ABSTRACT

EXEGETICAL ASSISTANCE TO ENHANCE SERMON PREPARATION

BY FULLTIME CHURCH OF GOD PASTORS IN BUENOS AIRES

by

Verónica Elizabeth Aguilar

Immense potential for preaching in local churches is being wasted. The potential lies within Christian brothers and sisters with the gift of knowledge. Since the task of preaching often falls on a single person, there is little possibility for collaboration in this arduous and essential task carried out by local pastors.

By their nature, sermons must be based on the Word of God. And by their vocation, pastors are called to preach. The preparation that pastors of the Church of God Association in Buenos Aires traditionally receive is insufficient to provide all the necessary tools to elaborate sermons centered on the Scriptures with a solid exegetical basis. Furthermore, they lack time to perform proper research in order to find high-quality exegetical resources that could address this lack due to their job responsibilities.

If pastors would allow themselves to accept help and discover the valuable resources available to them in their local church, they would create an ancillary team that provides them with exegetical resources vital for sermon preparation. The results could lead to exegetically more potent sermons and a more spiritually enriched congregation.

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Overview of the Chapter

Chapter One focuses on the proposal of an Exegetical Assistance to Enhance

Sermon Preparation by twenty pastors of the Church of God Association (COGA) in

Buenos Aires, Argentina, and the D.Min researcher as a provider of exegetical resources

to use in their sermons. This proposal emerges from the lack of exegetical formation for

pastors in their basic pastoral training and the potential of brothers and sisters in the body

of Christ with spiritual gifts to help their pastors. The researcher witnessed the lack of

exegetical formation and the potential help in her path as a member, leader, preacher, and

teacher of the COGA in Buenos Aires. Every candidate must fulfill specific requirements

in order to be a minister, but only one requirement refers to the academic formation. It is

a one-year program that contains little information regarding preaching and no content

whatsoever regarding original biblical languages and exegesis. This is the core of the

problem presented in this chapter.

This chapter also deals with three research questions that provide direction to this

project and the rationale for the project. It also presents a definition of key terms,

delimitations, and a review of relevant literature. The research methodology section

considers the type of research, participants, instrumentation, data collection, data

analysis, and generalizability of the project. Finally, an overview of the project is

presented.

Personal Introduction

I was born into an Argentinian Christian home forty-four years ago. My father has

been a bishop in the COGA, a Pentecostal denomination, for more than forty years. The

Lord performed a miracle in my life at two years old when He cured me of meningitis. He saved my life, and I was dedicated to Him. When I was old enough, I dedicated myself to the Lord.

By the mercy of God, I felt like an essential member of a vital body all my life, the body of Christ. I have a personal goal to grow, which inevitably leads to the community because one cannot, and should not, grow alone. There are brothers and sisters in the Lord who have to grow as well, and they need to approach the Bible differently. Why? I had shared the Christian path with brothers and sisters that were walking under the reign of Our Lord decades before I was born. They have heard hundreds of sermons and teachings. By this time, they should be teachers and preachers of the Word, but that is not the case. They are faithful children of God, but the depth of sermons and teachings does not allow them to grow at the level they should. They attend church and listen to what they already know. They may think, as anyone would, that they already know everything about the Bible. But they are not correct. Pastors and leaders also need the training to prepare better quality sermons and profound sermons that are exegetically based, always having something new for the hearers.

I started teaching in the church in 1990 and received my first credential in 2004. As a church teacher by divine call and as an ordained minister of the COGA, I am deeply committed to the biblical formation of the church's laity and pastors. I also sit in the temple trying to learn something new to gain spiritual strength, but I hear repetitive phrases that I already know. By the grace of God, I have been able to continue my Bible studies, but most pastors have not. Many of them were trained only by the Ministerial Internship Program (MIP) and other informal programs or are self-educated.

Since the MIP is the official requirement for passing from lay member to pastor, it is logical to think that all the church's pastors except those coming from other churches with similar studies in their churches of origin have a foundation in exegetical studies. In my experience as a preacher, gathering the information that I would later use to elaborate my sermons was an arduous and demanding task.

Unlike in previous centuries, the information available today is simply overwhelming. Hundreds, thousands, or millions of entries may arise for each topic searched. Learning to distinguish between reliable sources and those with no credibility whatsoever was a skill that I acquired through professional training in another discipline. Even today, this challenge arises with each query. Time wasted can become incalculable because in these times of cybernetic plagiarism, finding a quality source can require surfing numerous web pages before being found. Time and preparation are needed.

In my experience as a professor, mentor, and editor in permanent contact with local pastors, I found that every sermon represents a challenge regarding exegetical resources.

Statement of the Problem

On the one hand, the COG Division of Education in Buenos Aires, Argentina, provides an educational program for the laity to become pastors. The name of that program is the Ministerial Internship Program (MIP). It is the only educational program officially required for lay people pursuing a ministerial rank. The content relates specifically to preaching and is limited to eleven of ninety-eight pages of that material. It was written originally in English in 1977. When MIP started in Argentina in 1992, it was a two-year course that was later reduced to one year.

The Bible section of the course material does not contain teachings about Hebrew, Greek or exegetical studies. Pastoral knowledge of preaching comes primarily from their own experience as members and leaders of the church. This course material has proven to be insufficient. Since the provision regarding biblical foundation is far from ideal, a real need for knowledge, resources, and expertise in this area is evident. That knowledge, resources, and expertise do not come alone. Pastors must pursue them, and they need help to achieve them because they lack the know-how.

On the other hand, it is not unusual to refer to the pastoral job as a burden. It has been established that pastors are "overworked, underpaid, often work in a conflicted environment, and seem to be some of the loneliest people" (London and Wiseman 22). This study refers to American pastors, but South America's reality is not different from that description. Pastors do not have ample time to dedicate themselves to study. There are valuable materials available on the internet, but the copious amount of information demands a considerable amount of time and energy that pastors do not have.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the change in knowledge, attitude, and behavior in Argentinian pastors of the Church of God Association in Buenos Aires because of an Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation presented as four sermons prepared during a trial experiment.

Research Questions

The following three research questions arise from the problem statement to determine how to evaluate those who took part in the proposed experiment.

Research Question #1

What were the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding preaching before the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation?

Research Question #2

What were the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding preaching after the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation?

Research Question #3

What did the participants identify as the most and least helpful aspects of the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation?

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Rationale for the Project

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The first reason that this study matters is that growth is a biblical mandate. "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13, NIV). Growing certainly includes growing in knowledge.

Jesus was called teacher sixty of the ninety times that he was addressed directly in the Gospels. Teaching and learning are crucial concepts in the kingdom of God. It is impossible to grow, which is a personal and community goal in our Christian life, without knowledge. In Christian terms, knowledge refers to the Word of God. Christian education is, therefore, a biblical foundation. Almirudis registered the words of one of the most prominent teachers in the Church of God (COG), Roberto Amparo Rivera, who said:

"Ignorance of the Scripture implies ignorance of Christ since he said about Himself, 'These are the very Scriptures that testify about me' (John 5:39)" (6).

The second reason that this study matters is that pastors need help to prepare exegetically based sermons. As leaders of the local church, pastors are the first to receive formal education about the Bible. They do receive it, but not sufficiently for the task they have ahead of them. Preaching every week becomes a challenge for those pastors who guide their congregations according to the Word of God. Lack of sufficient time is a reality for those who make an effort and try to find exegetical resources on their own.

The third reason that this study matters is that the body of Christ has been equipped by God so its members can guide and be guided to grow "in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph. 4:13). The ideal goal for the body's members is to become mature, which is to be like Him. The goal is for the whole body, and the entire body must participate according to their spiritual gifts. Due to the church leadership role, pastors have been entrusted with the task of preaching, but they have at their disposal a team of saints that can carry a part of the burden.

The fourth reason that this study matters is that it can present a window of opportunity for local churches since it breaks with the paradigm of private inspiration and pastors working alone.

Definition of Key Terms

The following section clarifies the terminology used in this project.

Church of God (COG)

The Church of God is a Pentecostal Christian denomination founded in 1886 in Monroe County, Tennessee, by Richard Green Spurling, a former Baptist minister

unsatisfied with the Christian life as it was lived. He decided to follow a different path, following the New Testament as their rule for faith and practice. Eight persons agreed with him, and that was the beginning of the COG, a church "built upon the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The doctrines and practices of the church are based upon His teachings" (Church, "Beliefs").

The COG recognizes itself as a determinedly Christian church. It is built upon the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It also identifies itself as Pentecostal, Evangelical, and founded upon the principles of the Protestant Reformation, such as justification by faith, the priesthood of believers, the authority of the Bible, religious freedom, and the separation of church and state (Church, "Beliefs"). Regarding Christian doctrines, the COG subscribes to the following:

> the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible;
>
> the virgin birth and complete deity of Christ;
>
> the atoning sacrifice of Christ's death for the sins of the world;
>
> the literal resurrection of the body; and
>
> Christ's second coming in bodily form to earth (Church, "Beliefs").

Currently, the COG has a worldwide membership of over seven million in nearly 180 countries. With its headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee, the COG is one of the world's largest Pentecostal denominations. It reports over one million members, making it one of the nation's largest denominations in the USA.

Church of God Association (COGA)

The COG in Argentina is known as the Church of God Association. Its origins can be traced back to 1940 when Mario Mazzuco, after conversations with COG

missionary J. H. Ingram, decided to incorporate his church —Evangelical Church of Our

Lord Jesus Christ— to the COG. Mazzuco was appointed as the first overseer of the

COGA.

At present, the COGA is divided into ten regions. This project's participants

belong to the North CEA region located in the Buenos Aires province.

