despising the prophets.” In this way, they will do their part in countering the false doctrines of the Gnostics.

The most universally acclaimed expository preacher of the patristic period of church history was John Chrysostom, who preached and served as the Bishop of Constantinople in the late fourth and early fifth century. A century after his death, Chrysostom received the nickname “Chrysostomos” or “golden-mouthed” to describe his greatness as a preacher (John R. W. Stott 21). Carl Volz emphasizes that Chrysostom was intent on delivering the truth of Scripture, but he also emphasized preachers working on their delivery to present the message to the best of their ability. Chrysostom wrote a book called *On the Priesthood* and spent two chapters of the book talking about the presentation of the sermon (Volz).

Volz quotes Chrysostom in his instructions to those who might want to preach and warns them of “the great toil which is expended upon sermons delivered publicly to the congregation” (Volz). Chrysostom also stated that preachers should not look for adoration and attention in their preaching, but they must endeavor to preach in a way that keeps the attention of the congregation. This is not a skill that comes naturally as a gift

from birth, but each preacher must “‘cultivate its force by constant application and exercise.’ Chrysostom seemed to have mastered it: even though some of his sermons lasted two hours, people still called for more” (Volz). Chrysostom even chastised those who said they did not need to improve their preaching delivery skills by comparing themselves to the Apostle Paul, who claimed to not be a great speaker. He said that no preacher stands up to what God did through the Apostle Paul and that it is wrong to use this as an excuse to not preach well. He concludes by saying, “But the men of to-day—not that I would say anything harsh or severe, for indeed I do not speak by way of insult to them, but only in wonder—how is it that they do not shudder when they measure themselves with so great a man as this?” (Chrysostom 67).

Stott summarizes what made Chrysostom such a great preacher when he concludes,

First, he was biblical. Not only did he preach systematically through several books, but his sermons are full of biblical quotations and allusions. Secondly, his interpretation of the Scriptures was simple and straightforward. He followed the Antiochene school of “literal” exegesis, in contrast to fanciful Alexandrian allegorizations. Thirdly, his moral applications were down to earth. Reading his sermons today, one could imagine without difficulty the pomp of the imperial court, the luxuries of the aristocracy, the wild races of the hippodrome, in fact the whole life of an oriental city at the end of the fourth century. (J. R. W. Stott)

Chrysostom emphasized the important factors for an expository preacher. First, he emphasized a hermeneutic that attempted to find the “literal” meaning of the text before he preached on it. Second, he applied these truths from the Scripture to his audience at the time made the truths of Scripture real for them.

### **Early Middle Ages (476-1100)**

The early middle ages were not known for its great preaching or for leading figures who wrote about preaching. Michael Quicke summarizes the era by stating “with

the decline of Roman Civilization into the Dark Ages, preaching also decayed, often taking the forms of mechanical repetitions of older sermons” (66). James Philip argues that the “scholastic theology of the universities” and the “application of Aristotelean logic to the interpretation of Scripture...imposed an intolerable incubus upon preaching which virtually destroyed it as an effective means for communicating the gospel” (300). Lastly, Stitzinger concludes that while there were some interesting preachers in the era such as Peter the Hermit, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Thomas Aquinas, “none of them handled the text in an expository fashion” (15).

### **Late Middle Ages and Pre-Reformation (1100-1500)**

Prior to the Reformation, there were pastors and scholars who argued for the preaching of God’s word. They emphasized preaching as a major task of the Christian pastor. Pastors also emphasized the preaching of the Word and stressed the importance of the original meaning of the biblical text.

One leader who stood out in this area was John Wycliffe (1329-1384). Wycliffe emphasized the authority of the Bible over that of the Catholic Church, which caused him to incur the anger of the Catholic Church. Wycliffe believed that the Bible should be translated into the language of common people and serve as the authority for both the church and the common person. He used Scripture to attack many of the practices of the Catholic church because the practices of the church were not rooted in Scripture. Wycliffe concluded, “The highest service that men may attain to on earth is to preach the Word of God....The Church, however, is honoured most by the preaching of God’s

Word, and hence this is the best service that priests may render unto God” (qtd. in *Life and Times of John Wycliffe : The Morning Star of Reformation* 103)<sup>1</sup>.

The Renaissance and the rise of humanism in northern Europe also led to changes in Christian preaching. The humanism of the Renaissance led scholars to look to the original texts of ancient works, such as the Bible, and study them in their original languages. Erasmus’ publishing of the Greek New Testament in 1516 and 1518 allowed for biblical scholars to access the original text. This bypassed the official Roman Catholic Latin Vulgate and allowed scholars to see that not all Catholic practices were true to the original Greek text. Erasmus setup many Reformers views with his insistence on the importance of the Word of God in the original Greek. Stitzinger concludes that the Humanists themselves were not expository preachers, but they created the foundation for the expository preachers of the Reformation (16).

### **Reformation (1500-1648)**

The period of the Reformation brought on the argument of *Sola Scriptura*, which argued for the Scriptures as the sole guidance for doctrine and practice in contrast to the dual authority of Scripture and church tradition purported by the Roman Catholic Church. In addition, the emphasis on Scripture led to the translation of the Bible into the vernacular of the people and a renewed emphasis on preaching and teaching the Bible to the people of the church. Because of the emphasis on the authority of the Scriptures and their desire to help common people understand the Scriptures they now possessed, pastors were called to expound and apply the Scriptures. Several reformers stand out for their emphasis on preaching the Word of God.

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<sup>1</sup> The original source of this quote is listed as “a manuscript in the Bodeleian Library”



William Tyndale challenged the common preaching style of his day, which was associated with the Roman Catholic church. He disagreed with the hermeneutics of the Catholic Church, which he said created a state where the literal meaning or sense of Scripture, “has become nothing at all: for the pope has taken it clean away and has made it his possession. He has partly locked it up with the false and counterfeited keys of his traditions, ceremonies, and feigned lies.” He argued that this Roman Catholic hermeneutic hurt the pastor and the people, concluding that,

You shall understand, therefore, that the Scripture has but *one* sense, which is the *literal* sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, the anchor that never fails, which if you cling to it, you can never err or go out of the way. And if you leave the literal sense, you cannot but go out of the way. (72)

Thus, for Tyndale, the “literal sense” of Scripture is what should be taught and believed, because it is the only thing that will keep people on track in their lives.

Martin Luther emphasized the importance of the power of the Bible and the importance of preaching the Bible. Luther taught that the Word of God is vital for the life of a Christian. He stated its vital importance by saying, “Let us then consider it certain and conclusively established that the soul can do without all things except the Word of God, and that where this is not there is no help for the soul in anything else whatever” (Luther, *A Treatise on Christian Liberty* 312). For Luther, it was vital that the people of God have the Word of God for they were hopeless without it.

Not only did Luther believe in the necessity of the Word of God for Christians, he believed that it was necessary for preachers to use the Word of God for their preaching. When talking about the purpose of the pastors and priests of the church, he concluded that they should follow the example of purpose of Christ in coming to the world. Luther concluded, “Nor was Christ sent into the world for any other ministry but that of the

Word, and the whole spiritual estate, apostles, bishops and all the priests, has been called and instituted only for the ministry of the Word” (Luther, *A Treatise on Christian Liberty* 312). In addition, Luther stated the pastor is called to “not lose the Bible, but with diligence, in fear and invocation of God, read and preach it” (Luther, *Table Talk* 16). He wanted preachers to know that the foundation of what they taught must be the Word of God and the accurate translation that did not go away from the Bible’s intended meaning. For Luther claimed, “I have grounded my preaching upon the literal word; he that pleases may follow me; he that will not may stay “ (Luther, *Table Talk* 18). Patrick Ferry argued that for Luther nothing compared to the preaching of God’s word, and though people could read the Bible on their own, that it was vital and spiritually powerful for preachers to preach the Word of God (270–271).

John Calvin’s preaching is a prime example of the use of expository methods in preaching. Scharf concludes that Calvin “is in many ways the father of expository preaching as we know it” (86). Calvin had a high view of Scripture and how it should be used by preachers as the authority for preaching. T.H.L Packer argues, “For Calvin the message of Scripture is sovereign, sovereign over the congregation and sovereign over the preacher. His humility is shown by his submitting to this authority” (39). Calvin held the Word of God and the right preaching of the Word as a sign of a true Christian church. Calvin wrote, “Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists” (1023). Furthermore, Calvin believed that pastors need to keep their message solidly aligned with the message of God’s Word and

not their own message. In Calvin's definition of properly expounding Scripture, he asserted,

And, indeed, since it is almost his only work to lay open the mind of the writer whom he undertakes to explain, the degree in which he leads away his readers from it, in that degree he goes astray from his purpose, and in a manner wanders from his own boundaries. (xxiii)

Calvin was clearly advocating for staying within the argument of the text of a sermon and that straying from the direction of the biblical author is not the purpose of a preacher, because it opens the pastor up to straying outside the "boundaries" of the scriptural authority Calvin held so high.

Not only was Calvin convinced of the power of the Bible and the need for pastors to preach it, he was an advocate and practitioner of preaching through books of the Bible, which is a primary style of expository preaching. Parker reports that Calvin consistently preached through biblical books on Sundays when he "patiently led his congregation through book after book of the Bible" (1). Stitzinger says that Calvin preached through many books of the Bible, and his sermons through a book of the Bible provided the basis for his commentaries on each book (20).

The early Reformers, who held preaching the Bible as the goal of preachers, also influenced other groups and pastors who followed them. The Puritans of England also adopted the expository method of explaining the meaning of a text and applying the message to the congregation. According to Quicke, the Puritans used "teacher preachers" who had two parts in every sermon. First, they provided an exposition of the main points of the scriptural text. Then, they applied these points to the lives of the believers in the congregation (66).

### **Modern Period to the Present (1649-Present)**

The Christian world continued to diversify after the splintering of the Roman Catholic Church into Catholic and many Protestant groups. Several advocates for expository preaching methods emerged after the Reformers. The preaching tradition of the English Puritans was carried to the New World and practiced by preachers there, while other preachers rose up in the world who argued for expounding and explaining the text expositively.

One great preacher who advocated preaching in an expository style was John Wesley, who was influential in both England and the United States. During an 1847 Methodist Conference in Ireland, Wesley presented a set of nine rules for preaching. Three of these help us understand Wesley's view on how to preach biblically,

4. Choose the plainest texts you can.
5. Take care not to ramble from your text, but to keep close to it, and make out what you undertake.
7. Beware of allegorizing or spiritualizing too much. (Wesley)

According to Heitzenrater, John Wesley did not necessarily follow his fifth rule when it came to preaching from the text. In his published sermons, Wesley often used a verse as his starting point and then took off in other directions. Many times, Wesley would start with a text and then move quickly into telling stories that may or may not come back to the text. However, Heitzenrater concludes, "More often than not, of course, Wesley's preaching, as well as his written sermons, seems to be rather closely reasoned and sticks rather tightly to a development of the text" (104).

Stitzinger argues that after the Puritan era and the beginning of the Evangelical Awakening (1700- mid 1800's), there was a move away from expository preaching and towards a more topical approach although there were some "nonconformists" who

continued the expository ways of the Puritans (24). Charles Spurgeon would rise up as a great preacher in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Although some regard him as an expository preacher, others saw his preaching as taking one text and attaching biblical truths that did not necessarily fit in his chosen passage (Stitzinger).

In the twentieth century and beyond, this study will focus on preachers and teachers who have died and thus completed their ministry. Three advocates of expository preaching methods must be mentioned. First, Karl Barth summarizes the importance and centrality of the Scripture for preaching when he stated, “Two things call for emphasis. First, God is the one who works, and second, we humans must try to point to what is said in scripture. There is no third thing” (Barth 45). Then he gives a good explanation of expository preaching when he defines preaching with two principles.

1. Preaching is the Word of God which he himself speaks, claiming for the purpose the exposition of a biblical text in free human words that are relevant to contemporaries by those that are called to do this in the church that is obedient to its commission.

2. Preaching is the attempt enjoined upon the church to serve God’s own Word, through one who is called thereto, by expounding a biblical text in human words and making it relevant to contemporaries in intimation of what they have to hear from God himself. (Barth)

Again, his emphasis was on the “exposition” and “expounding” the text of Scripture and “making it relevant to contemporaries” which was a good representation of the principles of expository preaching.

Both John Stott and D. Martyn Lloyd Jones agreed on two principles of expository preaching. First, they agreed on the principle that all preaching must be expository, no matter what type of preaching is attempted by a pastor (Stitzinger 57–59). Lloyd-Jones taught the expository method of first expounding the author’s intent of a Scripture and then relating it to people’s lives. He stated, “All true Christian preaching

should be expository...The expositor opens what seems to be closed, makes plain what is confusing, unravels what is knotted, and unfolds what is tightly packed” (25). Second, both agreed that the church of their time was in desperate need of more expository preaching by pastors. Lloyd-Jones argued this when he said, “I would say without any hesitation that the most urgent need in the Christian Church today is true preaching, it is obviously the greatest need of the world also” (9). Stott argues for the same, “True Christian preaching (by which I mean ‘biblical’ or ‘expository’ preaching, as I shall argue later) is extremely rare in today’s Church. Thoughtful young people in many countries are asking for it but cannot find it” (92).

### **Arguments for Expository Preaching**

The value and preference of expository preaching must be established if preachers are to change their method of preaching. Multiple arguments are available to promote this method, and this section will attempt to summarize a few arguments.

#### **Preaching Stays Focused on the Text**

This argument lines up with Paul’s instructions to Timothy to “preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2) and is an attempt to focus on the power of the Bible alone to be “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16b-17). Thomas Long argues for the focus on the text in expository preaching when he says, “The purpose of preaching is not to provide a forum for the preacher—giving moral advice, expressing opinions on important topics, or listing religious ‘principles for living’—but rather to be the occasion for the hearing of a voice beyond the preachers’ voice—the very word of the living God” (Long 25). Preaching from the text keeps the

pastor focused on the passage for the ideas and keeps the pastor from moving off into tangents or error. Robinson argues that expository preaching allows the “passage to govern the sermon,” and the pastor does not come to the passage with exactly what he or she wants to preach, but instead allows the passage to decide the subject and course of the message (20). Stott concurs when he states that when one preaches expositively, that the text “sets us limits,” and pastors are bound by what the text says and not what they bring to the text or what they think the congregation wants to hear (John R. W. Stott 126).

By preaching expositively the intended meaning of the text, pastors are also increasing biblical literacy in their congregation, which is a need in today’s culture (Mayhue). Bob Smietana summarizes the results of a bible literacy research study done by Lifeway Research in 2016, which shows that pastors and other leaders should be worried about bible literacy. The research found that biblical literacy is low, even among church attendees. Even though 87 percent of households own a Bible, most Americans do not read the Bible and “the only time most Americans hear from the Bible is when someone else is reading it” (Smietana).

Within the Assemblies of God, there is also reason for concern about biblical literacy. According to Trinity Bible College president Paul Alexander (Trinity is an Assemblies of God endorsed college), Assemblies of God students score some of the lowest scores in comparison to other denominations on the Association for Biblical Higher Education exams administered to incoming freshman. He is concerned for the biblical literacy of the congregants in Assemblies of God churches (Alexander).

## **Hermeneutics**

It is not a point of contention within the Assemblies of God as to whether the Bible is the powerful Word of God and should be preached by the pastors of the Assemblies of God. Many scholars argue that the expository method of preaching best follows the mandate of preaching the Word. E. D. Hirsch bluntly states that in interpretation of literature “the text means what its author meant” (1). Bryan Chapell states that, “Our task as preachers is to discern what the original writers meant by analyzing the background and grammatical features of what they said” (Chapell, chap.3). Thus, the goal of the pastor and expositor must be to present the authorial intent of the original authors of the biblical text to a contemporary audience.

Joseph Dongell argues that God chose to reveal the truth of Scripture in particularities to a particular culture (Jews) and language (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), which are not necessarily similar to the particular culture or language of the reader. Because of this, Christians today have lost access to the truth of Scripture through natural intuition. The Protestant idea that any ordinary person can understand the Bible is not completely true because of the cultural and language barrier. To understand the Bible, a person needs to unlock the particularities of the text that are not known to a present-day reader before understanding and teaching the text. This is the job of a preacher and expounder of Scripture. The work that is required to understand a particular biblical passage and do the whole process of taking the text from its particularities to a contemporary audience is best and most efficiently accomplished by preaching through a book of the Bible. By doing this, the pastor can follow the flow of the author and also not duplicate the interpretation of the particularities associated with a book of the Bible



(Dongell). Stott concurs with this idea of the need to “reveal” what is in the Scripture to a contemporary audience to (Stott and Scharf).

Using individual and perhaps multiple texts to prove points in a topical sermon is difficult unless each passage is studied and expounded. Pastors today are not able to use intuition to understand the particularities that help pastors understand the true intent of the biblical author. Thus, the expository method helps a pastor stay true to the truth that was written in a culture and language that is foreign to the pastor and the audience.

### **Time constraints**

The method that brings forth the meaning of Scripture and works most efficiently for a time-constrained, busy preacher is to preach expositively through a book of the Bible (Dongell). Even topical preaching advocate, Andy Stanley, concedes that it takes less time to preach through a book. Although he is not a proponent of preaching through a book of the Bible, Stanley concedes, “Guys that preach verse-by-verse through books of the Bible-- that is just cheating. It's cheating because that would be easy, first of all” (Stanley and Stetzer). The advantage of preaching in an expository method moving from pericope to pericope through a book of the Bible allows the pastor to not spend time looking for his or her next sermon topic but instead follow the flow of the biblical author.

### **Longevity for Pastors**

Another advantage of preaching expositively is it allows a pastor to serve a church for a long period of time. Bridges links longevity in a church with a pastor's approach to preaching and that most long-term preachers are expository preachers. He states that people will overlook and forgive many pastoral shortcomings, but they expect their pastor to “know the Bible better than they do and help them apply it to their lives.” He

says that expository preaching allows a pastor to preach different messages for many years instead of relying on a few chosen issues or topics, which cannot be sustained for long (Bridges). Mayhue agrees that expository preaching does not limit the amount of topics and allows the pastor to have a “storehouse of preaching material” (Mayhue). Wood concurs that the sermons available in the Bible are almost unlimited, and by preaching expositively, he was able to have a successful ministry in one church for seventeen years (Wood).

### **Expository Preaching Is Not Limited to Preaching Through A Book**

There is a misunderstanding of expository preaching that it is a style of preaching that can only be done in a deductive, non-narrative, verse-by-verse exposition.

Magruder observes this misunderstanding when he states, “Many preachers understand expository preaching to be one method among many (e.g., verse-by-verse exposition), rather than seeing it as a guiding philosophy (i.e., the exegetical idea of the text will be the basis for the big idea of the sermon)” (Magruder 11). While most expository advocates teach that preaching through a book is the most common form of expository preaching and should be normative, there are a variety of ways to preach expositively. Robinson says that, “A biblical sermon can take many forms. Just as the biblical writers used many different genres of literature to communicate their ideas, preachers are free to use any form to adequately represent what the Scripture teaches” (H. Robinson 59). Robinson goes on in his chapter titled “The Shapes Sermon Take” to lay out a variety of methods for expository preaching, including deductive, inductive, and narrative forms of preaching. (H. W. Robinson). Irvin Busentiz concludes,

Just as verse-by-verse preaching is not necessarily expository, preaching that is *not* verse-by-verse is not necessarily *non*-expository. Granted some topical

approaches are not expository, but such *need not* and certainly *should not* be the case. No book deals with topics that directly impact daily life more than the Bible. Thus, to be effective all topical preaching, and teaching, whether the topic be thematic, theological, historical, or biographical must be consumed with expounding the Word. (Busenitz 255)

Thus, when the need to address a certain topic arises, an expository preacher can expound the texts that apply to topic. Also, new methods, such as narrative preaching, can be expository as long as they stay true to the meaning of the text and are used as a vehicle to expound the text.

### **Arguments for Topical Preaching and Against Expository**

Because most of the academic resources advocate an expository approach to preaching, it is difficult to find scholarly resources that promote arguments for topical preaching. Because there are many topical preachers, there are obviously reasons why pastors choose to preach in a topical fashion in spite of what they were taught in formal training institutions. This section will show the reasons given by some pastors who choose to preach topically and the response from an expository philosophy of preaching.

### **Jesus and The Apostles Did Not Preach Expositorily**

Scharf states that, as a seminary professor who teaches students to preach expositorily, he is asked why he preaches expository sermons when the preachers of the Bible did not preach in this method. Scharf concludes, “Of the many criticisms of contemporary expository preaching, the one that cuts deepest is that it is not biblical—at least not in the sense that it is warranted by apostolic example” (Greg R Scharf). Andy Stanley picks up this criticism when he evaluates preachers who preach through a book of the Bible and concludes, “No one in the Scripture modeled that. There's not one example of that” (Stanley and Stetzer).

This matter was treated in my introductory section to the study of expository preaching in the New Testament, but I will summarize the findings here as well. First, Jesus and the apostles were in a unique situation where they were not just preaching the written text, but they were speaking what would become the New Testament. Jesus was the “Word” himself and came to earth to reveal God’s truth (John 1:1, 9, 14), and the apostles were witnesses and proclaimers of the life and teaching of Jesus (Acts 1:21-22). Secondly, there are many examples of Jesus and the apostles expounding the text of the Old Testament (see the section on expository preaching in the Gospels and Epistles for an example). Moreover, the book of Acts contains non-apostolic expository preaching examples, such as the cases of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch expounding the Old Testament (Acts 8:26-40), which also act as models for pastors who do not speak with the authority of Jesus or the apostles.

### **Topical Preaching Better Meets the Needs of a Congregation**

Advocates of topical preaching make the argument that a topical style of preaching allows a pastor to best meet the perceived needs of a congregation. Topical preaching allows the pastor to set the agenda of the preaching based on perceived needs of the congregation and not be tied to the thought of a particular pericope or just follow an author’s thought week by week through a particular book. James Braga’s definition of topical preaching seems to allow for a pastor to come up with his or her points independently of a particular pericope. Braga defines topical preaching as, “one in which the main divisions are derived from the topic, independently of a text...the topical sermon begins with a topic or theme...This does not mean the that the message will not be biblical, but merely indicates that a text of Scripture is not the source of the topical

sermon”(21) Topical preaching advocate, Andy Stanley, contends that a pastor must find the needs of his or her congregation first and then look to Scripture to fulfill that need. He challenges the idea that pastors were taught in their training that a pastor should start with Scripture and then move to application of the Scripture. Stanley believes the expository method leads to “simply teaching the Scripture on an information basis” and does not necessarily engage the felt needs of the congregation (47). He also concludes that preaching through a book of the Bible is not effective to “grow people” (Stanley and Stetzer).

Henry Emerson Fosdick took the desire of meeting the needs of the congregation further by questioning whether the congregation cares about what a passage of Scripture means. He criticized expository preaching when he described expository preachers by saying,

They take a passage from Scripture, and proceeding on the assumption that people attending church that morning are deeply concerned about what the passage means, they spend their half hour or more on historical exposition of the verse or chapter, ending with some appended practical application to the auditors....Could any procedure be more surely predestined to dullness and futility...Who seriously supposes that as a matter of fact, one in a hundred of the congregation cares, to start with, what Moses, Isaiah, Paul, or John meant in those special verses or came to church deeply concerned about it?. (Fosdick)

Quicke adds that Fosdick “embraced psychology to counsel people from the pulpit” to address their felt needs (Quicke).

These arguments assume that an expository preaching method involves just giving information and not applying the passage of Scripture to the lives and needs of people in the congregation. The definition of expository preaching is to apply the truth of the Bible to the needs of the congregation. It is vital that the pastor exegetes the congregation and understands where they are, as well as exegeting the passage of Scripture. After doing

this, a pastor must expound the authorial intended truth of the Bible that was written in a particular culture and make it relevant to the culture of the congregation.

The meeting the needs of the congregation argument also assumes that expository preaching, especially preaching through a book of the Bible, will not fulfill the felt needs of a congregation. Wood argues that topical preaching will, in fact, just pick a few topics and miss many of the topics and messages that God wants people to hear. He goes on to state that by preaching through books of the Bible, a pastor will “address all the felt needs of people, since God’s Word is fantastically relevant” (Wood). In addition, a pastor will have to preach on subjects that may be overlooked because they are uncomfortable or just omitted. Wood explains that preaching “expositorily gave me great liberty to deal with sensitive matters—the congregation knew I wasn’t personally picking on them when I came to a text that was uncomfortable to them” (Wood). Lastly, Wood argues that expository preaching will result in preaching that is “not in the opinions of men nor in hobbyhorse doctrines nor latest fads but God’s written revelation” (Wood).

### **Topical Preaching Is More Effective in Building a Church**

Another argument for topical preaching over expository is the fact that large growing churches are using the topical method, and it seems to work to grow a large church. Because of this, many pastors follow the methods of these pastors. Benjamin Kelley describes his experience at the Beeson Pastor Program as he and the other students in the programs visited megachurches for one year. They found that ninety percent of the preachers at the megachurches were topical preachers, which caused the members of his cohort to question what style of preaching was the most effective. (Kelley 15–16). Kelley continues that the tension between what was the most effective preaching method

continued during the formal classroom training of the program. The professor wanted to teach expository preaching, while the students started questioning “the effectiveness of this style in comparison to the more contemporary and ‘trendy’ preaching styles of narrative and topical sermons,” and he stated that the preaching samples from the students during the class frustrated the professor who found them less than desirable and the “class session concluded with (the professor) passionately declaring, ‘Preach the text!’” (15–17).

Historically, the first and second centuries were times of explosive growth for the Christian church. During the first and second centuries, the *Didache* and the *First Apology* of Justin Martyr showed an expository style of preaching in the churches. In the Assemblies of God, expository preaching churches, such as James River Church in Ozark, Missouri, have produced large churches. There may be an argument that topical preaching can be effectively marketed, is “trendy,” and may attract a large crowd. The question has to be asked as to what makes a sermon and ministry effective and what is the biblical mandate for preaching and ministry. Expository preaching seems to answer the biblical mandate for both preaching and ministry, and expositors need to make sure they are using all the tools they have to make sure they are staying relevant in an ever-changing culture.

### **Assemblies of God Emphasis on Expository Preaching**

The Assemblies of God is presently promoting expository preaching in many areas. The General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God preached for seventeen years in one church and almost exclusively preached in an expository manner. Furthermore, he has written an article for the Assemblies of God Journal *Enrichment*

about the value of expository preaching (Wood). Furthermore, John Lindell, pastor of James River Church, a well-respected large Assemblies of God church near the Assemblies of God headquarters in Springfield, MO, preaches expository sermons and is noted for his preaching through entire books of the Bible. In addition, Pastor Lindell and his church have sponsored a scholarship at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary for students studying expository preaching (Introduction: The James River Center for Expository Preaching).

Perhaps the strongest promotion of expository preaching comes from LeRoy Bartel (former pastor, professor, Director of Christian Education for the A/G, and currently Dean of the College of Bible and Church Ministries at Southwestern Assemblies of God University). His statement acts as both a declaration promoting expository preaching and criticizing the present methods of some preachers within the Assemblies of God when he states,

I believe that anointed expository preaching ought to be viewed as the foundational method...People go to church expecting a significant encounter with the message of Scripture. There are tired of religious talks on contemporary topics basted with a slight hint of the Bible. Their hearts crave more than proof texts strung together by the preacher without regard for context in order to prove a predetermined point. People are frankly edgy about a message developed around an isolated phrase taken from a remote passage of Scripture; such a message may end up having no connection whatever to the biblical writer's purpose. (Bartel 114–115)

Magruder surveyed a variety of Assemblies of God publications from the General Council of the Assemblies of God that are targeted toward Assemblies of God ministers. He noted that most of them are strongly in favor of expository preaching and promote expository preachers and teachers. Magruder concluded, “More examples could be offered, but the point is simply that anyone reading A/G periodical literature aimed at



ministers cannot help but notice the promotion of expository preaching” (Magruder).

This strongly indicates that there is a desire by the leadership of the Assemblies of God to promote expository preaching as the preferred method of preaching in the Assemblies of God.

Lastly, I personally spoke to the preaching professors of the two schools that provide most of the training for Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors, Trinity Bible College in Ellendale, ND and North Central University in Minneapolis, MN. They both stressed their commitment to teaching and promoting an expository method of preaching. They both provided me with their syllabi for their preaching courses, which included books emphasizing expository preaching, such as Haddon Robinson and John Stott, as well as scheduled training on expository methods (Flippo, *Homiletics I Syllabus*; Flippo, *Homiletics II Syllabus*; Wadholm Jr., *Principles of Preaching Syllabus*; Wadholm Jr., *Advanced Preaching Syllabus*). A 2011 study of the syllabi of the Assemblies of God fourteen training institutions in the United States discovered that ten of the schools used Haddon Robinson’s text as one of their required texts for the class, and the other four used similar books, which were “evangelical, expository-minded preaching texts” (Granados 4-5). In addition, many Assemblies of God pastors are now trained through an online school, Global University and Berean School of the Bible, which uses course material that teaches expository preaching as the preferred method of preaching (Magruder 11).

### **Uniqueness of Pentecostal preaching**

A possible reason for the disconnect between the evangelical method of expository preaching taught both in training institutions and Assemblies of God

publications and the topical preaching of many pastors may be in the uniqueness of Assemblies of God Pentecostal preaching. Pentecostal history and practice have influenced preachers from the beginning of the Pentecostal movement until today. These Pentecostal distinctives have shaped the way that Assemblies of God pastors preach historically and today.

Since its inception in the early 1900's, the Assemblies of God kept separate from other Protestant groups until the 1940's. One reason was the Assemblies of God distinct doctrine of an empowering second work of the Holy Spirit which is accompanied by speaking in tongues. Edith Blumhofer states that the Assemblies of God both chose to stay separate from other Protestant groups and that other Protestant groups did not want to associate with the Assemblies of God. Members of the Assemblies of God looked at this conflict with other denominations as proof of the correct doctrine of the Assemblies of God. Thus, the Assemblies of God shared some characteristics of other Evangelical movements of the early twentieth century, but they also developed many aspects in isolation (Blumhofer 13–15).

One distinct aspect of the Assemblies of God and other Pentecostals was seen in how preachers handled the biblical text. These factors may affect how Pentecostal preachers approach expository preaching because they see the process of interpreting the Bible differently than the Evangelicals who promote expository preaching. Byron Klaus says that “early Pentecostal interpretation of the Bible tended to place very little significance on the historical context of the Bible...Preaching focused on the immediate meaning of a text rather than upon its original context” (Klaus 93). Gordon Anderson argues that Pentecostals now use the same historical/grammatical hermeneutic methods

of other Evangelicals but adds that, unlike other interpreters, Pentecostals “consciously, intentionally, and critically” bring personal and historical experience into the hermeneutical process (1–2).

Some Pentecostal scholars argue that the sign gifts, such as tongues, prophecy, healing, and miracles, are the mark of quality preaching. Ray Hughes titles a chapter in his book, *Pentecostal Preaching*, “The Uniqueness of Pentecostal Preaching,” and confirms that Pentecostal preaching needs to be grounded in the Bible. However, Hughes states that Pentecostal preaching is unique in the greater Christian world because it should lead to the supernatural, which he defines as “signs, wonders, healings, and miracles such as happened during New Testament times” (155). Hughes continues to argue that Pentecostal preaching should lead to supernatural encounters at the altar, such as revival and conviction of sin, baptism of the Holy Spirit, and confrontation of demonic powers (157). Hughes also offers an argument that “Pentecostal preaching is confirmed by the operation of spiritual gifts which lets a pastor know that he or she is preaching in a proper manner led by Spirit” (157). Charles Crabtree concurs that the sign gifts need to be a part of the Pentecostal preacher’s personal life and ministry life. The experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the use of spiritual gifts, and signs and wonders are what distinguishes Pentecostal preaching and makes it powerful (Crabtree 27–28).