The North CEA region, from now on COGA in Buenos Aires, is comprised of

180 churches.

Division of Education (DOE)

The Division of Education is a structure of the COG that provides "oversight of

programs, expansion, and development of colleges, seminaries, universities, Bible

institutes, and ministerial training models throughout the International Church" (Pyeatt

24).

The Church of God DOE's mission is "to provide education and training for

Christian formation, enrichment, and service in the twenty-first century" (Pyeatt 6).

Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation

The Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation has to do with local

church members engaged in helping their pastor in sermon preparation. In that sense, it

may be confused with what is known as Collaborative Experience for Sermon

Preparation, which has various definitions: "working with an appropriately gifted

member of a congregation to develop and deliver a sermon," can include "a consistent

partnership, from the first encounter with the scripture to delivery of the sermon" (Lower

4). It involves meeting with around six different people each time who represent the

constituency of the church and have received the sermon text previously to hear their

insights and illustrations (Smith). "Each week about eight to ten or even more people get together and think through different ideas for the sermon. Then three or four people write different sections of it, and it gets weaved together. Over the next four weeks, it goes through various edits by the teaching community. It comes out at the end in brilliant fashion" (Walker). In a collaborative experience "members of the church and their pastor gather each week to discuss the scripture passages that will be read and proclaimed the following Sunday in worship." During the session the pastor elicits "the input of multiple people in the process of sermon preparation" (Kelley).

> Collaborative preaching … involves an intentional effort to involve others in both sermon brainstorming and feedback. …It is important to keep the group small: usually 3-4 members. It is also important that the group changes regularly – every two to three months – so that an "in-group" dynamic doesn't take over, and to add diversity to the insights that are provided to the preacher. (McClure)

The Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation is distinct from the more common collaborative preaching models. It has to do with research done by some gifted members of the congregation, searching specifically exegetical resources for the texts the pastor has previously established. The printed information is handed to the pastor so he or she can use that information to prepare the sermon.

Exegetical Resources

Exegetical resources refer to the relevant material discovered during research, such as etymological references in Greek or Hebrew, relevant textual and translation problems, relation to other texts, redaction issues, form and source criticism, information

related to the text's original setting and meaning, theological, historical, geographical and political issues, and social customs.

The general background material on the biblical book, such as authorship, can be avoided unless they help the preacher identify a clear and textually relevant direction for his or her sermon.

The research can be done using lexicons and dictionaries, Gospel parallels, Bible encyclopedias, introductions to the Old Testament or introductions to the New Testament textbooks, and the like.

Ministerial Internship Program (MIP)

The Ministerial Internship Program is one of the several programs provided to COG pastors by the Division of Education.

The MIP was implemented throughout the United States in 1978. Currently, the MIP has been expanded to eighty-one countries and translated into eighteen languages. It was implemented in Argentina in 1992.

The MIP is required to advance from exhorter rank to the next rank. The MIP is comprised of three parts: Studies on the Bible, doctrine, and leadership; a supervised practicum with a pastor; and eight monthly seminars.

Ministerial Ranks

The COG recognizes three ranks of credentialed ministers: Exhorter (initial rank), Ordained Minister (intermediate rank), and Ordained Bishop (highest rank). Exhorters are authorized to preach, serve as evangelists, and serve as pastor of a church. Ordained ministers are further authorized to baptize converts, receive new church members, administer sacraments or ordinances, solemnize marriages, and establish churches.

There are specific requirements to be fulfilled to become a COG pastor, but they do not include a theological, ministerial, or Bible degree.

Women are not allowed to apply to the highest rank.

Delimitations

For this project, the researcher chose to work with twenty pastors of the COGA in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Lay people and leaders were excluded. Pastors coming from other churches were also excluded unless their pastoral training could be considered similar to the one provided by the division of education of the COG.

As this project analyzed the benefit of preaching with exegetical resources received from collaborators, pastors who do not preach in their churches at least three times a month were excluded. All of the participants were authorized by the regional overseer to engage in this project.

Review of Relevant Literature

The Biblical foundations section started with the body of Christ and the spiritual gifts topics as essentials for this project's development. Theological foundations continued with God's Word inspired by the Holy Spirit topic, exegesis, and preaching.

Biblical preaching makes the text foundational. Therefore, the first goal in sermon preparation must be to interpret the Biblical text as accurately as possible. The path to perform that task is paved with rigorous exegetical work. The literature review regarding exegetical resources focuses on languages, cultural context, and biblical narrative. Several writers who have focused their work on exegesis were consulted as well. Among the most notable authors can be mentioned Argentinian exegete Severino Croatto, and American Bible scholar Gordon Fee.

Sociological and ethical themes referred to the authorship concept in Western society and the Bible books' authorship. Finally, since the main protagonists are Church of God in Argentina pastors, a brief history of the church is mentioned.

Research Methodology

Since "The Holy Grail of research methods does not exist" (Sensing 50), it was necessary to adapt the researcher's approach to a particular context. In this project, COGA pastors in Buenos Aires were the main characters of this specific context; therefore, their thoughts and expertise were crucial. They were provided with exegetical resources to help them prepare their sermons and evaluate if this material made a difference in their sermon preparation process.

Type of Research

Since the intentions were to analyze the experience of elaborating sermons with exegetical material provided by some collaborators and elaborating sermons without that help, an intervention method was considered the most suitable for this project. The methodology reflected a before-intervention and after-intervention approach.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods using emailed tests, interviews, and document analysis was used for data collection to obtain the most reliable information from the participants.

Participants

The participants' selection process was based on predetermined criteria related to geographical location. Thus, COGA pastors and leaders working in Buenos Aires with a deep commitment to sermon preparation and biblical mandates for the body of Christ were chosen.

Participant pastors were recommended for this project by their Buenos Aires regional overseer. They were crucial for this project since they evaluated the usefulness of the proposal made in this project. Participant leaders were chosen among those in the COGA in Buenos Aires with a prominent position and years of experience as leaders, pastors, and preachers.

Instrumentation

Three different researcher-designed instruments were used in this project:

1. Pre- and post-test: A twenty-four-question pre-test called Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre-Test with a demographic survey section, and twenty-four-question post-test called Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Post-Test were administered.

2. Interviews: Two five-question semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher.

3. Document Analysis: Analysis of the textbook *Introducción a los Ministerios Cristianos II* [*Introduction to Christian Ministries*], MIP's only text that refers to the minister's formal preparation in the preaching area, was the third instrument.

Data Collection

Data collection for this project encompassed the four sermons experiment, along with tests, interviews, and document analysis. It occurred for eight weeks. All data were collected remotely through various digital media. The researcher administered the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre-Test to twenty COGA pastors

in Buenos Aires through the SurveyMonkey platform. This online test consisted of twenty-four questions and an introductory section named demographic survey that only appears in this pre-test.

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with two COGA leaders in Buenos Aires. It was a qualitative method designed to identify what the participants found to be the most and least helpful aspects of the four sermons' trial experiment. The researcher also analyzed COGA official documents regarding pastor exegetical and biblical formation.

RQ1 was answered through the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre-Test, a quantitative method that explored the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of participants regarding preaching before the four sermons prepared during a trial experiment. A semi-structured interview that the researcher designed was also used to answer RQ1. This semi-structured interview used four inquiries designed to obtain information about the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding preaching before the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation experiment. The last instrument used to answer RQ1 was document analysis.

RQ2 was answered through the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation post-test, a quantitative method used to gather data about sermon preparation following the four sermons prepared during a trial experiment.

RQ3 was answered through the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation pre- and post-tests.

Data Analysis

Mean score comparisons were conducted on the Likert Scale items yielding growth percentages for the quantitative method consisting of the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation pre-test and the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation post-test.

The demographic survey section in the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation pre-test was used to ascertain the sample population's variances. Interviews and document analysis were considered qualitative data; therefore, collecting and identifying themes was the primary method to process and analyzed them. (Sensing 202)

According to Patton, although software programs facilitate working with large amounts of data, synthesizing and presenting findings is one of the challenges of qualitative analysis (57). Following Moschella, qualitative data was first read in a literal way, highlighting particular words and phrases. The second type of reading was the interpretive reading to select and organize the data according to "implied or inferred meanings," and the third type of reading, a reflexive one to generate and interpret data (172-73).

Generalizability

This project might be easily transferred to a different setting if certain conditions are maintained since the intervention made was done with local pastors with certain difficulties regarding sermon preparation. Having this in mind, this project might be extrapolated not only to another COGA region, but to another denomination as well.

This project could be useful in every church where the pastor needs help to enhance the sermon preparation process.

The structure of the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation experiment was initially delivered through digital media. Hence, the physical presence is not a requirement to participate, making it easy to replicate this project.

The sermon preparation process's impact will be noticed first by the preaching pastors, but the final result will be for the whole congregation.

Project Overview

This project outlines four sermons prepared works Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation experiment for COGA pastors in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Chapter Two demonstrates the Biblical and Theological foundations of the body of Christ and a review of the exegetical literature highlighting its importance for sermon preparation. Chapter Three presents the research design, methods of research, and data analysis methodology for this project. Chapter Four analyzes the findings of the research and analysis of the collected data. Finally, Chapter Five offers the interpretation of the major findings for research questions and its ministry implications.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

"With over five billion copies sold, the Bible remains earth's most-read book" (Barna), but to buy a Bible does not mean to read it. And to read it certainly does not mean to understand it. This chapter first includes the Biblical foundations of the body of Christ, the spiritual gifts, and the gift of knowledge as relevant topics for this project. Second, the Theological foundations, as the framework surveying God's word inspired by the Holy Spirit and preaching, are explored. Third, the arguments are presented for exegesis and exegetical resources. Fourth, relevant literature of the Church of God' Denomination's pastor preparation and its history is addressed. Fifth, sociological and ethical themes, such as authorship concept and authorship of the Bible books at present are discussed. Finally, the research design literature is addressed.

Biblical Foundations

The main protagonists of this project were members of the body of Christ using the spiritual gifts they received for the edification of the whole Church. All spiritual gifts are important; however, in this project the gift of knowledge had special importance.

Body of Christ

The Body of Christ is made up of people who have been called to be saved and holy and have responded to that divine call. In the letter that Paul wrote to the Romans, he referred to the first call of God: He will say that he has been "called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—. ... Through him we received grace and apostleship

to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake" (Rom. 1:1b, 5; NIV).

The New International Version translates verse five as follows: "Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake" (Rom. 1:5). Then Paul continued speaking of the call: "And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:6-7).

The apostle Paul wrote to the mid-first century Christians living in Rome. Under the Holy Spirit's inspiration, his words also inspire those Christians around the world who read them. He then says to the recipients of his letter that they have first been called to be of Jesus Christ and then called to be saints.

Before serving in the church, in the various activities that may take place, the first step is to answer the call to "be of Jesus Christ": recognize sin, be ready for repentance, ask forgiveness and recognize Him as Savior and Lord. The activities that are done for God must be inspired by knowing Him, loving Him, and wanting to serve Him. Without this, they are meaningless.

The second call, "to be holy," has to do with everything that is done to procure a life "in holiness." Exercising spiritual gifts, abstention from sin, walking in the Spirit, and all that is edifying for the saints' life and community because this process is fundamentally framed within the Body of Christ. In Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words:

Into the community you were called, the call was not meant for you alone;

in the community of the called you bear your cross, you struggle, you

pray. You are not alone, even in death, and on the Last Day you will be

only one member of the great congregation of Jesus Christ. If you scorn

the fellowship of the brethren, you reject the call of Jesus Christ, and thus

your solitude can only be hurtful to you. (77)

Nobody is alone in the Body of Christ; if someone feels this way they should

reconsider the presence of their brothers and sisters, and the presence of Christ as head of

that body. The presence of Christ is central in Pauline epistles. In the sixteen chapters and

437 verses of 1 Corinthians, Paul mentions the name Christ sixty-six times. Paul

introduces himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus. He mentions "the name of our Lord

Jesus Christ," the cross of Christ, the mind of Christ, the gospel of Christ, the blood of

Christ, the example of Christ, the head of Christ. The Corinthians are "of Christ,"

servants of Christ, and members of Christ, and he also mentions the body of Christ.

The word "body" appears forty-one times; three are "the body of Christ." The

literary format chosen is a metaphor. The metaphor must be easily understood to be

effective:

> … it should be based on a literal concept that is familiar to the intended
>
> audience. This is because the power of metaphors is based on recognition
>
> and familiarity – the audience must immediately know the literal concept
>
> that is referred to. They must also immediately recognize the connection
>
> between the literal and the non-literal concepts (or what are often called
>
> the source and target domains), which form the metaphor. (Hintikka 361)

The body's metaphor intends to show every Christian's deep connection with

Christ and the connection between the members, independence and dependency, one and

all. It is easy to understand the intended functioning of the body of Christ by paying attention to the functioning of our own bodies. "There are few other aspects in the world of physical realities that are so absolutely ubiquitous and universal, both geographically and chronologically, than the physical body that we all inhabit" (Hintikka 361).

The body of Christ is the Church, and Christ is its head. However, this reality does not eliminate or prevent conflict. The several issues Corinthians were dealing with were addressed in Paul's epistle. The apostle did not try to solve those conflicts separately. He spoke to a church, not to individuals. It was crucial for the church to understand their position as members of the Body of Christ. In this context, the spiritual gifts are given for church edification (1 Cor. 14:12).

Spiritual Gifts

Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: God's provisions to edify the Body and be a blessing to others are spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:25). The fruits of the Spirit must always support activity in the Christian life.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul uses the word "golden" to describe the greatest gift: the Holy Spirit. In Corinthians, he uses another verb, *charisma*, which refers to ways of expressing the only gift. The charism can be born according to the need of the Church. On the other hand, the golden one will never change. It can be said then that the greatest gift that God has granted to the Church is the Holy Spirit Himself (Rom. 5:5; 8:15). Charisms or spiritual gifts are the manifestations of that most excellent gift.

If spiritual gifts are the way to express the gift of the Holy Spirit, the variety will not only have to do with the list of gifts given in the New Testament, but with those that the Church has developed. The lists are not exhaustive nor identical (Rom. 12:6ff; 1 Cor.

12; Eph. 4:11ff). If the gifts arise according to the Church's needs, new gifts will emerge. Even if not mentioned in the Scriptures, spiritual gifts are to serve the Church so it can do its job.

Purpose of spiritual gifts: Faced with the question: Why does the Spirit give gifts to the Church? the answer can be found in the Epistle to the Ephesians:

> to equip his people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
>
> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Eph. 4:12-16)

Nothing is given as an ornament to be displayed. The Body receives tools for service. "If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet. 4:11).

The purpose of spiritual gifts is for the edification of the body of Christ. This must also be the criterion for guiding this edification. It is not about the exaltation of certain

individuals with certain gifts; it is about the body's edification for the exaltation of the head of that body, Jesus Christ. In In Gordon Fee's words:

> The presence of the Spirit with its power and gifts makes it easier for God's people to conceive of power and gifts as real evidence of the presence of the Spirit. For Paul it is not like that. The ultimate criterion for the activity of the Spirit is the exaltation of Jesus as Lord. Whatever takes anything away from that, even if they be legitimate expressions of the Spirit, begins to move away from Christ to a more pagan fascination with spiritual activity as an end in itself. (*The First* 645)

Classification of spiritual gifts: Reading a book or study devoted to spiritual gifts may leave the idea that the subject is clearly outlined in the Scriptures, yet this is rarely the case. For this reason, Scriptures must be permanently consulted on every subject. Bible readers must not consider definitive something the Bible does not. The diversity in the gifts list of Pauline letters reflects that the author was not doing a systematic study. He was teaching about them according to the needs of the churches. "El propósito de este pasaje no es de dar instrucciones detalladas acerca de los dones espirituales, sino de subrayar la diversidad de funciones con las que Dios capacita a los creyentes" 'The purpose of this passage is not to give detailed instructions about the spiritual gifts, but to underline the diversity of functions with which God empowers believers' (Biblia de Estudio NVI 1837). Note that Paul only speaks of the gift of speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians; in the rest of the letters, he does not even mention it.

It is not easy to insert spiritual gifts into rigid categories. In doing so, some are forced because they naturally do not belong to that given category, and others are excluded because they are considered less critical (Almirudis 16).

Lists of spiritual gifts:

Table 2.1.

Lists of spiritual gifts as they appear in 1 Corinthians, Romans, and Ephesians

1 Corinthians 12:8-10	1 Corinthians 12:28-30	Romans 12:6-8	Ephesians 4:11
message of wisdom	apostles	prophesying	apostles
message of knowledge	prophets	serving	prophets
faith	teachers	teaching	evangelists
gifts of healing	miracles	to encourage	pastors
miraculous powers	gifts of healing	giving	teachers
prophecy	of helping	to lead	
distinguishing between spirits	of guidance	to show mercy	
speaking in different kinds of tongues	of different kinds of tongues		
interpretation of tongues	interpretation of tongues		

Gordon Fee states that those in 1 Cor. 12:29, 30 should also be included as gift lists; 13:1-3, 8; 14:6, and 26. (*The First* 662) This project considered 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 and 12:28-30, but the Greek word in 1 Corinthians 13:2 shares the same root that the Greek word in 1 Corinthians 12:8.

Gift of Knowledge

It is not entirely clear what the spiritual gift of knowledge means to the Apostle

Paul. It is probably closely related to the word of wisdom that is also mentioned in 1 Cor.

12:8 but does not appear in any other list of spiritual gifts. According to Gordon Fee,

"Some scholars have suggested that Paul has in mind a supernatural endowment of

knowledge, factual information that could not otherwise be known without the Spirit's

aid. Peter's 'knowledge' of Ananias and Sapphira's misdeed in Acts 5,1-11 is often looked

upon as this gift in action" (657). In Latin America, during the 1980s, a Christian

program called "The 700 Club" was broadcasted on open television. This program

popularized the concept of the gift of science as the specific information that the

protagonists of the program received about specific circumstances about people they did

not know who were viewers of the program. Gordon Fee states: "There is no reason to

doubt that the Holy Spirit speaks that way to the church today, but it is unlikely that Paul

had such a thing in mind in mentioning 'this' gift. If he wanted to name such a

phenomenon, it would probably be 'revelation'" (670). Regarding Luke's account of

Ananias and Sapphira as an example of the gift of knowledge, Fee highlights the fact that

"Luke does not indicate it as such in his narrative (cf. Acts 5:1-11) since the word 'know'

or 'knowledge' does not occur" (657).

In 1 Corinthians Paul uses the word "knowledge" ten times (1 Cor. 1:5; 8:1; 8:7;

8:10; 8:11; 12:8; 13:2; 13:8; 14:6). Some form of the verb "to know" is used thirty-four

times. Some things can be known, but others, such as the mind of God, are unknowable.

"No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God, but since Christians

have received the Holy Spirit, they are now capable of understanding many things of God through him" (Njiru 136).

The root of the word *gnoseos* is *gnosis,* which means understanding, knowledge, science. The message of knowledge, *logos gnoseos*, is not repeated in the four lists of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-10; 12:28-30; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11). The message of wisdom, faith, gifts of healing, miraculous powers, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in different kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues, gifts of helping, gifts of guidance, serving, encouraging, giving, and showing mercy do not appear in the four lists of spiritual gifts either. The message of knowledge only appears in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, but this does not undermine its authority.