Lastly, the altar call and altar experience are a large part of Pentecostal preaching, and, for many, it is a measure of whether a sermon has been delivered well. From the beginning, Pentecostal preaching has emphasized the need for response and an altar call (Klaus 93). Crabtree argues that it is an essential component of the Pentecostal experience. Crabtree says the Pentecostal altar is a “point of contact between a person

and God, the place where the Spirit's power begins the process of transformation" (27). Furthermore, a good altar call response and experience is the "capstone, the supreme reward for the many hours of prayer and study" (27–28).

Some will argue that Pentecostal preaching and the need for a response at the altar comes from the influence of Charles Finney in the Second Great Awakening. Finney used new, controversial methods to bring people to a point of decision. William P. Farley states that Finney,

to secure conversions, he deliberately raised the emotional timbre of the meetings. He adopted and popularized the Methodist practice of asking converts to come to the altar or sit on an anxious seat to signify their decision to follow Christ. To wear people down so they would make a commitment, he lengthened his meetings. Sometimes his meetings lasted 4 hours or longer. (Farley)

Bradley Trask identifies Pentecostal methods of persuasion to help people make a commitment at the altar with those of Finney. Trask then responds to those who criticize these methods by saying "it works" and then using the words of Charles Finney, "The results justify my methods" (Trask 187).

While the efficacy of altar calls and using emotional methods to bring people to the altar may bring results, there are some Pentecostals who question whether these tactics affect the quality of preaching and can even justify poor preaching. Josh P.S. Samuel warns, "There are some Pentecostal preachers who not only mishandle Scripture in their sermons, but also rely on hype to generate responses that appear to be supernatural; regrettably, these same preachers often claim that it is the Spirit who leads them to do what they do" (199).

### **Influence of Mentors Over Training**

Another disconnect between what Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors receive as training and what happens in the pulpits every Sunday is the greater influence of preaching mentors and models. As I stated earlier, speakers at Minnesota District Assemblies of God events primarily preach in a non-expository, topical style. These speakers are spoken of with great respect, and this has influence on the pastors who are hearing these speakers. Furthermore, if a pastor receives training in expository preaching in school and is encouraged to preach expositively by denominational resources, the influence of a topical preaching mentor at their first assignment and in other churches may have more influence than their training and denominational encouragement.

Albert Bandura developed a theory of learning called Social Learning Theory that may help explain why preachers are influenced greatly by models and mentors. In his theory, Bandura argues,

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. (22)

Notice that Bandura states that “most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling,” which seems to indicate that preaching is learned more by the role models and mentors than it is by formal educational training. Furthermore, Geoffrey Stevenson states that people learn by imitation of others, and that “human learning can more easily be understood by considering the fundamental human drive to copy the behaviour of another” (57). Again, it is a “fundamental human drive to copy behavior,” which seems

to indicate that proper models and mentors may overrule what is taught through education.

### **Research Design Literature**

This research project was a project that intended to measure the practices and attitudes towards expository preaching of the preaching pastors of the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God. The project was a pre-intervention project that intended to find out why many pastors do not preach expositively and identify some principles that would help Assemblies of God pastors in Minnesota to use more expository methods.

The quantitative survey was done to attempt to measure as many of the 190 preaching pastors in the Minnesota District Council as possible. Sensing states that a survey allows a researcher to find a sample from the entire group instead of just those who could have been measured using a questionnaire or one-on-one interviews (Sensing, chap.4). Judith Bell also advocates the use of a quantitative survey for a large group. She argues that it allows the researcher to have the ability “not only to describe but also to compare, to relate one characteristic to another and to demonstrate that certain features exist in certain categories” (14). Lastly, using a mixed-method of quantitative and qualitative research tools made it possible for the quantitative survey to help compensate for an inherent weakness in qualitative interviews. Sensing states,

A primary weakness that results from using qualitative methods with perceived experts centers on the nature of who they are as advocates in the field. They have a stake in presenting their congregation or their identity from a certain perspective. Researchers need to exercise caution when analyzing the data because they may only be hearing a rehearsed script. (chap.1)

In addition, because this is a mixed-method project, the use of qualitative, semi-structured interviews was used to complement and enhance the research gained through the quantitative survey. Sensing contends that doing interviews in combination with surveys allows the researcher to gain new information not discovered in the interviews and explain answers discovered in the surveys (chap.4). Also, as Creswell contends, by using a qualitative interview, the researcher is able to “gather data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes” (37). The qualitative interview gave opportunities for the respondents to respond to questions of the survey and allowed this research project to find the common themes that came from the interviewees.

### **Summary of Literature**

The Old and New Testament contains many examples of the need for priests and pastors to expound the Scripture for the people of God and apply it to their lives. They both speak of the great power of Scripture and the need for leaders to explain and apply these Scriptures to the people of God. Both the Old Testament (Nehemiah 8:1-8) and the New Testament (Acts 8:26-33) show examples of church leaders interpreting and applying the Scripture, which was not clear to people because they were culturally separated from the original author and audience. Also, the Scripture clearly commands preachers to preach the word (2 Timothy 4:2) and rely on its power to change lives (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Though church leaders throughout the history of the church did not always follow the examples of the Biblical pattern of preaching, there was always a group of preachers who endeavored to preach and apply the Scripture to the people of the church. The

Patristic Period showed early church leaders expounding the Bible and teaching others to do it also. The early Middle-Ages strayed a little towards ritualism and away from expository preaching. However, the late Middle-Ages saw a resurgence of preaching and a desire to find the original meaning of the biblical text, which was sparked by the humanism of the Renaissance and the surge in available texts with the invention of the printing press. The Reformation saw the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, which influenced preaching as pastors looked to Scripture over the tradition of the church for God's truth. It also sparked a push for pastors to preach the Bible in the language of the people, so they could apply it to their lives. Lastly, the Modern Age to the Present saw the biblical preaching of John Wesley and the Puritans, who followed the expository principles of expounding and applying Scripture. It also saw Karl Barth claim the superiority of the Word of God, and great expositors, such as Stott and Lloyd-Jones, rise up to practice and teach expository preaching.

Many arguments can be made for expository preaching. First, expository preaching focuses the preacher on the text and limits his or her message to what the text says. Second, the hermeneutical need of interpreting Scripture, which was written in a different language and culture, lends itself to expository preaching as the best way to bring the meaning to a contemporary audience. Third, expository preaching allows pastors to preach powerful messages from the Bible within the constraints of a busy schedule. Fourth, the plethora of sermon material available in expository preaching of the whole Bible allows pastors to stay in one place longer. Fifth, expository preaching can be expanded beyond one preaching style and can be used in a variety of sermon delivery methods.



Topical preachers do not have many scholarly journals written about the method, but there are definitely people who argue for its use. First, topical preaching advocates argue that Jesus and the apostles did not preach expositively and neither should we. However, Jesus was the Word of God and the apostles were witnesses to Jesus, which differentiates them. Second, some will argue that topical preaching better meets the felt needs of a congregation. This does not take into consideration that preaching expositively addresses the felt needs and beyond for a congregation. Third, topical preaching is seen as the way to grow a large church. There is some evidence that topical preaching can be used for numerical growth, but it does not change the biblical example or mandate.

The Assemblies of God trains pastors to preach expositively and promotes expository preaching through its publications. In addition, the present superintendent, George Wood, was a practitioner of expository preaching in his pastoral ministry and advocate of expository preaching in his present role.

There are two possible reasons why Assemblies of God preachers do not always follow their training. First, the uniqueness of the Assemblies of God may cause a disconnect between the expository philosophy and Assemblies of God preachers. The Assemblies of God has a history of separatism and was not accepted by other Protestant groups until the 1940's. Furthermore, the Assemblies of God has a pronounced experience component in its Pentecostal Hermeneutic that differentiates it. Also, the Pentecostal experience of the sign gifts cause many to seek these as a measuring stick for quality preaching. Lastly, the emphasis on the Finney-like altar call may cause pastors to do whatever it takes to bring people to the altar, and this may affect the emphasis on expository preaching.

A second reason why Assemblies of God preachers may not follow their training is the greater influence of mentors and role models over that of training. Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory indicates that pastors are more likely to learn from their experiences and mentors who may preach in a completely different method than what is taught at Assemblies of God training institutions. As much as the Assemblies of God promotes expository preaching, the influence of mentors and models may be more powerful than initial preaching training and denominational publications.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter covers the research methodology that was used for this project with an analysis of the methods used to both choose the participants in this project and conduct the research necessary to complete the purpose of the project. The step-by-step procedures for how the project was done are detailed including how each research tool was used to fulfill the project's purpose and answer the research questions. In addition, the unique context of the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God is examined, a time-line for the project laid out, and the factors contributing to the validity and reliability of this study are presented.

#### **Nature and Purpose of the Project**

The Assemblies of God has emphasized biblical expository preaching from its leadership and training institutions as the preferred method of preaching biblically sound sermons in Assemblies of God churches. In addition, research of biblical texts and most preaching scholars argue for expository preaching over topical preaching for biblical accuracy and for allowing the properly taught text and application of the Bible to change lives. However, the training ministers receive, the encouragement to preach expositively by Assemblies of God leaders, and the biblical and scholarly research has not always translated into expository preaching in the pulpits of Assemblies of God churches. Thus, the nature of this project was to study the preaching patterns of Minnesota Assemblies of God preachers and attempt to understand the attitudes towards expository preaching and the disconnect between the expository preaching taught in Assemblies of God training

institutions and the practice of preaching in the Minnesota District of the Assemblies of God.

In addition, the purpose of this research was to explore current patterns of preaching with pastors in the Minnesota District Assemblies of God in order to make recommendations for an expository preaching model which works in the distinctive Assemblies of God context. The goal of the project was to find out why many Minnesota District Assemblies of God pastors do not use expository preaching methods and determine ways to help them incorporate more expository preaching in their weekly preaching.

### **Research Questions**

In order to find patterns of expository and topical preaching that are used in the Minnesota Assemblies of God and to propose how its use can be increased, the research process was guided by three questions.

#### **RQ #1. What historical, theological, and practical factors are contributing to the present topical method of preaching in the Minnesota Assemblies of God?**

This research question addressed the purpose of determining the pattern of preaching that Minnesota District Assemblies of God pastors use and what reasons they may have for their preaching methods. Aspects studied in the literature review were historical, theological, and practical factors that contribute to the primarily topical style of preaching in the Minnesota District. Furthermore, questions seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen on the Preaching Survey addressed this research question, and questions one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, and nine of the Preaching Interview addressed this research question.

**RQ #2. What are Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors being taught about preaching in our formal and informal training institutions?**

This research question addressed the purpose by studying the training that Minnesota Assemblies of God preachers received in their formal educational training at Assemblies of God institutions, what other training they may be receiving from other sources they choose, what methods are presented at Assemblies of God events, and how these factors have influenced their current patterns and methods of preaching. Questions seven, eight, nine, fifteen, and sixteen of the Preaching Survey, and questions one, two, three, and six of the Preaching Survey addressed this research question.

**RQ #3. What disparities exist between training, modeling, and the current preaching practices of Minnesota Assemblies of God preachers?**

This research question addressed the purpose statement in the exploration of preaching patterns of Minnesota District Assemblies of God pastors to find the disparities between training, modeling, and current preaching practices in order to create recommendations for an expository model which would work in a distinct Assemblies of God context. Questions seven, eight, nine, twelve, fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen of the Preaching Survey, and questions two, three, four, six, seven, eight, and ten of the Preaching Interview addressed this research question.

**Ministry Context(s)**

The ministry context was the pastors of the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God. One of the unique characteristics of this group is the educational variable. The Assemblies of God does not require a seminary or college degree to be licensed or ordained. The Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God states,

“Any level of formal academic achievement [diploma or degree] shall not be a requirement for credentials” (*Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God Policy Manual for Credential Applicants* 5). Applicants are required to take an examination to “demonstrate knowledge of the Bible, Assemblies of God doctrines, and ministerial practices” and also must have a required level of training (*Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God Policy Manual for Credential Applicants*). This training ranges from “self-study and ministerial experience” to training at Assemblies of God weekend training institutes (Minnesota School of Ministry) to degrees from “an endorsed Assemblies of God post-secondary school” (*Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God Policy Manual for Credential Applicants*). Because of this, there are a variety of training levels amongst pastors. Many pastors in the past chose to take their coursework through the Assemblies of God endorsed North Central University in Minneapolis, but within the last ten years, enrollment in ministry majors has dropped at North Central and more and more students are choosing non-college level training courses instead of North Central or other Assemblies of God colleges.

Another factor that is unique about pastors in the Minnesota District Council is the polity of the Assemblies of God, which treats all churches as autonomous. The Assemblies of God does not like to refer to itself as a denomination, but instead uses the word “fellowship” to indicate the looser affiliation with district and national offices of the Assemblies of God. Churches choose their own pastors by congregational vote, and churches can be as connected or independent as they choose as long as they maintain Assemblies of God doctrine. This creates a variety of different styles of churches with different values and different leadership and preaching styles of pastors. In addition,

without denominational guidelines or requirements, pastoral pay varies widely in the district. Many Assemblies of God lead pastors are bi-vocational, and the average rate of pay is lower than other denominations. This factor may affect the amount of time that pastors can spend on preaching and can afford in training.

### **Participants**

The participants for the study were carefully chosen to match the purpose and research questions associated with this project. The selection process was for the most part purposive, but there was a random element used to obtain a sample for the interviews.

### **Criteria for Selection**

The initial participants for this study were all chosen in a purposive way. Three characteristics were used to choose the participants.

1. The participants for this study were all licensed or ordained ministers of the Minnesota District of the Assemblies of God.
2. All of the ministers were pastors who were the primary speaking pastors of Assemblies of God churches in the Minnesota District
3. All the participants were trained in Assemblies of God training institutions.

All three of these characteristics insured that participants fit the purpose statement and research questions. First, the participants' status as licensed or ordained ministers of the Minnesota District Assemblies of God narrowed the field to fit both the purpose statement and all three of my questions. Second, the participants' status as lead preaching pastors aligns with the purpose of exploring preaching patterns of current Minnesota Assemblies of God preachers and also helps answer research questions one, two, and three. The third requirement of participants receiving their training at Assemblies of God training institutions allowed the research to be focused on studying

Minnesota District Council pastors and especially assist in answering research question two and three concerning what was taught to pastors and how their practice differs at distinctly Assemblies of God institutions.

The Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God directory, which lists all churches and their lead pastors, was used to identify the lead pastor of every church in the district. This source generated a list of 191 lead pastors of churches in the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God. The pastors of all 191 churches were sent the Preaching Survey. However, it was prefaced in the introduction of the Preaching Survey that only pastors who were lead preaching pastors and attended Assemblies of God training institutions were eligible to take the survey. To confirm both of those criteria, lead preaching pastor and educated at an Assemblies of God institution, questions were added on the Preaching Survey to ask the participants if they were the lead pastor at their church and where they received their preaching training. If they did not answer yes to the preaching pastor and choose an Assemblies of God training institution, their survey was not counted.

The last question in my survey asked participants if they would be willing to take part in a thirty minute interview to further explore preaching methods and styles of Minnesota Assemblies of God preachers. Participants were informed that ten candidates would be chosen for interviews, and if they were willing, to write their name and email address in the survey so they could be contacted to setup an interview. Fifty-five pastors completed the survey, and thirty-six indicated their willingness to take part in an interview. Out of thirty-six, a random sample of ten was picked, using Excel as



documented by SurveyMonkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/random-sample-in-excel/>).”

### **Description of Participants**

As stated above, the candidates were all licensed or ordained pastors in the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God, primary lead pastors of Minnesota Assemblies of God churches, and trained in Assemblies of God training institutions. They were all over the age of 18, but there was no limit on age as long as they were serving as lead pastors. The genders of the candidates were both men and women and were of a variety of ethnicities. The participants were in good mental and physical condition.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Informed Consent was received by participants in the online Preaching Survey by way of asking applicants to read the Preaching Survey Informed Consent and answering yes to the question, “Do you agree to the above terms? By clicking Yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.” The participants in the Preaching Interview were given a written copy of the Preaching Interview Informed Consent to read, sign, and date if the interview was in person or were sent the informed consent by way of email and asked to return them signed if the interview took place by way of Skype or FaceTime.