Paul was not teaching a course on spiritual gifts. He gave pastoral advice and explained the importance of each member's role in the body of Christ.

> The key is an emphasis on valuing and judiciously encouraging every member's contribution to ministry. Those who teach the rest of the church should view their task as mobilizing all believers for their ministry in the world, where their "parishes" are their physically and spiritually needy neighbors, coworkers, and other acquaintances (cf. Eph 4:11-13). If only five percent of Christ's body uses its gifts, only five percent of the church's work will be fulfilled. Whereas ancients expected particular supernatural activity, especially at healing shrines or oracular centers, Paul democratizes God's activity among all of God's people. (Keener, *1-2 Corinthians* 106)

According to Keener, those with the spiritual gift of knowledge should be mobilized by church teachers to use that gift. The same is true for each spiritual gift in the body of Christ. There is not a single definition for the gift of knowledge: "Other see the gift of *λόγος γνώσεως* as referring to something more akin to inspired teaching. …Still others see it as related to receiving Christian insight into the meaning of Scripture" (Njiru 136). A definition that considers the use of the word "knowledge" in the Pauline epistles, the intention of Paul while talking about the spiritual gifts, and the general context of the epistle must be chosen. According to Hiram Almirudis, the gift of knowledge could be described as follows:

> Knowledge, both in secular and religious literature, is the faculty of
> perceiving, of understanding. Therefore, knowledge as a spiritual gift is
> the ability to perceive, inform, document, and have deep notions of God's
> truths. It cannot be denied that the gift of knowledge has more to do with
> the theoretical, intellectual aspect of Christian truths, the correct
> perception of them (1 Cor. 12:8; 2 Cor. 11:6). (40)

The gift of knowledge is a crucial gift for this project. "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). Many people don't know that they have it. They also ignore the blessing they could bring if they used their gift to seek exegetical information for their pastor's sermons.

Theological Foundations

Word of God Inspired by the Holy Spirit

A primary concern regarding the Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit involves the role of human participation because "God did not choose to give us a series

of timeless, non-culture-bound theological propositions to be believed and imperatives to be obeyed. Rather he chose to speak His eternal Word *this* way, in historically particular circumstances and every kind of literary genre" (Fee, *Gospel* 25). Some genres were known and used in biblical times, and others took a particular form in the Word of God.

Human participation is mainly viewed as a single individual elaboration. This is a relevant topic since the Holy Spirit continues working in the Earth, inspiring those who continued to convey the divine message of the kingdom of God. These individuals belong to a faith community that is listening and being inspired by the Holy Spirit to participate in building the Church: "Taking seriously the fact that God repeatedly chose to inspire human authors requires us to take seriously the human dimensions of the text—the linguistic and cultural matrices in which the text is encoded" (Keener, *"The spirit"* 22).

Bible inspirational theories range from word-for-word dictation to one individual to selecting specific passages that could be left out of the Bible because they were not considered genuinely inspired by God. Those texts would simply be a human elaboration. There is no consensus criterion on the concept of inspiration as it varies according to each author's theological inclination. A current of conservative thought considers that even from questioning the authorship of traditionally recognized writers, the truth of divine inspiration is endangered (Hayford 812).

Biblical inspiration of single individuals would be inherently linked to its inerrancy. This inerrancy is understood from this same conservative trend according to positivist guidelines. It has to do with the impossibility of finding an error in the biblical text. In this view, those found as "errors" by people without doctrinal limitations force an arduous series of arguments and harmonizations that wear down even the most willing

person. The lengthy and exhausting nature of this work indicates that this is not the author of the biblical text's objective.

Justo González was confronted during a lecture by a student who wanted to know his position on the inerrancy of the Bible:

> "Do you believe that the Bible is inerrant?" the young man with the tape recorder asked.
>
> There was a hush in the audience, for much more than a theological issue was at stake. The setting was the lecture hall at a seminary in Latin America. ... The young man with the tape recorder had been sent by representatives of the fundamentalist faction in the denomination to check on what was being taught at the seminary. ... After a moment of hushed expectation, I responded, 'Yes! The Bible is inerrant. But the same cannot be said for any interpretation of the Bible. The error is not in the Bible, but in its interpreters, who often confuse their own words with the Word of God.'
>
> "What do you mean? Can you give me an example?"
>
> "Surely. As a matter of fact, I'll give you two. In John 15:1, Jesus says that he is 'the true vine.' If I were to tell you that this means that Jesus has roots and a trunk, and leaves, and needs dirt and fertilizer in order to live, you probably would say that I was mistaken. Jesus is not really and literally a vine. The text must be interpreted in some other fashion. You probably would say that the text is an allegory, that its language is metaphoric. Yet the text itself does not say that it is an

allegory or a metaphor. There is no error in the text. The error would be in

the interpreter, who takes it literally when it is not intended to be literal.

Isn't that so?" I asked as he nodded in agreement. Then I continued:

"Now, then, in Genesis 1, we are told that God made the world in six days.

Just as in the case of John 15, the text does not tell us whether we are to

interpret it literally or not. If you insist that the text must be taken literally,

that is your privilege, and there certainly is nothing in the text to contradict

you. But there is also nothing in the text that says that it must be taken

literally. Therefore, your position and the position of someone who says

that text is to be taken as a metaphor are based, not on the text itself, but

on your interpretation of the text. If either you or that other person errs, the

error is not in the text itself, but its interpretation. That is why I say that

the Bible is inerrant, but the same cannot be said for any Bible

interpretation. As a matter of fact, for me to claim that my interpretation is

inerrant is to usurp the authority of the Bible. And the same is true of any

interpretation, no matter whether literal or metaphorical." (11-12)

Referencing the canon as a sign of inspiration would not be effective either. The

Old and New Testaments canon histories are replete with changes, disputes, and

uncertainties. Only from the distance of centuries can this process be seen as definitive

and without question of any kind. Some Septuagint books circulating among early church

Christians were not incorporated into the canon. Others came out. And the books are

presented in a different order. For example, Manasseh's prayer is not in the Jewish,

Protestant, or Catholic canon. However, it was present in some versions of the

Septuagint, in the Vulgate at the end of the fourth century, in the King James Version of 1611, in the Bear's Bible, a Spanish Protestant version of Casiodoro de Reina in 1569, and the Geneva Bible of 1560. There is no original text, but only copies that differ from each other, as happens with the texts considered canonical.

Indeed, the canon's consolidation was a theological and cultural battle where definite books managed to prevail. But the books considered deuterocanonical by the Catholic Church were part of the Bible read by the Early Church in Greek. They would not have been read, recommended, and quoted unless they had been considered inspired by God. Even the Reformers - who translated the Bible into vernacular languages in their quest to bring the Word of God closer to a people who did not speak Latin centuries ago - reserved space for these books. The official listing of books would also not be a definitive solution to settle the question of divine inspiration.

Since there is no objective scientific way to demonstrate the divine inspiration of the Bible (Arens 90), the individual and the Church's faith is necessary. Whoever approaches the biblical text to study it as a simple literary text, even if they consider it a religious book, will not do justice to the text, which was not written to be studied, but to be believed and lived: "Even though God inspired the Bible in textual form, it is not just any text. For us as Christians, it is *God's* Word, and it not only spoke in the past but continues to communicate to us God's message" (Keener, *"The Spirit"* 24).

The key is faith; the faith of the readers, and the faith of the Biblical story's protagonists, since divine inspiration was given long before a single letter was written (Arens 90). Inspiration is also traced back to the history of Israel's people and the countless accounts that became the oral tradition (Salas 58) which are Old Testament

traditions. It would be impossible to understand the New Testament and traditions of the New Testament arising from the first Christians' experiences that enriched the life of the church without the Old Testament traditions. They circulated orally until the writing process and subsequent writing took place, since "el Espíritu no puede ser aprisionado entre las letras de los escritos bíblicos" 'the Spirit cannot be imprisoned between the letters of the biblical writings' (Arens 167). It may sound dangerous to some Christians' ears that the biblical text has been circulated orally, yet this has happened for several centuries.

According to Salas, to understand the mentality of the biblical man, it is enlightening for us to consider Bedouin's thoughts:

> Sobre este punto oí referir a un profesor bíblico, —perfecto conocedor del sentir beduino— que un "jeque" del desierto podía recitar sin el menor titubeo su árbol genealógico, cuyas raíces se hundían nada menos que en Mahoma (¡trece siglos!). Y lo curioso es que tal genealogía, a juicio del perito, distaba mucho de ser convencional. (59)

> I heard a Biblical professor –a perfect connoisseur of Bedouin thoughts– mention that a "sheik" of the desert could recite his family tree without hesitation, whose roots sank no less than in Muhammad (thirteen centuries!). And the curious thing is that such genealogy, in the expert's opinion, was far from being conventional.

Fundamentalism makes a tremendous effort to harmonize the biblical text to explain inconsistencies. The goal is to support the idea of the perfect God, according to the positivist view. Fortunately, God does not depend on human effort to sustain the

power of His divinity. His Word is true because He is the truth (John 14:6). And the change He makes in the lives of those who seek it from the heart is also true. It is not the same, but it is true.

Another view, known as liberal, disrespects believers by asserting that there is no such thing as an inspired text or that God's Word doesn't provide any useful element for enriching the understanding of the biblical text. Ultimately, authors who elaborate on these hypotheses lack the evidence that indubitably supports their affirmations, so they incur in the same error that they criticize.

The free gaze of a believer in God who places their highest hopes and their most profound suffering on Him cannot be conditioned by long tirades of fundamentalisms against all those who do not interpret the Bible according to its parameters. Nor can it be questioned by liberal disbelief, with that facility to put and take authority and value, because the person who believes in God needs Him as light to illuminate his life.