Confidentiality for the Preaching Survey was ensured by using privacy protocols of the online survey tool, Survey Monkey, which are laid out at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/privacy-policy/>. Furthermore, all survey responses were strictly confidential and data from this research was reported only in the

aggregate. The information was coded by Survey Monkey, remained confidential, and was only accessible by using a login and strong password on the site.

Confidentiality for the Preaching Interview was obtained by an assurance in the informed consent that the participants answers were confidential and only accessible to the research team. Furthermore, a password-protected MacBook Pro contained all of the recordings and findings, and all electronic data was stored in a secure, encrypted folder on a Macintosh computer using 128-Bit AES encryption with a complex password known only by the research team. In addition, all data was secured via password to the account, which was also known only by the research team. Data downloaded from the website was secured on the secure, encrypted folder of the researcher's laptop, which is password protected. Any data printed in hard copies was secured in the researcher's locked security file box. Six to twelve months after completion of the dissertation and its final approval, all data will be deleted from the website. Data saved on the researcher's computer will be securely deleted by FileShredder, and all hard copies of data will be shredded and burned, as well, one year after the date the dissertation is completed and approved.

Confidentiality was ensured for the Preaching Survey and was secured by only using the responses in the aggregate to form a composite of responses and did not refer to individual responses in the reporting of the study. For the Preaching Interviews, each candidate was identified using a four or five letter code beginning with the letters "int" for interview and a number between one and ten.

### **Instrumentation**

Two researcher-designed instruments collected data in this study. The first one was the Preaching Survey, and the second one was the semi-structured Preaching Interview.

The Preaching Survey was a researcher-designed quantitative researcher instrument to measure the preaching styles and attitudes of the lead pastors of Minnesota District Assemblies of God pastors, which helped establish information and trends for all three research questions. The survey also included a demographic section, which identified the age, education level, the institution which provided the participant his or her preaching training, and the education level of each participant. The goal of this instrument was to identify trends of preaching attitudes and methods for the whole district. As Tim Sensing argues, the survey was used to sample the entire group of lead pastors in the Minnesota District, and this would not have been possible with a questionnaire or individual interviews (Sensing). The survey had eighteen questions and used some binary questions where participants chose between expository and topical preaching for their answers and also had a forced choice Likert Scale of 1-5 with the option of “Undecided” for questions where participants were asked for an opinion or observation.

The Preaching Interview was a research-designed, semi-structured, qualitative instrument used to allow a randomly picked group of ten participants to further explain questions used in the survey and dig deeper into other aspects needed for the research questions. The rationale for this instrument was to allow Minnesota District pastors to explain their preaching training, choices of preaching methods, and their rationale for

their preaching methods. There were ten questions in the interview and an eleventh question which allowed the participant to clarify any of his or her answers and gave an opportunity to express any further thoughts on expository and topical preaching. This tool helped answer the three research questions and formed the basis for helping create suggestions to help Minnesota District pastors use more expository preaching.

### **Expert Review**

The research methods were sent to my dissertation advisor, Dr. Doug Oss, retired head of the Preaching Department at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary; Dr. Rick Wadholm, the academic dean of Trinity Bible College, an Assemblies of God college operated by the Minnesota District Assemblies of God and other neighboring districts; and Dr. Doug Graham, the head of the College of Church Leadership at North Central University, an Assemblies of God college operated by the Minnesota District Assemblies of God and other neighboring districts. They have all taught preaching in a Pentecostal school and all have earned doctorates. Expert reviewers were sent the Preaching Survey and Preaching Interview, along with an introduction letter with an explanation of the problem being addressed, the purpose of the research project, and the research questions. A rubric was created for each of the instruments, which asked whether each question was needed or not needed, clear or unclear, and suggestions to clarify. Expert reviewers were also asked an open-ended question at the end, “Recommendation of questions that were not asked that needed to be asked?”

The expert reviewers gave positive reviews, offering some minor points of clarification on a few questions and suggestions to clarify some things for participants in the study. They all approved the instruments used in the research.

### **Reliability & Validity of Project Design**

The use of the Preaching Survey for the entire sample of Minnesota District Assemblies of God lead pastors was the best way to explore the preaching methods, preaching method rationales, and other factors influencing preaching styles of the entire district. The Preaching Interview enabled deeper research with a smaller sample of the larger group to investigate preaching methods and rationales, and also allowed pastors to expand on their answers. The instruments were reliable as the Preaching Survey followed best practices for a survey, including use of the Likert Scale and a positive evaluation by three expert reviewers. The survey received a twenty-nine percent response rate in the four days it was offered. In addition, the Preaching Interview followed the best practices for semi-structured interviews, including a consistent order and reading of questions and a positive review by the expert reviews.

Both instruments were administered to the participants in a consistent basis. The Preaching Interview was offered on the internet for four days and a reminder was sent out after two days to remind pastors to complete the interview, so that the presentation was consistent. In the Preaching Interview, all the questions were asked in the same way each time, and the researcher intentionally did not make any comments to indicate approval or disapproval of answers to the questions. The findings of the two studies were trustworthy and generalized, because there was a mixed-method approach of a quantitative Preaching Survey and a qualitative Preaching Interview.

### **Data Collection**

The project design was a mixed-method, pre-intervention, which used a quantitative Preaching Survey and a qualitative Preaching Interview. The Preaching

Survey was done using Survey Monkey and was sent out to every lead preaching pastor in the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God. To facilitate a quick response, participants were given four days to complete the survey, and, to add credibility to the survey, a letter of endorsement from the Assistant Superintendent of the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies, Ed Tedeschi, was attached. A twenty-nine percent response rate was obtained using these methods.

The qualitative, semi-structured Preaching Interview candidates were identified by asking for volunteers in the Preaching Survey to give their names and email addresses if they were willing to be interviewed. Of the fifty-five responses, ten were chosen using a randomization program in Excel, and they received an email nine days after the survey closed confirming their selection for the interviewing and laying out the process for the interview. The ten candidates were then contacted by phone the next day, and in-person interviews were setup for eight participants in the next two days. After completing the in-person interviews, two remaining candidates were scheduled to have interviews by Skype or FaceTime and were interviewed within seven days of the last in-person interview.

The quantitative Preaching Survey was done to find answers to the research questions from a large group of people, such as the 191 lead pastors of the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God. As Judith Bell states, the survey is a good tool for a “large group of individuals to enable the research not only to describe but also to compare, to relate one characteristic to another and to demonstrate that certain features exist in certain categories” (14).

The qualitative Preaching Interview was done to create a mixed-methods study, which pulled more in-depth answers from the quantitative research done in the Preaching Survey. Sensing, in his chapter on surveys, asserts that in conjunction with surveys “face-to-face interviews increase participation, your ability to clarify, and the probability of gathering additional information” (Sensing). In addition, the qualitative research method of the Preaching Interview allowed me to strengthen the research by, as J.W. Creswell contends, “the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes” (37).

### **Data Analysis**

The data was collected in a mixed-method format with a quantitative Preaching Survey sent to 191 lead pastors in the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God. In addition, qualitative, semi-structured Preaching Interviews were administered to ten randomly selected pastors who took the survey and indicated their willingness to participate in the interviews.

The online service SurveyMonkey provided the quantitative data from the Preaching Survey. The data was collected and analyzed in Microsoft Excel 2016. Analyzation by Excel computed the descriptive statistics, most notably the mean and standard deviation of each question. Each question was individually analyzed to determine the statistical significance of the responses, mean, and standard deviation.

The semi-structured Preaching Interview protocol provided qualitative data which was recorded, and notes were created during the interview and from the recordings. I read through the notes of the interviews several times and listened again to certain

sections of the interviews to provide clarity of answers. After several readings and clarifications, I created codes for certain themes that reoccurred in the interview answers and coded them appropriately. I created a Word document with each coded theme along with related interview responses for each theme.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors are trained and encouraged by the Assemblies of God to preach in an expository method. However, this was not the primary preaching method of lead pastors in the Assemblies of God. The purpose of this research was to explore current patterns of preaching with pastors in the Minnesota District Assemblies of God in order to make recommendations for an expository preaching model which works in the distinctive Assemblies of God context.

This chapter identifies the participants in the study and their demographic makeup. Then the chapter presents the quantitative data from the Preaching Survey and the coded qualitative data from the Preaching Interviews for each of the three research questions. Chapter Four concludes with a list of major findings from the presented data.

#### **Participants**

The initial Preaching Survey was sent out to 191 lead pastors in the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God. Of that number, it was unknown how many met the qualifications of my study as lead pastors of Minnesota Assemblies of God Churches who had been trained at an Assemblies of God training institution. Fifty-three lead pastors, who met the qualifications, filled out the survey. Of that group of fifty-three, thirty-four volunteered to take part in the Preaching Interview of which ten were randomly selected. The demographic profile of those who took part in the Preaching Survey is represented in Figure 4.1. The demographic profile of those who took part in the Preaching Interview is represented in Figure 4.2

Figure 4.1: Demographics of Preaching Survey  
Participants (N=53)

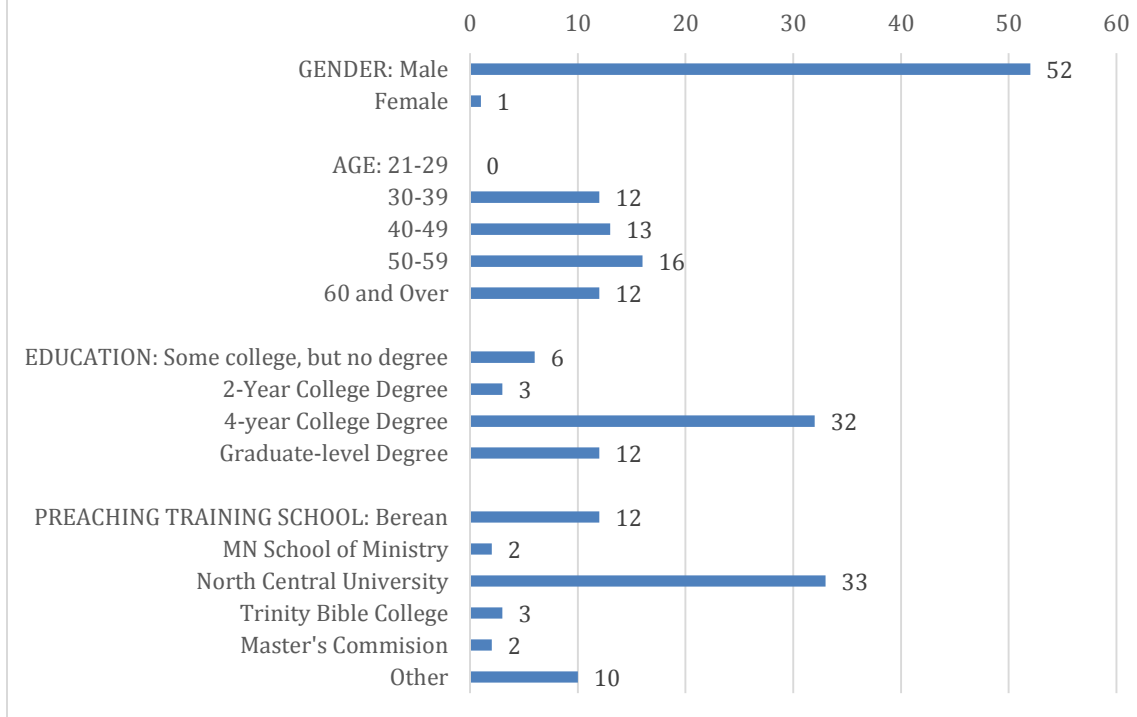
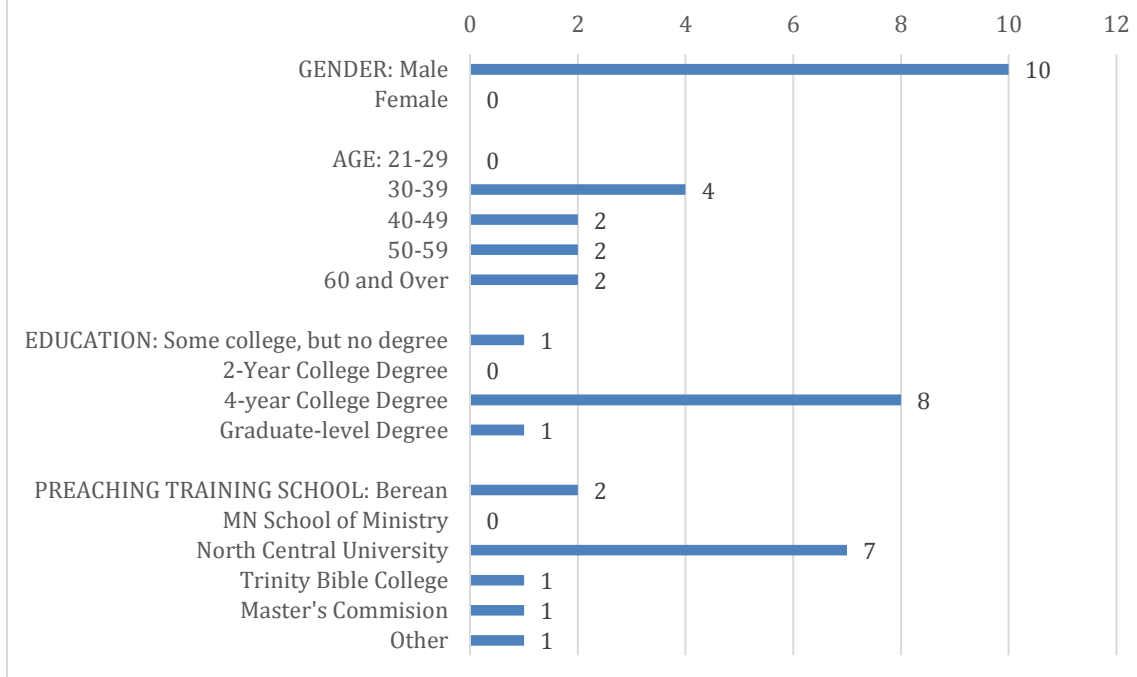


Figure 4.2: Demographics of Preaching Interview  
Participants (N=10)



### **Research Question #1: Description of Evidence**

#### **What historical, theological, and practical factors are contributing to the present topical method of preaching in the Minnesota Assemblies of God?**

The Preaching Survey had ten questions which looked for reasons why Minnesota Assemblies of God preachers prefer topical preaching over expository preaching (See Table 4.1). Out of these ten questions, some of them also provided information for research questions two and three (See Table 4.2 and 4.3). Questions seven and eight looked for reasons for preaching style from each participant's initial preaching training and mentor/model preaching in his/her life. Question seven showed a majority of participants remembered expository preaching in their educational training, and question seven showed no clear majority of influence either towards expository or topical.

In questions nine, eleven, twelve, and sixteen participants had a large number of undecideds ( $\% > 20$ ), which may have caused the means to stay around three, which is the number assigned to the undecided choice on the Preaching Survey. Question sixteen which asked pastors to identify the preaching style preference of Assemblies of God leadership and publications showed the highest score of undecided at 37.74 percent, while question nine about the effectiveness of expository preaching showed 22.64 percent undecided, and question eleven about which sermon style takes more time to prepare and question twelve about which style is the most Pentecostal scoring 20.75 percent undecided.

The participants are most widely varied in their concepts of whether expository preaching is more biblical (question thirteen) with a standard deviation of 1.16, and a narrower group of responses were evident on the question of what method of preaching

the Assemblies of God promotes (question sixteen) with a standard deviation of .87.

Three questions (nine, eleven, and fourteen) had an almost equal distribution (< 6 percent difference) between agreement and disagreement with the Likert scale questions showing a lack of consensus on these questions. Question twelve on whether Pentecostal preaching is best expressed topically had the strongest disagreement with the lowest mean of 2.35 and 64.15 percent disagreeing in total with the highest strongly disagreeing number of 11.32 percent. Meanwhile, question fifteen on the topical preaching at most Minnesota District Assemblies of God events had the strongest agreement with the highest mean of 3.78 and 64.15 percent agreeing in total with the largest strongly agreement number of 18.87 percent.