Avoiding the positions of fundamentalism and liberalism does not mean ignoring the challenges that the Word of God presents to the modern reader:

> Our doctrine of inspiration suggests that Scripture inherently contains ambiguity, accommodation, and diversity, each to varying degrees. Since God chose to give us his word in this manner, our task is to hold each end of the spectrum—historical particularity and eternality—with equal vigor. While we cannot generate the absolute certainty so sought by the fundamentalists, we can nonetheless move toward a higher level of commonality. The way toward this higher level is found at the crucial point of authorial intentionality, both human and divine. (Noel 75)

A healthy balance proposed by Noel considers human participation in the biblical text elaboration— with its limitations and particularities—and divine participation as far as can be understood by the human mind. The search for exegetical information, taking into account this framework, will look for those data that serve to approach the message that the Word of God probably wanted to transmit to the first recipients. According to Arens, divine inspiration will be essential to move the person to understand and accept the saving message that the Bible communicates (90).

Preaching

The question "What is the purpose of preaching?" can have many answers:

a) "to convey truth, persuading listeners to react positively to divinely revealed truth" (Lee 97);

b) "the communication of truth by man to men" (Brooks 5);

c) "the disclosure of God, an encounter with God through the Word, more than information about God" (Wilson 21);

d) to preach the gospel, which "is not in our thoughts or hearts; it is in Scripture" (Barth 78);

e) "to be the occasion for the hearing of a voice beyond the preachers' voice: the very word of the living God" (Long 19-20);

f) "to gather up the Church into the community of the Trinity, with all that means in terms of wholeness, relationship, transformation, mission, and service in the world" (Bruce 61); and

g) "to build up and bring up the church and cause the amounts of Grace and power in it to reach those of Jesus Christ" (Kim 17).

These are all different answers to the question, but with many elements in common. Especially, they are rooted in the Word of God.

> "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news! (Rom. 10:13-15)

As children of God redeemed by Christ's blood (1 Pet. 1:18-20), the path illuminated by the Holy Spirit is modeled by Him.

> In the daily grind of ministry, it's easy to forget whose ministry it is. Although we desire to serve Christ and often ask him for help, we assume that it's our ministry, and we are the principal actors. This common understanding of ministry is partially true, but the profound truth is that the ministry we have entered is, first and foremost, the ministry of Jesus Christ. It's his ministry more than ours. (Seamands 20)

Christ is the axis, but He is not alone: the Holy Spirit and the Father play a crucial role in His mission. Jesus said to his listeners:

> And the Father himself who sent me has testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice, nor seen his figure, nor live his word in you, because you do not believe in the one whom he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think you find eternal life in them. And it is

they who bear witness in my favor! However, you do not want to come to me to have that life. (John 5:37-40)

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (Luk. 4:14-21)

The Lord did not speak these words to an ignorant audience of the Scriptures. If the Jews boasted of anything, it was to treasure, even to obsess over the sacred text. Compared to the place the Word can have in any of our homes, their devotion was commendable. And yet they did not understand the text because they had not fully understood the purpose for which it was written. Despite so much looking at and

venerating the text, they could not see what God had done and what God wanted to do. His plan goes back to the very beginning of creation.

> Sometimes theologians have thought about the image as like just a capacity that we have that differentiates us from animals, like our ability to make choices or our ability to reason. No, that passage understands that there's a *relationship* that constitutes the image. Just as the persons of the Trinity are created in relationship to each other, we´ve been created in relationship. (Seamands 21:15-21:45)

God creates human beings in His image, a Trinitarian image. This reality "has profound implications for ministry. Often, the places where people really fail in ministry are in their ability to form and to function well in relationships" (Seamands 17:23–17:38). Considering that, it is easy to see the Lord Jesus Christ finding specific moments to be alone with the Father, but essentially dedicating His life to preach to the people around Him. He was preaching with His own life.

Jesus Christ was the most passionate and sincere preacher in history. Preaching was Christ's major ministry. Christianity began with the preaching of Jesus Christ. It began when he came and made one speech, "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'" (Mark 1:14). The birth of the church also began from preaching. Therefore, nothing is more important for preaching than the truth. Not only because Christianity began through the preaching of Jesus Christ, but also because the movements of repentance and salvation arise through preaching and those who were spiritually mature save lost souls (thus enabling the

community to practice the will of God). It is also because preaching served the most important role whenever the Christian community attempted to accomplish God's vision and attempted to pursue changes and growth. Therefore, preaching is more important than anything else for the growth and changes of the Church.

> In preparing this sermon, the basic question I have asked myself has not been, "How can I make this ancient book interesting or useful for modern listeners?" but rather, "What is this story doing to change our thinking, will, and day to day living as God's people?" This way of reading is a form of listening and obedience, which requires that we approach the biblical text with a willingness to be taught, challenged, confronted, humbled, and converted. (Green and Pasquarello)

The listeners' minds, hearts, and wills must be addressed in sermons. They are the reason for preaching. So, preachers need to think about the audience to whom they are trying to convey the Savior's Good News. Good News is not only for unbelievers; preachers have to find out how to create the environment so that their weekly audience receives that Good News too.

The ultimate goal of preaching is knowledge of God. Consequently, preaching not only finds its starting point in God and is carried out by the power and presence of God, but it also has its end in God since it tries to bring individuals to the personal knowledge of God (Costas 23). Indeed, the desire, the need, is to know Him better. But that knowledge is mediated by His Word, so the essential thing in preaching is to explain the Bible or exegesis. Many sermons quote biblical texts and develop varied themes. However, the audience is left after the sermon with the same degree of biblical ignorance

with which they began to listen because the Word of God is not explored. Somewhat disjointed and superficial reflections are made.

<div align="center">**Exegesis**</div>

The word exegesis is the transliteration of the Greek term *exegesis*, which means "narrative," "description," and also "explanation," "interpretation." The verb *exegeomai* means "explain, interpret, tell, report, describe" (Goodrich and Lukaszewski 113).

> Bible study in order to be exegesis must be methodical and scientific.
> Exegesis requires *method*. It implies a defined aim, a plan, and order of
> procedure. Most persons study without any definite aim and without an
> established method or a persistent purpose. Their studies inevitably
> become desultory and lead, if not into positive error, at least to no large
> and permanent results. They learn many things but acquire no coherent,
> organic body of knowledge. (Stevens 198)

There is no single way to do exegesis. Some authors consider that the steps should include textual criticism, literary criticism, criticism of genres and forms, criticism of tradition, and redaction criticism. The basic bibliographic tools to work with would be critical editions of the original texts, concordances, dictionaries, synopses, linguistic key, and others (Krüger, et al. 15-34). Some authors consider that exegesis primarily involves "five areas in which the exegete must acquire skill: textual criticism, grammar/syntax, semantics, compositional analysis, and intertextuality" (Shepherd 118). Other authors propose a process that includes the analysis of the text: confirm the limits, compare versions, reconstruct the text, translation, historical context, literary context, form, structure, grammatical data, lexical data, biblical context, theology, secondary literature, and application (Stuart and Fee 56-86).

The Word of God is a book that can be scientifically scrutinized and from which countless doctoral theses can be written. But it can also be simply read by someone who is learning to read. So impressive is the power of God imprinted in the letters of Scripture. For believers, the Word of God is fundamentally a book to be believed and lived. But this belief in divine communication for a full life does not necessarily imply that the believing reader understands everything read in the Holy Scriptures. Biblical exegesis is necessary, but in turn, time, resources, and professional training are mostly needed to carry it out.

The exegesis of God's Word will shed light on those texts that become obscure due to the temporal, cultural, and other distances that exist between the first recipients and current readers. Besides, it allows enriching those texts that can be considered more understandable with the naked eye. "Honor your father and your mother" (Exod. 20:12) in the context of parricides takes on another dimension.

Believers believe and live the Word of God, but they do not do so alone. The Christian faith is lived in community; therefore, brothers and sisters play a crucial role in building the kingdom of God, which includes the preaching of the Word, although one person, the pastor, has historically performed this task. Since exegesis is vital to nurture preaching, the contribution that other members of the Body of Christ can make in this process will be essential.

Believers are familiar with the study of the Word, but usually not exegesis. The history of exegesis is often considered on par and even merged with the history of hermeneutics. This is because both disciplines are understood in their meaning of explanation and that exegesis can also mean "interpretation." That is where exegesis

crosses paths with the art of interpreting, which is hermeneutics. So the distinction will depend on how those words are defined. In this text, exegesis is understood as a different exercise that precedes hermeneutics. While exegesis is concerned with explaining the meaning of the text to the original readers as well as possible, hermeneutics is responsible for analyzing possible interpretations for today's reader.

It is worth mentioning that exegetical work is not exclusive to the Scriptures. Some scholars are dedicated to explaining ancient Chinese or Latin texts, contemporary authors, or what is of interest to them and consider that it requires an explanation. That is why the term "biblical exegesis" is specified.

Furthermore, when speaking of exegesis, it is understood that it must be done based on the original languages of the Bible, namely Hebrew, Greek, and in some sections in Aramaic. Exegetes, people dedicated to the exercise of exegesis, must master these languages in order to explore the richness of the biblical text.

As an explanation of the Scriptures, Biblical exegesis was given from the first years of spreading the divine message in writing. Since more people had access to the writings without the author's presence, explanation became necessary. The original recipients of the biblical text understood the message upon hearing it. Revelation, which is the New Testament book that most often quotes the Old Testament, begins as follows:

> The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his
> servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his
> angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the
> word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who
> reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it

and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near (Rev. 1:1-3).