**Table 4.1 Factors Contributing to Present Preaching Style (N=53)**

Questions			Expository %	Topical %	No Response %			
7. What was the primary preaching method you were taught in your academic training?			56.60%	24.53%	18.87%			
8. The mentors and/or pastors you look up to preach in which method primarily?			41.51%	52.83%	5.66%			
Questions	Mean	SD	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Undecided %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	No Response %
9. Preaching in a topical rather than expository style best meets the needs of my congregation.	3.00	1.07	3.77%	35.85%	22.64%	28.30%	7.55%	1.89%
10. Expository preaching is more difficult than topical preaching.	2.75	0.98	3.77%	49.06%	16.98%	28.30%	1.89%	0.00%
11. Topical preaching takes more preparation time than expository preaching.	3.04	1.02	1.89%	35.85%	20.75%	32.08%	5.66%	3.77%
12. Pentecostal empowered preaching is best expressed in topical preaching.	2.35	0.89	11.32%	52.83%	20.75%	9.43%	1.89%	3.77%
13. Expository preaching is usually more biblically accurate than topical preaching.	2.94	1.16	3.77%	45.28%	13.21%	24.53%	11.32%	1.89%
14. When looking for a series idea, I look for a topic to preach about rather than a book of the Bible to preach through.	2.87	1.10	9.43%	35.85%	13.21%	37.74%	1.89%	1.89%
15. The speakers at Minnesota District Assemblies of God sponsored events (District Council/Equip, Minister/Spouse, Family Camp, etc) primarily preach topical sermons.	3.78	0.92	0.00%	11.32%	16.98%	45.28%	18.87%	7.55%
16. The Assemblies of God leadership and publications promote and encourage pastors to preach expository sermons.	3.21	0.87	3.77%	15.09%	37.74%	39.62%	1.89%	1.89%

Figure 4.3- Questions Seven and Eight

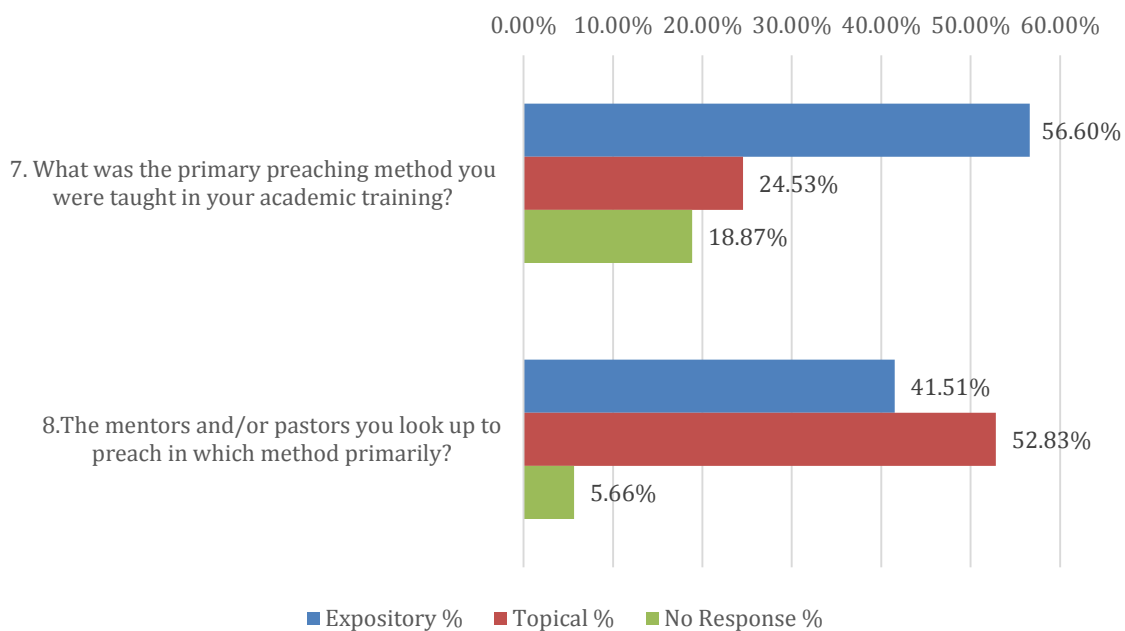
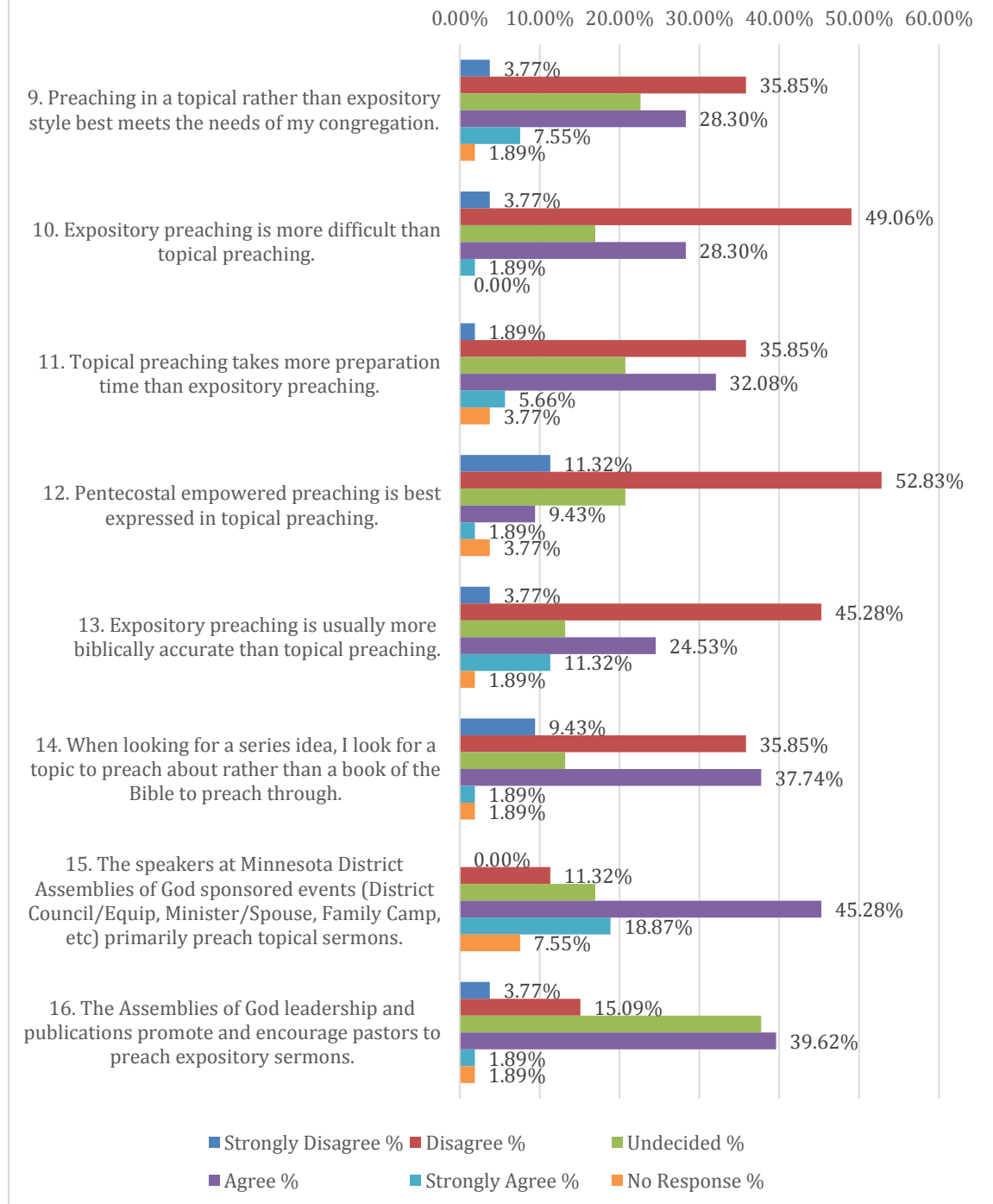


Figure 4.4: Questions Nine - Sixteen



Qualitative data collected from the ten Preaching Interviews provides some answers to research question number one. By analyzing and coding the data, I was able to identify the following factors as reasons why pastors in the Minnesota District Council

of the Assemblies of God are primarily topical preachers and what advantages they see in preaching topically rather than preaching in an expository fashion.

### **Confirmation of the Claim of Research Question One**

The quantitative data in the Preaching Survey did not clearly state a preference for expository or topical preaching among Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors with questions nine and fourteen, which were written to identify method preference, showing an almost equal preference both ways. However, out of the ten interview participants, eight identified themselves as mostly or primarily topical preachers with only two saying they preach expositoryly. This confirms the basis for the first research question on why Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors are primarily topical preachers.

### **Reasons for the Use of the Topical Preaching Method**

There were multiple reasons why the Preaching Interview participants contended for topical over expository preaching. Interview participants mentioned several factors that influenced their style of preaching, including the following five points.

#### **Relevance**

The interviewees gave many endorsements on the relevance of topical preaching to their congregations. The word relevant was mentioned as a positive quality of topical preaching in a majority of the interviews. Int6 mentioned the fact that topical preaching was a more “marketable” style of preaching which reaches people where they are. Int10 inputted that topical preaching is more relevant to a younger generation and engages the culture well. He goes on to state it allows churches to be flexible and “timely” by moving to topics that are in the news and popular in the culture at a given time. Int9 contends that growing churches and large mega churches are using topical preaching

effectively to bring new people into their churches, which makes it a model pastors want to follow.

The word “communicator” came up in a large number of interviews, and it was asserted that topical preaching lends itself well to becoming an effective communicator. Int5 stated that topical preaching lends itself to great illustrations and stories that make the sermon more interesting. Int6 discussed learning from both bad and good communicators in non-church settings to see how they present their craft and adapt it to topical preaching. Int1 stated that topical preaching is an “engaging” form of communication for pastors. Int3 contends that good topical preaching should engage the congregation and keep them “on the edge of their seat.” Finally, Int8 contended that it is vital for a pastor to be entertaining and passionate to be relevant to people.

### **Effectiveness in Reaching People**

Int4 argued that expository is a great form of preaching, but topical preaching is what people do and what works to reach people. Int4 concluded that it is a method that relates better to the unchurched and helps them come to a relationship with Christ. Int2 and others argued that the sign of good preaching is the response of the people to come to the altar and ultimately leads to church growth. Int3 stated that expository preaching can bring a necessary knowledge of scripture, but topical preaching can “move him” and bring him to an encounter with God.

### **Better Serves the Needs of the People**

Another often repeated argument for topical preaching was that it equipped pastors to satisfy and serve the needs of the people. When asked what makes for a quality sermon, most of the interviewees came up with answers revolving around the



response of the people either during the sermon or the changes in their lives after the sermon. Most of the topical preachers said that they chose their topics based on the needs of the people in their congregation. Int8 stated that he seeks after where people are in his church and what needs they have, which he addresses in topical series. Int7 concurred that he seeks out the needs of the church and picks out topics to line up with those needs. Int5 and others stated that they pray and seek God's direction to find what topics God lays on heart to meet the needs of the church. Int3 and Int5 stated that topical preaching relates to people where they are, and Int7 contended that topical preaching allows pastors to tailor their messages to what the people need.

### **Works Better in a Preaching Calendar**

Int5 stated that topical preaching allowed pastors to change the topics to create variety in the preaching calendar and not lock you into anything for too long. Int6 concluded that switching from topic to topic instead of staying a long time in a book allows him to pick the needed topics for the church instead of having to follow the path of a particular biblical book. Int3 stated that topical preaching can help a church keep momentum throughout the year with a different topical series every month that keeps momentum going in the church. Int6 stated that he picks certain topics to hit every year and needs the flexibility in the preaching calendar to satisfy the topics he determines are needed.

### **Pentecostal Distinctive Preaching**

Another factor that was revealed in the interviews was the role of the Pentecostal distinctive of Assemblies of God preaching, which lends itself to a topical approach. All interviewees stated that as the Holy Spirit filled preachers, the Holy Spirit guided them in

their preparation for preaching, gave them power for preaching, and gave them sensitivity to the Spirit while preaching. Int3, Int5, Int6, Int4, Int10, Int8, and Int7, who all identified themselves as primarily topical preachers, talked about the Holy Spirit giving them words and direction while preaching. Int6 indicated that God puts things in his heart while preaching, and Int4 stated that God speaks to him during his preaching to guide him. Int5 says that God has many times prompted him to change directions during his sermon to deliver a different word than he had planned. Meanwhile, Int2, who identified himself as an expository preacher, said that God guides him and empowers him in his preparation for the sermon and that he tries to stay in tune with the Holy Spirit. In addition, expository preacher Int9 says that the Holy Spirit empowers him and gifts him, but his Pentecostalism is best expressed as a biblical preacher.

### **Worries about Topical and Praise for Expository**

An interesting fact that arose from the primarily topical preachers was their honesty about the weaknesses of topical preaching and the strengths of expository preaching. Topical preacher Int1 stated that topical sermons run the risk of pastors “cherry-picking” their scriptures to support any topic they might want to preach. Int7 stated that topical sermons can sometimes be shallow and “watered-down.” Int4 is frustrated when he hears pastors go off on their preferences without adequate support of scripture. Int6 admitted that topical preachers can have great presentations of a topic without any real scriptural meat to back them up. Lastly, Int5 stated that topical preaching is more time consuming than expository preaching through a book of the Bible, because a pastor needs to find new topics all the time instead of following the topics of a particular book.

Int3 admitted that he thinks expository is probably a better form of preaching, and he does not know why he is more topical. Int5 said that expository preaching is a more “in-depth” form of preaching, and Int8 stated that expository preaching is an “accurate” preaching of the Bible. Although he looks for needs of his church to address in topical preaching, Int7 stated if he preached through an entire book expositively, he would probably cover the needed topics for his church, and that it would probably be more effective for his church.

### Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

What are Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors being taught about preaching in our formal and informal training institutions?

**Table 4.2 What Are Minnesota Assemblies of God Preachers Being Taught About Preaching (N=53)**

Questions			Expository %	Topical %	No Response %			
7. What was the primary preaching method you were taught in your academic training?			56.60%	24.53%	18.87%			
8. The mentors and/or pastors you look up to preach in which method primarily?			41.51%	52.83%	5.66%			
Questions	Mean	SD	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Undecided %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	No Response %
9. Preaching in a topical rather than expository style best meets the needs of my congregation.	3.00	1.07	3.77%	35.85%	22.64%	28.30%	7.55%	1.89%
15. The speakers at Minnesota District Assemblies of God sponsored events (District Council/Equip, Minister/Spouse, Family Camp, etc) primarily preach topical sermons.	3.78	0.92	0.00%	11.32%	16.98%	45.28%	18.87%	7.55%
16. The Assemblies of God leadership and publications promote and encourage pastors to preach expository sermons.	3.21	0.87	3.77%	15.09%	37.74%	39.62%	1.89%	1.89%

Figure 4.5- Questions Seven and Eight

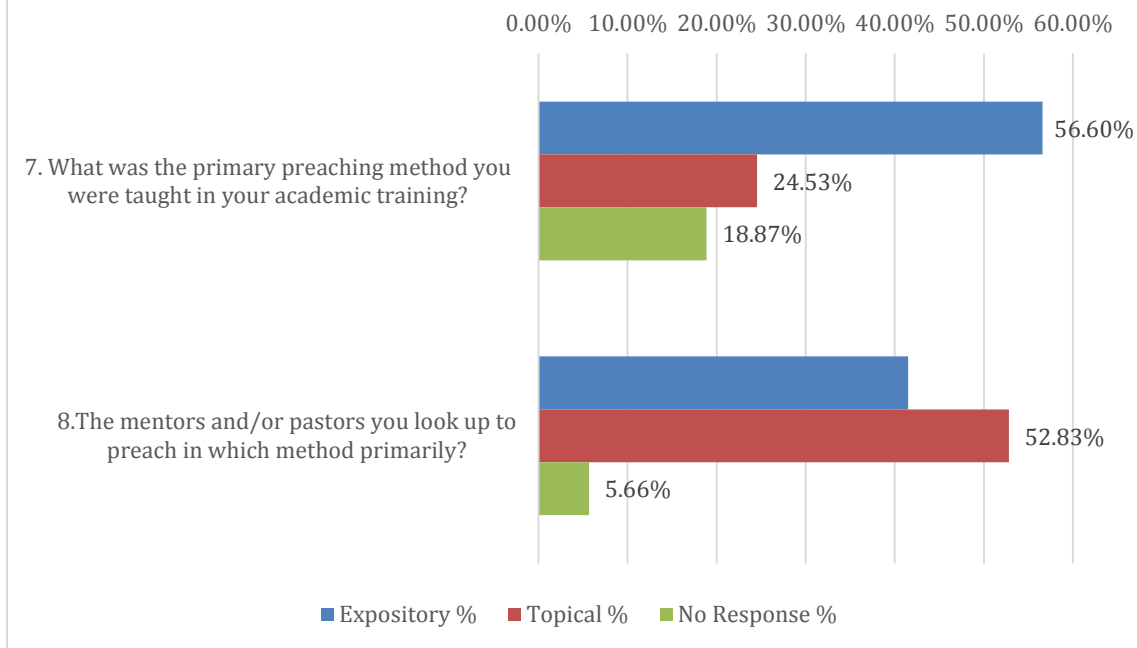
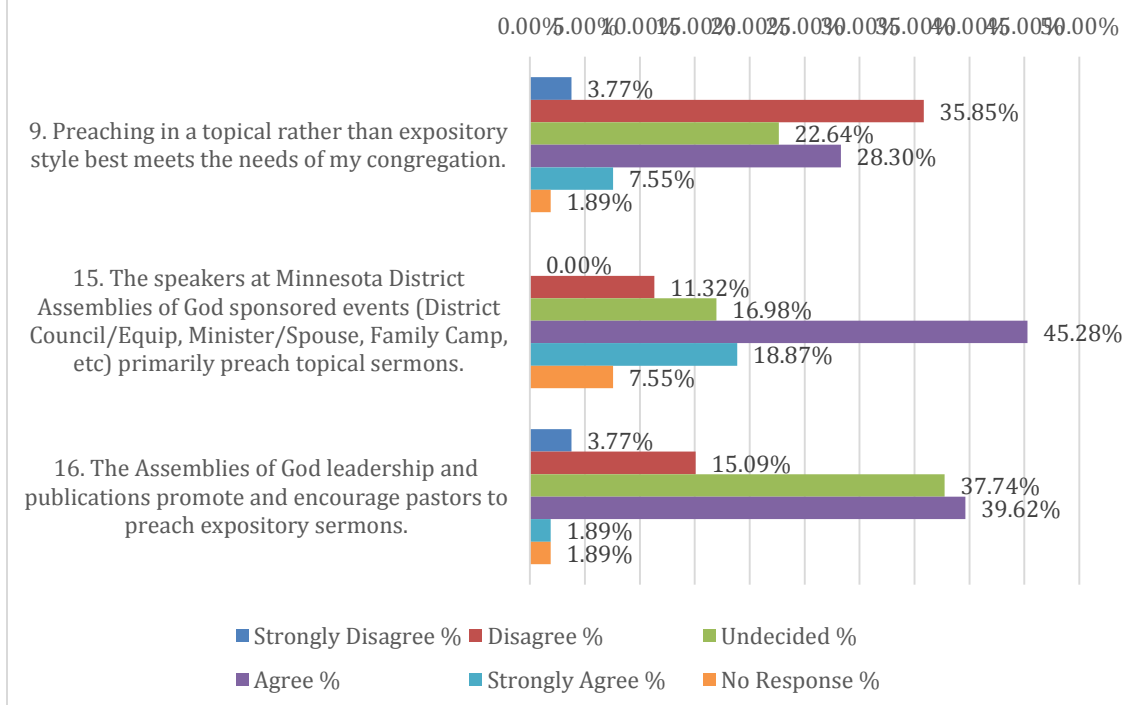


Figure 4.6: Questions Nine, Fifteen, and Sixteen



Qualitative data from the Preaching Interviews gave some insights into the training of pastors in their initial training at Assemblies of God endorsed training

institutions and their subsequent training through informal training. The interview answers to the formal training in expository methods lined up with the quantitative data in Preaching Survey question seven, which stated that a majority of pastors reported their training was in expository preaching. The data analysis showed the interviewees identified the following characteristics about their formal and informal training.

### **Initial Training Is Primarily Expository**

The interviewees came from a variety of different training schools, but for the most part they stated (if they could remember their training) that they primarily received training in expository preaching at each institution. Some of the preachers were not in programs that were designed to train pastors to be lead preaching pastors, but they now find themselves in these roles. Some were youth ministry majors who commented that the training they received was more topical in the youth homiletic courses and more expository in the standard, pastoral major homiletics classes. One interview participant started his pastoral ministry as an assistant pastor of music and never took a preaching course at his Assemblies of God endorsed college, because it was not part of his music ministry program. Thus, he primarily received his training through mentors.

### **Mentors are Primarily Topical**

For almost all of the participants in the Preaching Interview, their initial ministry was working under topical preachers. An exception was expository preacher Int9 who served his internship under a preacher who taught him how to preach expositoryly and his first pastor also practiced expository preaching, which he claims were his primary preaching training influences. Int7 and Int5 both talked about their home church pastors who impacted their preaching as being primarily topical preachers.

The interviewees all listed well-known pastors to whom they listened and looked up to. Expository preacher Int2 listed only expository preachers in his list of pastors. Int5 and Int4 only listed topical preachers in their lists, but most of the topical preachers listed some expository preachers amongst those they admired. However, the topical preachers spoke of their admiration for the expository preachers, but they did not speak of them as models who guided their preaching.

### **Speakers Promoted at District Events Are Primarily Topical**

The Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God has multiple functions where prominent pastors come into speak either to laypeople and pastors or just the pastors. Preaching Survey question fifteen on the topical preaching at most Minnesota District Assemblies of God events had the strongest agreement with the highest mean of 3.78 and 64.15 percent agreeing in total with the largest strongly agreement number of 18.87 percent. The interviewees also concurred with the statement that speakers at these events are either completely or almost always topical preachers. Int2 stated that he has never heard an expository speaker at any event or training he has attended. Int3 stated that he desires expository preaching at district events. Int7 stated that he heard one expository preacher that stood out, but most are topical. Most were impressed with the presentation styles and stories of the preachers at the events, with Int8 commenting that they are all “dynamic” and “really good speakers.” Int1 commented that they were “engaging” in their deliveries and speaking styles. Int10 stated that although the speakers are all delivering messages they have preached many times, he finds the messages anointed. Int8 and Int5 both stated that what they liked most about these events was the

altar times, and Int3 stated that he likes the rejuvenation he receives from the experience at the events, which is not necessarily linked to the preaching.

### Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

What disparities exist between training, modeling, and the current preaching practices of Minnesota Assemblies of God preachers?

**Table 4.3 Disparities Between Training and Present Preaching Styles (N=53)**

Questions			Expository %	Topical %	No Response %			
7. What was the primary preaching method you were taught in your academic training?			56.60%	24.53%	18.87%			
8. The mentors and/or pastors you look up to preach in which method primarily?			41.51%	52.83%	5.66%			
Questions	Mean	SD	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Undecided %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	No Response %
9. Preaching in a topical rather than expository style best meets the needs of my congregation.	3.00	1.07	3.77%	35.85%	22.64%	28.30%	7.55%	1.89%
12. Pentecostal empowered preaching is best expressed in topical preaching.	2.35	0.89	11.32%	52.83%	20.75%	9.43%	1.89%	3.77%
14. When looking for a series idea, I look for a topic to preach about rather than a book of the Bible to preach through.	2.87	1.10	9.43%	35.85%	13.21%	37.74%	1.89%	1.89%
15. The speakers at Minnesota District Assemblies of God sponsored events (District Council/Equip, Minister/Spouse, Family Camp, etc) primarily preach topical sermons.	3.78	0.92	0.00%	11.32%	16.98%	45.28%	18.87%	7.55%
16. The Assemblies of God leadership and publications promote and encourage pastors to preach expository sermons.	3.21	0.87	3.77%	15.09%	37.74%	39.62%	1.89%	1.89%

Figure 4.7- Questions Seven and Eight

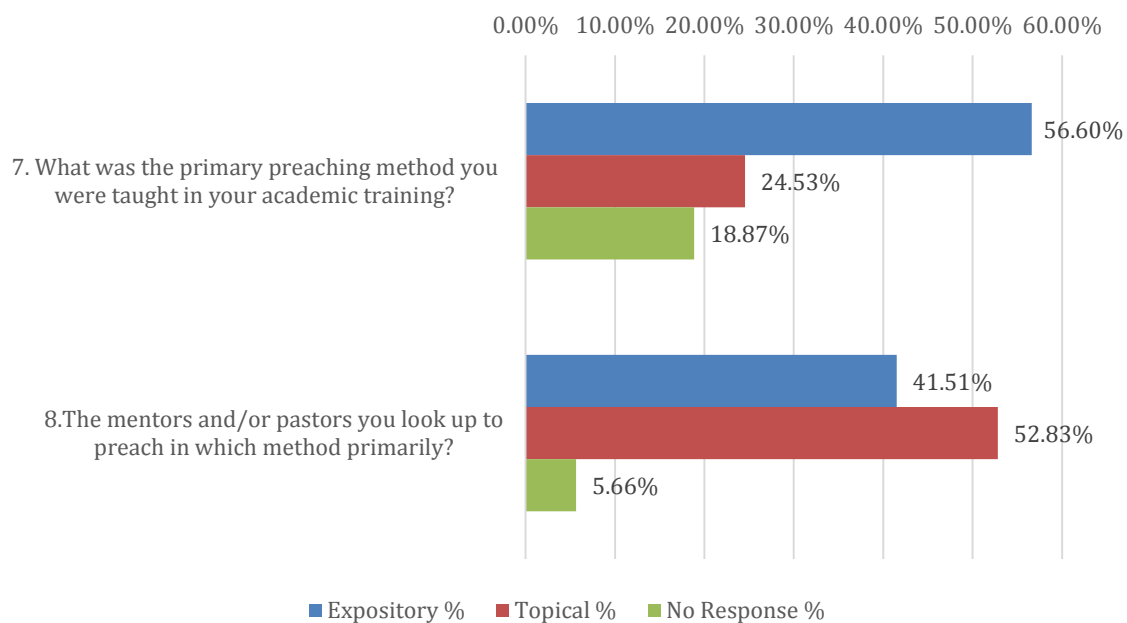
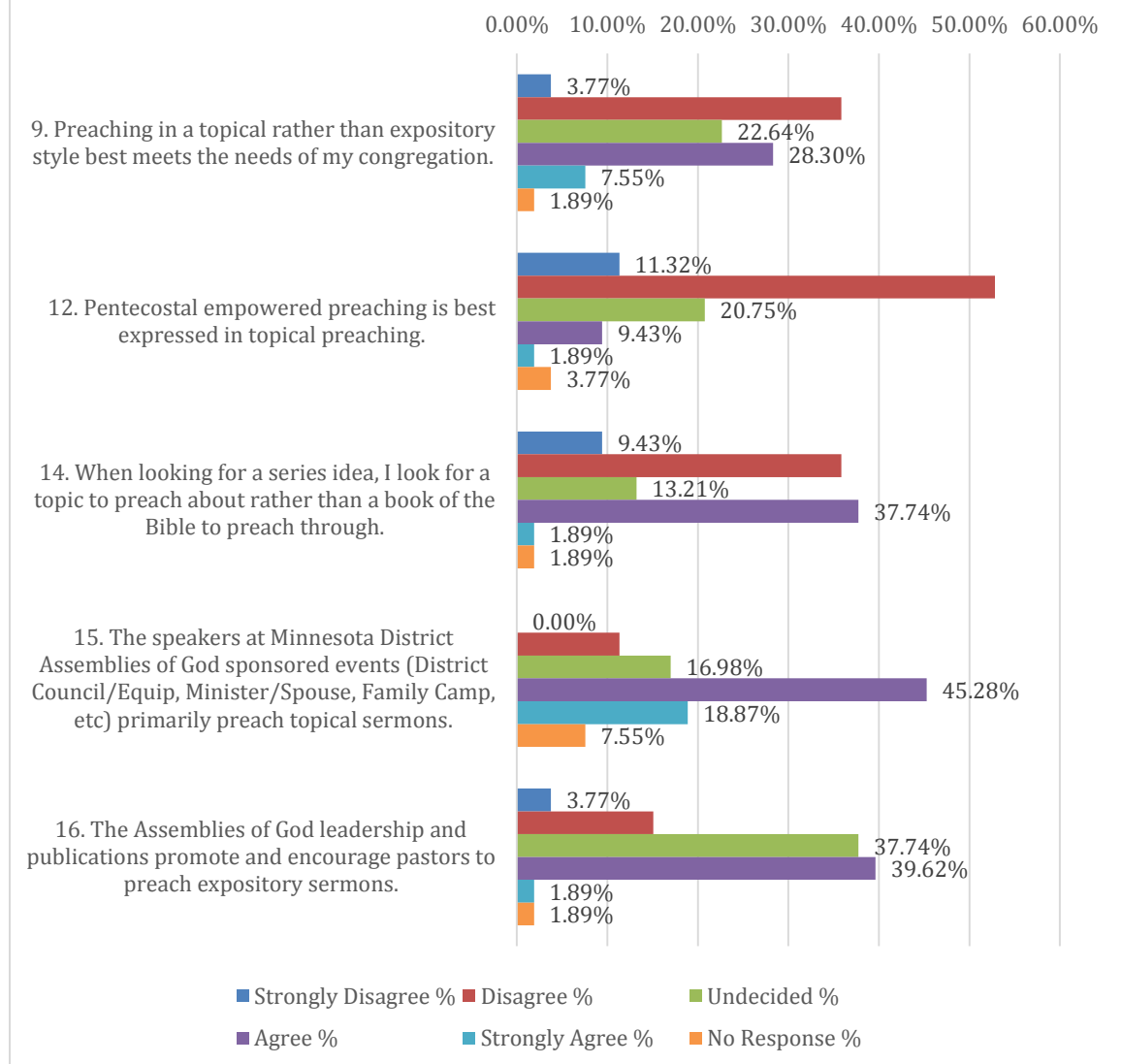




Figure 4.8: Questions Nine, Twelve, Fourteen, Fifteen , and Sixteen



Qualitative Data obtained through the Preaching Interviews found some common themes that showed disparities between training, modeling, and the current preaching practices of Minnesota Assemblies of God preachers. My coded data analysis shows that the participants in the Preaching Interviews identified the following themes as disparities.

### **General Lack of Influence of Initial Training**

Almost all of the interviewees were able to identify their training at an Assemblies of God endorsed training institution as expository preaching training. Of the ten participants in the Preaching Interview, four were in the thirty to thirty-nine age demographic. Even though they were not that far removed from their training, none of these interviewees talked about their training as highly influential on how they preach today. Int6 spoke of one teacher at his institution as “disengaged” and teaching in a “shoot from the hip” method and also teaching a “shoot from the hip” method of preaching. Int3 commented that he learned a lot about preaching and public speaking skills but “felt ill-equipped to preach” after his training and was not influenced much by his training.

Int8 talked about learning methods at school and learning how to look at a particular text, but he does not use the methods he learned there. Others from other demographics spoke of varying levels of influence of their training. Int5 spoke of learning expository and topical methods, but he was influenced much more by pastors in his youth and other pastors when he started his ministry. Int1 who received his training in Assemblies of God endorsed training outside of the endorsed college programs, spoke of his speech classes in college being more helpful than his preaching training in his program.

### **Promotion of Assemblies of God Resources Not Influential**

As noted in the literature review, the leadership and publications of the Assemblies of God encouraged and endorsed expository preaching. As shown in the Preaching Survey question sixteen, only 41.51 percent of lead pastors were able to

identify this fact. This question also provided the largest number of undecideds in the survey with 37.74 percent answering “undecided.”