Revelation 1:3 says that blessed people are not those who manage to decipher hidden riddles, but those who listen and keep what is written, that is to say, those who obey. It is understood that those who hear that message will understand it. Otherwise, it would not be possible to obey. So, assuming that the first recipients of the text would understand the message, the question is whether or not they will obey it. The message would be understood with such clarity that it would challenge listeners and put them in need of deciding whether to obey the divine message or disobey it.

That was the reality of the first century, but then the text remained in use for other churches, with other realities, and the author of the text was no longer present to explain what he meant. The recipients were no longer those who shared the context of the author of the text in such a way that they could clearly understand what he wanted to convey. The need to explain the text became evident.

A text's exegesis requires a long, detailed, and precise process, done in the original languages. Such a demanding task is beyond the reach of most Bible readers. But those interested people can enter the world of exegesis by taking the first steps, which are analyzing specific words, specific situations, and precise comparisons. That is why this project speaks of exegetical resources. While biblical exegesis itself is an ideal, it also takes practice. The first step is contact with biblical languages.

Some authors do not speak of exegetical resources, but use other terms such as studying God's Word and methods of approach. The terminology can vary, but the idea behind it is to explain the biblical text. For example, in David Thompson's brief but

highly practical and insightful volume, *Bible Study That Works*, he describes inductive Bible study practices. The inductive process of studying Scripture begins with the premise that two fundamental questions must be answered. The first question is, *"What, as a matter of fact, did the author intend to say to his first readers?"* (Thompson 12) Essential to answering this question is the historical setting in which the author of the book or letter resides. Considering that the Holy Spirit can generalize the particular situation where and when the author is located, the modern reader must acknowledge that the biblical author was not writing to him or her. Therefore, strong consideration must be taken to understand the passage's context being researched and the possible author's reason for writing it. The question also addresses the Bible's objective nature by recognizing that it exists independent of the modern reader. This collection of poems, letters, and stories that people call the Bible is God's Word, whether or not anyone reads it. Therefore, it is imperative to understand where the passage sits in the light of the chapter, book, Bible, and so forth before the modern reader interprets the passage or applies it to his or her life.

Exegetical resources refers to specific material found when studying a biblical passage, such as the following: references in Greek or Hebrew, translation problems, issues of textual criticism, theological, historical, geographical, political, and social issues.

The study of the Word of God's content is vast. It can reach levels of complexity that make necessary a previous preparation to open the Bible and be capable of reading and understanding it best possible, not necessarily with academic purposes in mind, but with life purposes in mind for sure.

It is not unusual to face a biblical text that is misunderstood, as in the case of temple dedications: "... to compare the building of a local congregation with the Solomonic temple is a mistake. Depending on the function under study, the temple may be compared to the general headquarters of a mainline denomination, to a patriotic monument, or a national bank" (Jiménez and González 78).

Another example would be Psalms 126:5, 6. "Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them." It is easy to understand the joy after the harvest, but why the weeping? African readers commented to an American reader:

> Well this is quite obvious. When that Psalm was composed, it was just like our times. There had been a famine in the land. The families have a difficult choice to make. They have a certain amount of corn and they can do one of two things with it. They can use it to feed their hungry children, but if you do that, you are no longer a farmer next year. You have nothing to plant. You have to go to the city to beg. Or you can literally take that corn away from your hungry family, your hungry children, and sow it in the land.
>
> Of course in those circumstances when you go out to the land you are weeping. How could anyone do anything different? It's obvious. (Jenkins)

His final reflection was that when a person has suffered hunger, they can easily read the Bible and notice how much it talks about food. The great Day of God is a banquet where everyone has enough to eat.

Every reader comes to the text from a particular social location that

determines how the text is heard and interpreted. Objectivity is an illusion

that denies the reader's role, whether that reader is an untrained layperson

or a tenured biblical professor. Subjective approaches, such as reader

response theory, have suggested that texts have no meaning other than that

brought by each individual. (Lundblad 7-8)

In Matthew 18:15-20, binding and loosing do not occur in an exorcism context,

but for the administration of church discipline. Church leaders are responsible for

determining who is allowed to remain within the new covenant community and under

what conditions.

Mark 5:21-43. "Jairus' daughter and the woman with the issue of blood" is a

precious example of a variety of those essential subjects needed for a better

comprehension of the Scripture. Even though the pericope was told in the Synoptic

Gospels, the chosen Gospel for analysis was that of Mark. Basically, for the extent of the

account. Mark 5:21-43 has 373 Greek words (SBLGNT) and 490 English words (NKJV).

Luke 8:40-56 has 287 Greeks words and 370 English words. Matthew 9:18-26 is the

shortest account with 138 Greek words and 180 English words.

It draws attention because Matthew contains twenty-eight chapters and 18,370

words; Luke has twenty-four chapters and 19,496 words, and Mark has only sixteen

chapters and 10,981 words (Rice).

Several topics could be taught from these texts before actually reading them.

These are:

a. Languages that were spoken during Jesus' life and during the New Testament writing time and the Greek text and its way to the English texts;

b. Synagogues and the story of that institution, the role of synagogues during Jesus' life, and during the time of the writings of the New Testament, the authorities in the synagogue and the influence on the life of the Jews and Christians;

c. Common sicknesses during the time of Jesus and possible treatments to heal the sick and results;

d. Economic situation of Jesus' followers and the people whom he taught, their incomes and expenses;

e. Social stratification of Jesus' followers and the people whom he taught;

f. Funeral traditions and the preparation of the dead bodies for their final place; and

g. Purification regulations in the Old Testament about menstruating women and corpses and other regulations from other texts that were important for the Jews.

Women who suffer painful menstrual periods can imagine the pain of that woman. It was not only her body that weakened, but also her finances, her social relations, her whole life. According to the Jewish ideas of that time, the woman was an utter outcast because of her disease. She could not take part in any religious proceedings, could not come into the temple, or touch other persons. She had to be separated from her

husband. Her disease came within the scope of the regulations of Leviticus 15. So she was not only impoverished through having had to give all her possessions to physicians in the hope that they might heal her. She was a despised and solitary woman. If her cure had taken place without the Savior making it known publicly, she would have had the utmost difficulty removing the inhabitants of the town the prejudice and scorn that she had met with for years. For this reason, the Savior understood her circumstances and made her appear before the whole multitude to testify that she had been healed (Geldenhuys 261).

That's why it was not enough for the Lord just to heal her. He knew that she needed something more, so He also touched her heart. Her sickness prevented her from having a "normal" life. She could not be touched, hugged, or caressed; her life circumstances were challenging. She struggled and found herself facing the Lord in the middle of a multitude expecting her to be reprimanded. So she told Him "the whole truth" (Mark 5:33), waiting for the worst, but what she received was tenderness and comfort for her soul.

Many women were mistreated for reasons they could not control. They have been treated by society in a way that has wounded them. They may be physically ill, but their souls also need the touch of the Lord. He can touch them with a supernatural hand or through the hands of his Church.

The Messianic secret in Mark was the prohibition of talking about the miracles performed by the Lord. The question arises; why did Jesus forbid talking about them? (1:23, 34; 43-45; 3:11-12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26, 30; 9:9). There is an exception (5:19). There have been several answers to this question. One is that it was not yet the right time for

Him to be revealed as Messiah. His listeners were waiting for a Messiah, but the idea that they had about it would be very different from the plan of the Lord of living among the poor, taking His cross, and dying.

As previously stated, there was an exception in the Gospel of Mark. A Gentile was allowed to talk about the liberation made by Jesus in His life.

> As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis[b] how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed. (Mark 5:18-20)

Perhaps because his family and the people from where he was from did not know and shared the tradition about the Messiah, there was no real risk of the Lord being misunderstood.

The beginning of the account established that the woman could believe in the possibility of being healed due to what she had heard.

> And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. (Mark 5:25-28)

If she had "heard about Jesus," it was because someone was telling beautiful things about Him. Is it not part of the Gospel to tell the needy the news about the love of Jesus for humanity and his power? Why would the Lord not want some stories to be told?

He is willing to heal, but healing is not the goal. There has been, and there will be Christians that have not been healed, but they are still faithful and believe in a God of miracles. The goal is to make disciples. And a sick disciple is still a disciple. He or she will deal with sickness as Christ would.

Mark emphasizes this healing's theological nature by his repeated use of "straightway" (*euthus*).

> Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.
>
> At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"
>
> "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"
>
> But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. 33 Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. (5:29-33)

The verbal link underscores the theological link: the woman's healing is not just a physical cure, but a moral one, affecting her very identity. The woman's reaction of fear and trembling (*phobētheisa* and *tremousa*, v. 33) is an expression of awe, and it is followed by a gesture of faith: "[she] told him the whole truth" (v. 33).

An essential aspect of this significance is the emphasis on faith. At the end of chapter four, Jesus reproaches his disciples for their lack of faith (v. 40), but here, he commends the woman for having faith. Although not called to be a disciple, the woman acts like one, following after Jesus and trusting him to save her. The woman is a model of the faith the disciples lack (Sabin 189).

Should stories about the healing power of Jesus be told? Yes, indeed. However, it has to be clear that physical healing is not the ultimate purpose of the Lord for the person that needs a divine touch. The Holy Spirit definitively wants to touch the heart and convert it according to the divine mission.

The Church of God Denomination's Pastor Preparation

COGA in Buenos Aires is part of the international COG (Cleveland, Tennessee), and it is also part of its history, a history that started in the nineteenth century. In this section is also presented the Church of God denomination's pastor preparation.

The Beginnings of the Church of God

The history of the beginnings of the Church of God in the United States may contain surprising elements; however, what happened was utterly predictable. Various excesses occurred because there was no protective organization to discipline and guide the faithful and no biblical training.

As so many people joined the church in such a short time and without the guidance of prepared leaders, between 1900 and 1902 they fell into the hands of extremist fanatics, which prohibited or censured everything from food to women's hairstyles.

Table 2.2.

Chronology of the beginning of the history of the Church of God

Date	Event
1884	Dissatisfaction with creeds and rituals in Historic Churches leads Richard G. Spurling to renew his study of Scripture and Church History.
1886	The Christian Union is organized in Monroe County, Tennessee, with eight members. Richard Spurling Jr. is ordained and selected as pastor.
1896	A great revival at Shearer School in Cherokee County, North Carolina, stands out as prominent leader W.F. Bryant. The group with Spurling Jr. combined with the group from North Carolina. About a hundred people are baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in other languages.
1896-1902	Persecution threatens the Christian Union.
1900-1902	Fanaticism Almost Destroys Christian Union
1902	A simple plan is adopted as a government. The name of Christian Union is changed to Church of Holiness.
1903	A. J. Tomlinson joins the young church and is selected as pastor.
1906	The First Assembly meets in Cherokee County, North Carolina, with twenty-one delegates. Church leaders move to Bradley County, Tennessee.
1907	The name of the Church of Holiness is changed to Church of God.

Source: Conn, Charles W. *Como Ejército Poderoso, La Historia de la Iglesia de Dios – 1886 – 1976.*
Pathway Press, 1983.

In Argentina, the Church of God arose between 1939 and 1940 when the Evangelical Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ had contact with the international organization Church of God through the missionary and representative, J. H. Ingram. A

fraternal union was then established between the existing church under Mazzucco's pastorate and the Church of God.

Pastors' Preparation

In 2011, a Church of God pastor who was studying for his bachelor's degree in theology dedicated the thesis work of his professional training to the subject of preaching. Years later, that minister received the most votes from his colleagues and became the Regional Supervisor of the Province of Buenos Aires.

In the introduction to his book, he says that the first time he was invited to preach, he simply did not know how to do it. He prepared what God spoke to his life, with much effort and few resources, but he knew it was not enough (Franco 5). Unfortunately, that case is not an exception, but the rule. Most of the Church of God's pastors began their first steps in preaching with the experience provided by the hours of listening to their pastors and without any formal preparation to do so. The desire to transmit the Word of God is indispensable, but not sufficient.

There are general requirements for admission to the pastorate like being baptized by the Holy Spirit; be well informed about the teachings and doctrines established by the International General Assembly of the Church of God; keep up with the tithes; have served as exhorters prior to requesting the certificate of ordained ministers, and be active in evangelistic or pastoral work (*Enseñanzas* 62-64).

It can be read in the manual de *Enseñanzas, Disciplina y Gobierno de la Iglesia de Dios* [*Teachings, Discipline, and Government of the Church of God*] that formal preparation in the Bible area is not a requirement for aspiring pastors. However, ministers must complete a course called Ministerial Internship Program.

The need for formal preparation on a topic as vital to pastoral ministry as preaching is more than evident. That is why Franco poured into a text his years of study and personal experience on the subject, trying to contribute to filling a professional training gap within the COGA.

Franco divided his work into two parts. The first part is about the person of the preacher including his witness, his commitment to the church, and his commitment to the entrusted work of preaching the Word of God. The second part is concerned with the sermon including the choice of subject, the correct interpretation of the biblical text, the use of various resources, and the proper structuring of the sermon.

His intention in writing that final work was to challenge the reader to prepare a special message, and to provide him or her with adequate tools for the sermon delivery. Franco expected for the reader a fresh and transforming experience (5).

Franco shared the anecdote of a preacher who, given the shortage of resources consulted, simply repeated the little content he had. It would have been an experience strong enough to be marked in his memory since Franco recorded that the preacher in question went on to repeat the same information up to four times!

Exegetical work is essential. It is also indispensable and arduous. Therefore, a proposal that allows the pastor to have exegetical resources available to prepare his sermon is welcome.

Sociological and Ethical Themes

Two other themes from the literature review highly enriched the research of this project: authorship concept and authorship of Bible books.

Authorship Concept

Unlike other religions or sects that profess to have received their sacred writings directly through a divinity, excluding all human participation, the Evangelical Church considers that different authors wrote the Bible in different times and cultures. But it is necessary to clarify that when speaking of "authorship" of the Bible, the western and individualistic concept of that word is not currently in mind.

In western society, a text's authorship is understood as a single person writing or composing something. The *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* [*Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy*] defines the term "author" with five meanings, all of which refer to the author as a "person" who causes, invents, or produces something. For its part, the *Merriam-Webster's Learners Dictionary* defines the term as follows: "1: the writer of a literary work (such as a book) . . .; 2a: one that originates or creates something: SOURCE. . . . 2b: capitalized: GOD sense 1." The first known use of author as a noun was in the fourteenth century, in the meaning defined at sense 2a.

It is clear that the idea of pseudepigraphic authorship simply cannot exist in today's society. On the contrary, the works belong to people who register them in official organisms that are not cited without credit. If that happened, you would be facing a plagiarism case, which is condemned by society and even punished by law.

It is known that the literary genre of the homily does not contemplate the speaker mentioning the sources from which he was inspired to elaborate his sermon. With notable exceptions, authors of biblical commentaries, dictionaries, bibles, manuals, and encyclopedias will not be mentioned. And yet, the listener understands that not

everything he hears has been the preacher's elaboration. It is the work of the preacher, supported by works of other authors.

> hablar de la existencia de un autor o creador de una idea o conocimiento -
> en el sentido de que sus creaciones o conocimientos son, de principio a fin,
> creaciones suyas- parece algo dudoso. Sería más preciso hablar de
> impulsores, promotores, perfeccionadores o refinadores, más que de
> creadores. (Vera)
> to speak of the existence of an idea author or creator –in the sense that his
> creations are, from beginning to end, his or her creations– seems
> somewhat doubtful. It would be more precise to speak of promoters,
> perfectionists, or refiners, rather than creators.

Starting from the fact that "todo conocimiento es una realización colectiva" 'all knowledge is a collective achievement,' it would be interesting to replace the concept of author or creator to think of a person who "sintetiza brillantemente y añade modestamente" 'synthesizes brilliantly and adds modestly' (Vera).

But the idea that someone else could bring exegetical material to the preacher may generate the thought that he is not doing his job as a researcher. He may be wrongly labeled as "incompetent—incapable of developing and expressing their own thoughts—or, worse, dishonest, willing to deceive others for personal gain" (*MLA Handbook* 53), but collaboration has nothing to do with plagiarism. The preacher who receives the collaboration of other people is not stealing ideas or his collaborators' work, but they give them up. He is not incompetent, but wise and generous allowing other people to contribute to the elaboration of the sermon. On the other hand, the sermon

elaboration continues to be the preacher's responsibility and work. Only the search for sources for exegetical resources would change.

The preachers who download their sermons from the Internet, copy them from homiletical resource books or a colleague, without giving due credits create severe cases of plagiarism. And with good reason, those who prove themselves incapable of transmitting in their own words God's message to the members of their church will be considered incompetent.

Authorship of Bible Books

The current concept of authorship refers to a person who created, produced, or invented something. It is connected to individual work. Coauthoring is entirely possible, but it is implicit that the authors know each other and work together on the book. Sicre mentions that there must be a direct relationship between teacher and student in the present-day mentality so that someone can claim to be a disciple. This distinction is not clearly presented in the texts of the Old Testament, especially the prophets, to the point that people involved with the text could be very distant from the prophets temporarily, although within their spiritual sphere. Sicre explains how the disciples continued their teacher's work by writing biographical texts about the teacher; reworking some of his oracles; and creating new oracles (191). The readers were not deceived; it was a natural process. They were presented the main theology of the "author" (Moo).

In ancient Eastern culture, this concept of individuality did not exist. The Israelites had no conflict with reading an ancient manuscript or writing an ancient oral tradition and adding their perception following the reality that the people lived. The intention of attributing a work to someone other than its author was to promote the work

by using the fictional author's recognition and authority. The latest author was not the original author, but that was not important to the latest author.

The biblical books authorship has been the subject of lengthy debates. The Book of Isaiah is an example. Some writers have very defined positions. In the New Testament, the book of Isaiah is directly quoted twenty-one times and attributed in each case to the prophet Isaiah. Some scholars, who find it difficult to accept the prophetic predictions that fully anticipate future events, have denied that Isaiah was the author of chapters forty to sixty-six. They have titled this second section the "*Deutero Isaias*" (second Isaiah.) They insist that as these chapters speak of things that happened after Isaiah, such as the Babylonian captivity of Judah, the return from exile, and the rise of Cyrus, they must have been written later and attributed to the renowned prophet. However, Isaiah and other prophets of his time prophesied events in the life of Jesus that occurred seven hundred years later (Hayford 825). Sicre's comment also leaves no room for consensus. Talking about the book of Isaiah, he considers very few people or none have read it in one fell swoop because it is a complicated reading (195).

Sicre agrees with Hayford that the main problem between both theories lies in considering the prophecy as a prediction. Denying this could lead one to be labeled as a racionalist of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which, in turn, could deny the possibility that God reveals hidden things or the future. However, Sicre ends his analysis of the arguments in favor of Isaiah's multiple authorship by saying that is not important who was the real author. The important thing is the message of God, and not the messenger (198). Arens makes a similar statement after a detailed analysis of the different positions (29).

In the mouth of a neophyte of Scripture, these words might reveal some excuse for lack of study. However, in the mouth of a Scripture scholar, that phrase poses the question very seriously. The power of God's divinity is not in jeopardy because someone may believe that no person has the power to speak centuries in advance. That is not in doubt. What is analyzed is the biblical author and human receptors of the Bible.