One of the stated reasons for the Assemblies of God promoting expository preaching is to keep pastors’ sermons biblical. Question thirteen on the Preaching Survey asked lead pastors if they thought expository was more biblically accurate than topical and 49.05 percent were in disagreement with 35.85 percent in agreement. With most of the interviewees answering that they were topical preaching, they had different answers as to how they stayed biblical with their topical preaching methods. Int3 identified the question of how he can stay true to the biblical truth in his preaching as a daunting question. He identified using passages that had well-known meanings as a method to stay true to the biblical meaning. Many of the interviewees identified consulting commentaries and computer tools such as Logos as tools to stay true to scripture. Int4 commented that to stay biblical he used many verses that said the same thing in a sermon to stay true to the Bible. Likewise, Int5 said he uses multiple passages in every sermon to give as much scripture in each sermon as possible. Int8 and Int10 identified prayer as a good way to make sure you stay with what God wants. Int7 and Int1 look at what others have done before them to make sure they are staying true to the scripture. Int5 and Int8 identified that they make sure their sermon lines up with the whole message of scripture. Int8, Int6, and Int7 identify their preaching as topical, but they attempt to stay with one text per sermon if possible. However, Int8 commented that he looks for the one text that will go the direction he wants to go with his theme.

## **Barriers to Expository Preaching**

Participants in the Preaching Interview were mostly highly complementary of expository preachers and expository preaching methods. Their reasons for not using expository methods were varied. The quantitative data in the Preaching Survey gives some insight into why Minnesota Assemblies of God preachers are not preaching in an expository method. Pastors were evenly split over whether topical or expository preaching were better for their congregations (Table 4.3: Question 9) and only favored choosing a topic rather than a book of the Bible for a series (Table 4.3: Question 14). Furthermore, when asked which takes more time, topical or expository preaching, respondents were evenly split (Table 4.3; Question 11). However, in the preaching interview there were several concerns about expository preaching that seemed to cause people to shy away from expository preaching. Int3 expressed that he thought the best way to preach was expositorily, and he did not know why he was more topical, and Int7 stated that expository preaching through books of the Bible would probably cover the topics he wants to cover, but he still preaches topically and would like to try expository preaching.

There was some trepidation and reluctance toward expository preaching expressed by the interviewees. Int1 expressed fear of the dryness of expository preaching in contrast to topical. Int2 expressed that the biblical literacy of churches was too low to handle preaching through an entire book, and he needed to stick to shorter sections of scripture to match shorter attention spans. Int4 expressed that it was necessary to have high intelligence to preach expositorily, and Int6 warned that there were many intelligent preachers who knew the word who were quite boring. Int4 also worried that expository

preaching was not always adequate because people need more than just information.

Lastly, Int6 indicated that expository preaching can be strenuous and difficult for preachers.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

Several major findings became clear from the data analysis of both research tools.

I have listed them here in a numbered list.

- 1) Mentors and models are more effective in influencing methods of preaching than education and denominational resources.
- 2) Many Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors are convinced that topical preaching is more effective in reaching people and growing a large church.
- 3) Many Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors are convinced that topical preaching best meets the needs of the congregation.
- 4) Preaching training at Assemblies of God training institutions and denominational resources are not having a great effect on preaching in the churches.
- 5) Expository preaching is admired by pastors, but there are barriers stopping them from embracing this preaching method.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The majority of Minnesota Assemblies of God pastors preach topically in spite of the fact that pastors are trained to preach expositively and encouraged to do so by the Assemblies of God. This research project investigated the present preaching patterns of lead pastors in the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God for the purpose of recommending an expository preaching model that would fit the distinct needs and culture of the Minnesota District.

This chapter identifies five findings from this research project and explains how they correspond to personal observations, the literature survey, and the biblical framework of the project. Then, limitations of the research study, unexpected observations, and recommendations for further study are explored.

#### **Major Findings**

##### **Mentors and Models More Influential than Education and Denominational Resources on Methods of Preaching**

I have observed Minnesota District Assemblies of God pastors emulating pastors who they see as successful. Furthermore, I have seen that the modeling a pastor received in his or her home church and youth camp experiences affects his or her preaching styles, even when confronted by new methods of preaching in his or her academic preaching training.

During my research, the majority of pastors stated that their mentors and models are topical preachers. The Preaching Survey and the Preaching Interviews also

confirmed that pastors in the Minnesota District were taught expository preaching methods in their academic preaching training, but they believed that preaching in a topical method best served the needs of their congregations and was the method they primarily used. It seems clear from these observations and findings that the academic training received in the expository method is not as influential as the models and mentors who predominantly preach topically. In the Preaching Interviews, pastors spoke of their major preaching influences in their own lives as pastors they listened to on podcasts or pastors who taught them directly in their ministries. Most of the pastors in the interviews modeled their preaching after pastors who were topical preachers with good delivery skills and numerically successful ministries.

In my literature review, the Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura supports this finding. Bandura stated that people will learn the majority of their practices through watching others model behavior, and this influence of modeling and observation is greater than learning through other educational methods. Thus, acceptance of this learning theory can be used to promote positive and less than ideal traits. Thus, to help Minnesota District Council pastors preach more expositively, this learning theory must be applied to create opportunities for expository preaching to be observed and modeled in order to reinforce the expository preaching, which is taught in the formal preaching education of the Assemblies of God.

In addition, the historical aspects of the Assemblies of God may affect the models that have been passed down. Klaus states that the early Assemblies of God preachers did not necessarily look for the meaning of the text intended for the original readers (93) . Hughes and Crabtree indicate that signs and wonders are the indicators that show good

Pentecostal preaching and appear to promote these indicators over solid Bible exposition and application (Hughes 157) (Crabtree 27–28). Lastly, Samuel warned that Pentecostals who adopt the Charles Finney method of doing whatever it takes to bring someone to the altar will not always handle Scripture well and, instead, stick to preaching whatever it takes to bring people to the altar (199). All of these unique, historical Pentecostal factors influence the Pentecostals of today, as these methods have been modeled and promoted to Minnesota District Assemblies of God pastors.

The biblical and theological framework for this project pointed to an emphasis on the expository method of preaching the text and applying it to the lives of people in the church. This was modeled in both the Old Testaments by the priests and in the New Testament through Jesus, the apostles, and the instructions given to the pastors and teachers who followed the apostles. This biblical example needs to be the most important precedent and mentor for preachers. In addition, when Paul, who was the mentor to Timothy, instructed Timothy on how to preach, he emphasized in 1 Timothy 4:13 the expository method of reading a Scripture and teaching and applying the passage to a congregation. Furthermore, he charged Timothy to “preach the word,” which shows the emphasis of preaching that the mentor wanted his student to have.

### **Belief that Topical Preaching Best Leads to a Growing Church**

There is little doubt that large churches have been built by pastors who preach topically and may or may not align their topics with good exegesis of Scripture. The pastors who preach at Minnesota District Assemblies of God events are almost exclusively topical preachers, and they are promoted as pastors who have had extraordinary numerical growth in their churches. The pastors who participated in my



survey and interviews confirmed that the pastors who preached at district level events were topical preachers who were good at telling stories and keeping a crowd engaged. However, too many of these topical preachers either use the method of reading a Scripture and then launching off in their own direction or sometimes even misinterpreting the Scripture to fit the topic or point the pastor wanted to make. Again, my interviews and surveys showed pastors acknowledging the success of the topical preachers. In addition, in my interviews with Minnesota District Council pastors, many shared about how they saw the success of these topical preaching pastors in bringing people to church and wanted to use their methods because they work in building a large church. They wanted to be effective “communicators” and “relevant” like these topical preachers who were seeing great growth.

In my literature review, I showed that the first and second century pastoral instructions of the *Didache* and the *First Apology* of Justin Martyr showed an expository style of preaching. Historically, the first and second centuries were times of explosive growth for the Christian church. Furthermore, there have been many expository preachers throughout history that have seen great church growth. The relevant present-day example for Assemblies of God pastors would be James River Church, a megachurch in Ozark, MO, which emphasizes expository preaching in their church and supports training pastors to preach expositively.

The biblical/theological point that would respond to this is what the pastor is asked to do by the biblical text. The priests of the Old Testament were charged to bring the truth of Scripture and not their own points of view (Malachi 2:6-7). In addition, in an expository fashion, the priests were instructed to bring the truth that was written in

Scripture and apply it to the lives of the people. In Nehemiah, the priests were called to explain and apply the Law of Moses, which was not readily understood by people separated by culture and language to the original readers (Nehemiah 8:1-8). The New Testament records Jesus and the apostles using the Old Testament as an authority for their preaching and then instructing those who were not apostles to preach the truth of Scripture and apply it to the people (Acts 8:26-33) (2 Timothy 2:15). The Bible instructs pastors to preach the Bible and apply it to the lives of people and not to do whatever method they think will grow a church. Following God's instruction has grown churches in the past and will continue to do so, because God promised to grow his church and charged his pastors to do what he called them to do: to be part of God's building the church (Matt. 16:18, Matt 28:19-20, Acts 1:8).

### **Belief that Topical Preaching Best Meets the Needs of a Congregation**

I observed that many pastors in our Minnesota District preach on a certain group of subjects and topics, which they think are vital to the health of the church. They will look at the needs of the church or find a topic that is on the minds of people in the general culture and form their preaching calendar around these topics. They start with a topic they see as a need and then look for Scripture to match up with the topic they want to preach. In my interviews, pastors identified topical preaching as the way to stay relevant with culture, especially with the younger generation, and that it allows the church to be flexible to engage whatever cultural topic is important at the time. These pastors also argued that topical preaching allowed them to tailor messages around the needs of the people at the moment and be able to switch directions if needed. Lastly, pastors commented that they needed to stay topical, so they could hit what they determined were

the crucial topics every year in their preaching calendar. Many of these pastors thought that preaching through a book would cause them to miss what the people needed and not allow for needed flexibility.

In my literature review, I touched on the arguments of Andy Stanley, who argued that expository preaching teaches the Scripture and does not necessarily engage the felt needs of the congregation, and of Henry Emerson Fosdick, who questioned whether people in the congregation care to examine the Scripture closely (Stanley and Jones) (Fosdick). This analysis by Stanley and Fosdick assumes that expository preaching is only about information and not about application. The definition of expository preaching is expounding the author's meaning in Scripture and applying it to the people in need of the truths of Scripture. Furthermore, as George Wood argues, preaching expositively through a book of the Bible will fulfill the needs of the congregation and even hit on some topics that a preacher will not through picking his or her own topics, all with the authority of Scripture choosing the topics, so a pastor can preach topics that may be controversial (Wood).

The argument of Scripture is on preaching the Word of God, which brings out topics, rather than starting with topics and finding Scripture that correlates. There is no doubt that the writers of Scripture were writing to the needs of the readers and address timeless needs of the church. Preaching in an expository fashion, especially in preaching through books of the Bible, will apply the solutions of the inspired Biblical authors to the needed topics of the church. The arguments made by the Biblical writers, when properly expounded and applied, will do a better job of handling the needs of the church than a pastor trying to find Bible verses to match his or her solution. Even Jesus, though he was

the Word himself, properly applied and quoted Old Testament Scripture as authority to defend himself and prove his points (Matt. 4:1-11, 15:7-9, 16:29; 22, 15-46; Luke 24:27).

### **Institutional Assemblies of God Preaching Training and Resources Not Having Great Effect on Preaching in Churches**

I have observed that the Assemblies of God attempts to instruct the pastors of the fellowship to preach expositively both in education and by encouragement from publications and the national leadership. However, this does not seem to often translate to the practices of the pastors in the churches of the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God. In Preaching Survey question seven, 56.6 percent identified their training at A/G institutions as expository. During the Preaching Interviews, pastors confirmed that they received training primarily in expository preaching during their educational training for preaching. However, a common theme among the interviewees was that the training was not effective in training them to preach or influential in how they preach today. They spoke of experiences, other speech classes, and mentors as much more influential in their preaching. The pastors spoke of the educational training as training them about preaching, but it did not train them to preach or give them enough experience in preaching to feel confident to preach coming out of college or another training institution.

The literature review section confirmed that the Assemblies of God attempts to promote expository preaching through the training institutions and other publications. I confirmed this expository training by talking to the preaching professors at our two Assemblies of God colleges, Trinity Bible College and North Central University, that train the majority of pastors in the Minnesota District, and I also consulted writings and

teachings by national Assemblies of God leadership. Jeff Magruder surveyed the colleges and correspondence preaching training of the Assemblies of God and found that they promote expository preaching (Magruder). Other leaders, such as former General Superintendent George Wood, spoke strongly in favor of expository preaching (Wood). Also, LeRoy Bartel, a highly respected national leader, argues fervently for expository preaching and against shallow, topical preaching (Bartel). Unfortunately, the literature I found did not address the problem of why the educational training at Assemblies of God training institutions and denominational resources was not greatly impacting the preaching of local pastors.

The biblical/theological truth of this reality is that there is a constant need to instruct the priests and church leaders to preach the Word of God. The priests were instructed and expected to teach the biblical text in Leviticus 10:11 and Deuteronomy 33:10. However, later in the Old Testament, the priests had to be charged again and reminded as to what their duties were (Nehemiah 8:1-8; Malachi 2:6-7). Furthermore, although Jesus and the apostles preached the Scripture as an example to the pastors and teachers who followed, Paul had to write the Pastoral Epistles to instruct the non-apostles, Timothy and Titus, on their duties to preach the Word of God. Thus, education in preaching is an ongoing task that needs to be addressed continually.

### **Admiration for but Barriers to Pastors Embracing Expository Preaching**

I have observed on the few occasions when people hear expository preaching in the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God, they are impressed by it. In my interviews, I discovered that although eight out of ten of the preachers were topical preachers, I heard few complaints about expository preaching. Pastors commented about

how they worried that topical preaching could lead to pastors taking Scripture out of context, and pastors can go off in directions without adequate support of Scripture. Some also commented that topical preaching can be a great presentation without much scriptural substance behind it. Also, the pastors admired expository preaching with comments like “in-depth” and scripturally “accurate” to describe it, but I sensed that they did not feel adequately prepared to preach in an expository manner. The feeling from many of the pastors was that expository preaching is probably as effective or more effective than topical, and that they are unsure why they do not do more of it. Some even thought preaching through a book could cover the needed topics for the church better than topical preaching.

My literature review on the strengths of expository preaching addresses the fears and encourages pastors to try to preach in an expository manner. Most pastors would agree with the point that we need more biblical literacy but may not understand that expository preaching can help address the lack of biblical literacy. Likewise, many pastors do not think of the hermeneutical issue of trying to unwrap a text that was written in a different language, culture, and time and, instead, believe that Scripture should be easily understood by most Christians. Likewise, the time advantages of preaching through a book instead of searching for a new topic every week or month could be a big encouragement to help pastors try expository preaching through a book of the Bible. Lastly, the misunderstanding that expository preaching cannot handle an urgent topic when needed and cannot be used in creative delivery methods may remove barriers to pastors who want to preach expositively.

The biblical/theological point is the efficacy of the Scriptures as a tool for teaching and that by expositively presenting the truths of Scripture, the Scriptures will supernaturally be effective “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:17). This promise should take the pressure off of pastors who think they have to come up with topics and solutions on their own and then find Scriptures to match. God gave the gift of Scripture to the church to act as the authority and the supernatural power to change lives. The Biblical mandate to preach the Word and apply the Scriptures is not intended to be only for a few gifted expositors but is a mandate and gift for all pastors.

### **Ministry Implications of the Findings**

The first implication concerns the individual lead pastors of the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God. This study generated great interest in my fellow pastors of the Minnesota District Council, and many have expressed a desire to read the findings. The implications of this study for the individual lead pastors is that the arguments for the effectiveness of topical preaching over expository preaching are not valid. Pastors who preach expository messages are pastors of growing, relevant churches whose sermons meet the needs of the congregation better than a topical approach. Because of the autonomous church structure of the Assemblies of God, it is up to each individual pastor to study the arguments for expository preaching and determine what is best for his or her church.

My findings also indicate that if the leadership of the Minnesota District Assemblies of God is going to have more expository preachers, they will have to try to overcome the model of historical topical preaching methods in the Assemblies of God

and the influence of mentors who preach only topically. To do this, they will have to promote the expository preachers that exist in the district and promote them as mentors and models. At the present time, most promotion of successful ministers is usually based on a unique ministry style or above-average numerical growth. Furthermore, expository preaching skills must be taught and reinforced in pastoral teaching sessions at statewide pastoral training seminars, such as at District Council and the Equip Conference, as well as demonstrated effectively at District Council events by bringing in speakers who preach expositively, so that opportunities are made available at the District level for pastors to observe and learn expository preaching.

In addition, the District should encourage formal training for its ministerial candidates and further training for its credentialed ministers. This shift is imperative to increase expository preaching because, while college-trained ministers assert that their homiletical training did not equip them to preach, there are a growing number of ministers in the Minnesota District who have even less formal training. This recent trend of young ministers pursuing alternate routes towards credentials is a result of the historic bias of the Assemblies of God against formal education, which is evidenced by the absence of formal education requirements for pastors and a lack of encouragement for pastors to go on for higher levels of training. This trend needs to be reversed so that pastors receive the initial training necessary to equip them to preach biblically and so that credentialed ministers are encouraged to pursue further training to strengthen their homiletical skills.

The implications for the preaching education institutions, including the colleges, the correspondence school (Berean School of Ministry), and the District School of



Ministry, are that they need to examine how they are preparing pastors since the pastors in my study generally did not feel they were equipped well to preach in any philosophy or method. Furthermore, the pastors generally expressed they did not receive the skills needed and enough foundation to enable them to follow the expository method preferred by the schools. Both Trinity Bible College and North Central University expressed interest in my research project, and they want to see how they can improve their preaching education and help students become better equipped as expository preachers. From this study, two suggestions emerged for teaching expository preaching. First, pastors expressed that they did not receive enough opportunity to develop their own sermons and just learned about sermons. This could be overcome by having students produce manuscripts of sermons and preaching more sermons for the class. Second, there needs to be a stronger foundation for expository preaching, so that students understand its biblical and practical arguments, compelling them to preach expositively.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Although I faced some limitations during my research, I do not believe that they impacted the generalization of the study findings. The most noticeable of the limitations was my time restraint. Because my Preaching Survey had to be conducted close to the Christmas holiday, it undoubtedly affected the number of pastors who were able to engage in the survey. In addition, due to Minnesota's size, there were geographical limitations that made interviewing certain or additional respondents challenging because of the required travel time. In fact, whether due to location or scheduling conflicts, I had to conduct two of my interviews via Skype, rather than the preferred face-to-face method. Although difficult to quantify, one limitation that may have affected my interview

responses is that I knew most of the interviewees personally, and I got the sense that some of them were trying to give me the “right” answer or impress me.

One difference I might consider if I were to conduct this study again would be to choose a less busy time in the church calendar to conduct both the survey and the interviews. However, I would not alter my instrumentation or data collection, because I did not encounter limitations with either of them and they both allowed me to do quality data analysis.

### **Unexpected Observations**

One unexpected observation I had was concerning the number of pastors who, though they preached topically and believed it was the best method for their church, admired expository preaching and questioned the topical method more than I thought they would. A primarily topical preacher in my interview told me that he thought topical preachers ran the risk of “cherry-picking” their Scriptures to support their topics. Another one expressed that he was frustrated by pastors who go off on their own topics without scriptural support, while another interviewee said he finds topical sermons to sometimes be “watered-down.” Moreover, another interviewee admitted that topical preachers can have great presentations without any real scripture to back them up.

Furthermore, although eight out of ten of the interviewees were primarily topical preachers, they had great admiration for expository preaching. Words like “in-depth” and “accurate” preaching of the Bible were used to describe expository preaching. One interviewee said that he looked for topics to preach to satisfy the needs of the congregation, but he admitted that preaching through an entire biblical book expositively would probably cover the needs of his church and be more effective for his church.

### **Recommendations**

While this study produced good results and had value, there are always ways to improve and expand. I have summarized three.

1) In a future study on helping pastors preach more expositively, a document analysis instrument could be used to listen to or read sermons of pastors in a defined research group. This would help show the actual patterns of preaching of a group to see if what is actually done on a Sunday morning matches up to the answers on the survey and interviews. This could help increase the validity and reliability of the data.

2) While I interviewed pastors, I heard too many times phrases like “is that what you wanted?” or “did I answer that correctly for you?” Most of this seemed to rise from my familiarity with the interviewees and my status as a leader in the district. Perhaps using an interviewer that was unknown to the interviewees would help them feel more comfortable and not try to help or please the interviewer.

3) Another interesting addition to this study would be to segment the Minnesota District lead pastors by where they received their training. This would allow a researcher to see which training was producing what results and would help schools see whether their methods of training were producing the desired preaching results.

### **Postscript**

My journey through this research project has included quite a bit of change. I have had three different coaches during the process, and every time I changed it felt like, to some degree, I was starting over. In addition, there were long periods of time that I was without a coach and had to figure things out for myself. This has both been frustrating and caused me to grow.

Throughout this project, I have had a great opportunity to connect with my fellow lead pastors of the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God. I have worked hard to represent them fairly, while attempting to find ways for us all to improve. I pray that both objectives have been accomplished.

## APPENDIXES

### A. Preaching Survey

#### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

##### **A Study of the Expository and Topical Preaching Methods of Minnesota District Pastors**

You are invited to be in a research study being done by John Hubert, a Doctor of Ministry Student at Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are the primary preaching pastor of a church in the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God, and you have been trained to preach at an Assemblies of God Institution (College, Berean, Global University, DSOM, Masters' Commission). If you fulfill both of these requirements, I invite you to participate in this survey.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to answer survey questions concerning your preaching methods and why you choose a particular method of preaching. The survey will take approximately ten-minutes and is conducted through SurveyMonkey. Here is a link to SurveyMonkey's privacy policy <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/privacy-policy/>. There is no compensation for your participation.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can skip a question or withdraw from the survey at any point. It is very important for me to learn your opinions since these surveys are the material I will use as my data for my doctoral dissertation at Asbury Theological Seminary. I believe this project will assist pastors in the Minnesota District of the Assemblies of God to grow in their preaching. The research project will last three months, and I will keep the data for an indefinite period of time, at least until my dissertation is written and approved.

Your survey responses will be strictly confidential, and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. Your information will be coded and will remain confidential. The answers will be used to form a composite picture of respondents.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell John Hubert. My phone number is (218) 556-5462 and my email is [john.hubert@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:john.hubert@asburyseminary.edu). If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want. You can ask John Hubert questions any time about anything in this study.

Agreeing to this letter means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to assist me in this study. If you do not want to assist me in the study, do not agree to this letter. Assisting in this study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not agree to assist in this study or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

- \* 1. Do you agree to the above terms? By clicking Yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.

☐ Yes

☐ No

For this survey, please use the following definitions:

**Topical Preaching:**

Topical preaching starts with and focuses on a topic, or a central idea, rather than a section of Scripture. The preacher chooses a sermon topic based on his or her desire to preach on a subject or topic rather than starting from a section of Scripture. Scripture texts are used in the preparation and delivery of the sermon to support the points of the topic or subject.

**Expository Preaching:**

Expository preaching starts with a section of Scripture and the section of Scripture is the basis for all of the points. The goal is to start with the biblical text and study the text to determine as well as possible the meaning of the original author to the original readers. After finding this meaning, the preacher is to transmit the truths of the passage to a contemporary audience.

2. What is your age?

18-20

21-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60 or older

No response

3. What is the highest level of school that you have completed?

Some high school, but no diploma

High school diploma (or GED)

Some college, but no degree

2-year college degree

4-year college degree  
Graduate-level degree  
None of the above  
No response

4. From which of these schools did you receive your primary training for preaching?

Berean School of the Bible  
Minnesota District School of Ministry (DSOM)  
North Central (Bible College) University  
Trinity Bible College  
Master's Commission  
No response  
Other (please specify)

5. How many hours a week do you typically spend on sermon preparation?

1-5  
6-10  
11-15  
16+  
No response

6. Are you the primary preaching pastor at your church?

Yes  
No  
No response

7. What was the primary preaching method you were taught in your academic training?

Expository  
Topical  
No response

8. The mentors and/or pastors you look up to preach in which method primarily?

Topical  
Expository  
No response

9. Preaching in a topical rather than expository style best meets the needs of my congregation.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree  
Undecided  
Agree  
Strongly Agree  
No response

10. Expository preaching is more difficult than topical preaching.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Undecided  
Agree  
Strongly Agree  
No response

11. Topical preaching takes more preparation time than expository preaching.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Undecided  
Agree  
Strongly Agree  
No response

12. Pentecostal empowered preaching is best expressed in topical preaching.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Undecided  
Agree  
Strongly Agree  
No response

13. Expository preaching is usually more biblically accurate than topical preaching.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Undecided  
Agree  
Strongly Agree  
No response

14. When looking for a series idea, I look for a topic to preach about rather than a book of the Bible to preach through.



Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Undecided  
Agree  
Strongly Agree  
No response

15. The speakers at Minnesota District Assemblies of God sponsored events (District Council/Equip, Minister/Spouse, Family Camp, etc) primarily preach topical sermons.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Undecided  
Agree  
Strongly Agree  
No response

16. The Assemblies of God leadership and publications promote and encourage pastors to preach expository sermons.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Undecided  
Agree  
Strongly Agree  
No response

17. Do you wish to withdraw from this survey and not have your answers recorded?

Yes  
No

18. To help me finish this research project, I need to conduct ten 30 minute interviews concerning a pastor's preaching methods and why he or she chooses a particular method of preaching. If you are willing to take part in an interview either in person or by Skype, please enter your name and email address in the text boxes below. I will choose ten volunteers at random and contact you if you are chosen for an interview. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Name

Email

## B. Preaching Interview

## Preaching Interview Protocol (Semi-Structured)

	Question	Script	Prompt
	Welcome and explain what will occur	<p>My name is John Hubert, and I am calling as prearranged via email (or phone) to do an interview with you on preaching styles.</p> <p>First of all, I want to say thank you for being willing to participate in this interview. As I told you earlier, when we arranged this interview, this interview is for my doctoral dissertation at Asbury Theological Seminary.</p> <p>I'm going to ask you 10 questions that are scripted and may ask others to probe or seek more clarity. Of course, you are under no obligation to answer any of these questions; it is purely voluntary. However, I am asking you to respond to my questions as accurately as possible since these interviews are the material I will use as my data for the conclusions I build in my dissertation. Again, since you are helping me with the interviews, I would be happy to share with you my dissertation and findings when it is completed.</p> <p>As I mentioned in my email to you, in order to accurately report the data from the interviews, I will need to tape this interview. So just before I turn on the recorder and ask you for your permission to tape our interview, do you have any questions? (Answer questions)</p> <p>Ok, I am going to turn on the recorder now. (Turn on recorder)</p> <p>_____, may I have your permission to record this interview with you regarding preaching styles?</p>	<p>Response to Introduction Questions—</p> <p>Answer to meet their needs</p>

		Questions about Preaching	
)	Tell me what you think of and feel when you hear the term expository preaching? Topical preaching?	Answers Here	Go on...  What did you mean when you said _____?
		At this point I will present a working definition for both so we can speak the same language for the rest of the interview. This will be on a separate sheet and handed to the interviewee.	
)	Tell me about your academic preaching training? Where did it occur and what styles of preaching were you taught? How did this influence your present preaching?		Go on... What did you mean when you said _____?  Was your training effective in preparing you to preach and practical?
)	Tell me about mentors and preachers you admire. How have they influenced you?		Go on... What did you mean when you said _____?  What styles of preaching do they use? Why do you think they are quality preachers?

)	How do you define an effective sermon or sermon series? What characteristics define effectiveness?		<p>Go on... What did you mean when you said _____?</p> <p>How can you measure effectiveness?</p>
)	Can you explain to me what it means to be a Pentecostal preacher? How does this affect how you preach?		<p>Go on... What did you mean when you said _____?</p> <p>What makes Pentecostal preaching distinct from other Christian preaching?</p>
)	Tell me about the preaching you have heard at Minnesota District Assemblies of God events.		<p>Go on... What did you mean when you said _____?</p> <p>Did you find the preaching well done? Why or why not? What styles were used or encouraged?</p> <p>Examples of events: District council, Equip, Family Camp, Minister/Spouse</p>

)	What is your primary preaching style, topical or expository? Why do you choose to preach the way you do?		<p>Go on...</p> <p>What did you mean when you said _____?</p> <p>What style of preaching is effective with your audience congregation?</p> <p>Any other reasons you choose your style?</p>
)	If you preach a sermon series, could you describe for me how you pick and design your typical sermon series'?		<p>Go on...</p> <p>What did you mean when you said _____?</p> <p>Do you start with the Bible or with a topic? Why did you start with this? Which is easier? Do you switch styles?</p> <p>Do you usually have a central theme or preach through a book of the Bible?</p>
)	How do you define a biblically sound sermon? How do you make sure that you are expressing the Bible's truth and not your own?		<p>Go on...</p> <p>What did you mean when you said _____?</p>

0)	Walk me through your preparation for a typical sermon for your primary worship service.		Go on... What did you mean when you said _____?  Where do the points for your sermon come from?
1)	Is there anything concerning expository or topical preaching you would like to add or clarify from your previous answers?		

## C. Ethical Considerations Worksheet

**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER (Preaching Survey)****A Study of the Expository and Topical Preaching Methods of Minnesota District Pastors**

You are invited to be in a research study being done by John Hubert, a Doctor of Ministry Student at Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are the primary preaching pastor of a church in the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God, and you have been trained to preach at an Assemblies of God Institution (College, Berean, Global University, DSOM, Masters' Commission). If you fulfill both of these requirements, I invite you to participate in this survey.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to answer survey questions concerning your preaching methods and why you choose a particular method of preaching. The survey will take approximately ten-minutes and is conducted through SurveyMonkey. Here is a link to SurveyMonkey's privacy policy <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/privacy-policy/>. There is no compensation for your participation.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can skip a question or withdraw from the survey at any point. It is very important for me to learn your opinions since these surveys are the material I will use as my data for my doctoral dissertation at Asbury Theological Seminary. I believe this project will assist pastors in the Minnesota District of the Assemblies of God to grow in their preaching. The research project will last three months, and I will keep the data for an indefinite period of time, at least until my dissertation is written and approved.

Your survey responses will be strictly confidential, and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. Your information will be coded and will remain confidential. The answers will be used to form a composite picture of respondents.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell John Hubert. My phone number is (218) 556-5462 and my email is [john.hubert@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:john.hubert@asburyseminary.edu). If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want. You can ask John Hubert questions any time about anything in this study.

Agreeing to this letter means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to assist me in this study. If you do not want to assist me in the study, do not agree to this letter. Assisting in this study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not agree to assist in this study or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

- \* 1. Do you agree to the above terms? By clicking Yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.

☐ Yes

☐ No

### **INFORMED CONSENT LETTER (Preaching Interview)**

#### ***A Study of the Preaching Methods of Minnesota District Pastors***

You are invited to be in a research study being done by John Hubert, an ordained Assembly of God minister pastoring at Crossroads Church in Bemidji and a Doctor of Ministry Student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are the primary preaching pastor of a numerically growing church in the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to answer interview questions concerning your preaching methods and why you choose a particular method of preaching. The thirty-minute interviews will be scheduled with you to take place either in person or through Skype. There is no compensation for your participation.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can skip a question or withdraw from the interview at any point. It is very important for me to learn your opinions since these interviews are the material I will use as my data for my doctoral dissertation at Asbury Theological Seminary. I believe this project will assist pastors in the Minnesota District of the Assemblies of God to grow in their preaching. Once the interviews are completed in the next three months, I will use the data for my dissertation project. Six to twelve months after my graduation on May 19, 2018, I will shred and burn all interview notes and erase all voice recordings using FileShredder for Mac.

Your answers will be confidential. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell John Hubert. My phone number is (218) 556-5462 and my email is [john.hubert@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:john.hubert@asburyseminary.edu). If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want. You can ask John Hubert questions any time about anything in this study.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in



the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

---

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

---

..... Date Signed

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Please Print Your Name

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