God has the power to express Himself anachronistically, but human beings do not. They talk about what they know and understand and what they are suffering and expect. With this in mind, the difference between biblical and contemporary mentalities must be understood. The text was produced over an extended period of time not because of some kind of divine flaw, but due to many people's collaboration.

The possibility of opening the concept of biblical authorship to several authors would allow another look at the possibility of considering an author of sermons that draws on other people's knowledge. That happens anyway because the pastor who reads a book is consulting the other author's knowledge, but it would be about doing that process explicitly and intentionally.

Research Design Literature

According to Sensing, "Design is essential" (61). Research design is implemented to describe how the project was accomplished. Therefore, it must be detailed and precise. In order to guarantee transparency and reliability, the design "must be explained and justified" (86). Since growth is a biblical mandate, (Eph. 4:11-13) pastors must be equipped and possess an increasing knowledge of the Word of God. Unfortunately, the ministerial formation of the pastors of the COGA in Buenos Aires does not have a relevant emphasis on studying God's Word. On the other hand, the task of presenting the

Word of God to the congregation each week involves arduous preparation. Pastors would benefit from receiving help in this process, and help is found among those members who possess the gift of knowledge. Since the exegesis of God's Word was an essential element in pastors' ministerial practice, the need to present this project was recognized.

The researcher was inspired by the presence of Roberto Amparo Rivera in the Church of God, a pastor who held a doctoral degree in education. He modeled a ministry firmly committed to his labor as a pastor and with profound knowledge of the Scriptures.

Interviews conducted with the leaders and document analysis of the only educational program officially required for people pursuing a ministerial rank in the COGA provided valuable qualitative information on the problem's commonality with exegetical pastoral training.

This project was designed as an intervention. The researcher sought to experiment with some kind of experience to determine its effectiveness. The intervention was the action needed to change what may be considered a problem. The researcher first detected that problem by analyzing the context. The researcher in a DMin project is a "co-participant with the community in the process of gathering and interpreting data to enable new and transformative modes of action" (Sensing 63). The goal is not only to describe a problem, but to contribute to the necessary transformation, "so that the needs and concerns of the participants are addressed" (32). During the whole process, participants were protected. The possibility of harming them was latent during the research.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods using emailed tests, interviews, and document analysis was used for data collection to obtain the most reliable information. This combination provided a broader knowledge base to evaluate the

findings, providing a better and more in-depth understanding of the research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data by itself (Creswell 22).

Multiple means of data collection provide a complex view of the intervention, "enabling a thicker interpretation" (Sensing 72). This project sought to assess the intervention's effectiveness from multiple angles; therefore, mixed methods ascertained the conclusion's better validity.

The literature in the Church of God by Roberto Amparo Rivera's who holds a doctoral degree in education and is a model of a minister firmly committed both to his work as a pastor and to pursuing a profound knowledge of Scriptures deeply impressed the researcher of this project

Summary of Literature

Chapter Two addresses the Biblical foundations for the body of Christ, spiritual gifts, and the gift of knowledge. Considering the real need for solid exegetical resources for sermon elaboration and the fact that pastoral preparation to use these resources has proven to be insufficient, the spiritual gifts have a crucial role in edifying the body of Christ, particularly the gift of knowledge.

The theological foundations explore the Word of God Inspired by the Holy Spirit and preaching, which are key elements for this project. The exegesis section shows the different possibilities pastors have to enrich their sermons.

The Church of God Denomination's Pastor Preparation section offers a detailed explanation of the preparation pastors of the COGA receive. The sociological and ethical themes address the authorship concept and the authorship of Bible books. Finally, the research design literature presents how this project is accomplished.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter Three addresses the research methodology that was used for this project, offering a brief review of its nature and purpose, the designed research questions matched to the purpose statement, along with the instrumentation used to answer each of them.

It also presents the selection, description, and ethical considerations regarding the participant in their particular Church of God context. Finally, Chapter Three presents the expert review, reliability, and validity of the project, together with procedures for collecting and analyzing data.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

This project noted the need for high-quality exegetical resources for sermon preparation and how difficult it was for pastors to obtain them due to the lack of preparation and the lack of time. Therefore, a proposal of exegetical resources first provided by the researcher emerged.

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the change in knowledge, attitude, and behavior in Argentinian pastors of the COGA in Buenos Aires, resulting from an Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation presented as four sermons prepared during a trial experiment.

Research Questions

This project was guided by three research questions that were answered using the corresponding researcher-designed instruments: pre- and post-tests, interviews, and document analysis.

Research Question #1

What were the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding preaching before the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation?

This research question was studied to determine accurate information regarding pastoral knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors when faced with their labor of sermon preparation. It also addressed the purpose statement by analyzing the educational training that COGA pastors in Buenos Aires received in their formal path to become pastors.

In the twenty-four-question Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre-Test, the distribution was as follows: Q1-10 addressed a demographic survey; Q11-17 addressed knowledge; Q19-25 addressed attitudes; Q27-33 addressed behavior. The interviews with two recognized Church of God in Buenos Aires' leaders and the document analysis of the textbook *Introducción a los Ministerios Cristianos II* [*Introduction to Christian Ministries*] were also used to answer this research question.

Research Question #2

What were the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding preaching after the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation?

This research question addressed the purpose of determining the participants' self-perceived understanding of sermon preparation. The goal was to afford participants the experience of being helped in that process by a person in the congregation who is gifted in biblical exegesis or the word of knowledge.

In the twenty-four-question Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Post-Test, the distribution was as follows: Q1-7 addressed knowledge; Q9-15 addressed attitudes; Q17-23 addressed behavior.

Research Question #3

What did the participants identify as the most and least helpful aspects of the

Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation?

This research question sought to establish which part of the intervention made an

impact on the participants.

In the twenty-four-question Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation

Pre-Test, questions 18, 26, and 34 addressed Research Question #3. In the twenty-four-

question Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Post-Test, questions 8,

16, and 24 addressed Research Question #3.

Ministry Context

The COG presents itself as a church highly committed to education: "Emphasis

upon education and training is a priority of the Church of God" (Church, "Beliefs").

However, as a global institution, it does not require candidates to have a seminary or

college degree. Candidates "must have the baptism in the Holy Ghost, . . . must be

actively engaged in the ministry either evangelistic or pastoral work, . . . must be

thoroughly acquainted with the Teachings and Doctrines of the Church of God as set

forth by the International General Assembly, … and must successfully pass the

examination given by a duly constituted board of examiners" (Church, *Study* 6). The

general instructions for the first ministerial rank make it clear that the only educational

requirement is the MIP. The next ministerial rank cannot be pursued "until the minister

has completed the Ministerial Internship Program (MIP) or its equivalent" (Church, *Study*

5). As deduced from the MIP previous analysis regarding preaching and exegesis,

pastoral formation on those topics varies, depending on the path each minister has decided to take to enhance his/her preparation.

The COG offers various educational institutions, such as universities, colleges, and schools, with graduate studies, masters, and doctoral programs. However, a theological, ministerial, or Bible degree is not required to be ordained as a COG minister.

Although the COGA in Argentina intends to follow and replicate each teaching and decision taken in every General Assembly in the United States, the dynamic of being a church in a different environment makes it impossible to accomplish that.

COGA pastors in Buenos Aires, Argentina are officially part of a powerful church, but living in a country other than the United States they do not experience the same benefits as their colleagues in America. The church has a wide variety of educational offers, but COGA pastors in Buenos Aires cannot access them.

The following three examples show of the difference existing between the COGA in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and the COG with headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee:

First, according to the church size, there is a table with the desired wage for COG pastors whose salary ranges can vary widely depending on education, additional skills, or the number of years spent in the profession. This table is not followed in any part of Argentina due to the evident economic difference between the two countries' churches.

Second, the program Calling and Ministry Studies (CAMS), is designed to help ministry candidates determine if they are called to clergy ministry and to provide knowledge about ministry, but the program is not available in Argentina.

Third, every time the word pastor is used in this project, it refers to a unique person as the church leader. There may be a co-pastor and many other leaders helping their pastor, but they all depend on him or her.

Participants

The participants were intentionally chosen to match the purpose statement and research questions associated with this project.

Criteria for Selection of the Participants in Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre- and Post-Tests

The pastors who were invited to take the pre- and post-test based on their ministry, preaching frequency, seniority, rank, and recommendations as follows:

1. Pastors of the COGA in Buenos Aires

2. Pastors who preached at least four times a month

3. Pastors who held a pastoral position for at least five years.

4. Pastors who held one of the three ministerial ranks granted by the COGA

5. Pastors who were recommended by the regional overseer

The regional overseer supplied twenty-five names and pastors' phone numbers who met the previous criteria.

The researcher selected some participants from the list but did not use all of them. In order to assure that the sample would accurately represent the larger pastoral population, chosen participants represented ten percent of the pastoral population from the COGA in Buenos Aires.

Criteria for Selection of the Participants in the Interviews

The criteria for the selection of interviewees included their ministry, seniority, preaching frequency. The ministry requirement for the interview participants was that they be ordained bishops with experience as regional overseers and experience as pastors of the COGA in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The seniority requirement was that they be a leader with a prominent position in the COGA in Buenos Aires for at least two years. The requirement for preaching frequency was that when they had served as pastors, they preached at least four times a month.

Description of Participants

The twenty-one participants were mostly males, there were four female pastors. All participants were ordained pastors by the COGA and preachers. The age range varied from the late forties to the late sixties. They are all originally from the area.

Ethical Considerations

There is a natural eagerness to obtain answers and discover new information in any research project, but the researcher cannot be interested in researching without ethical considerations. The DMin Student writing this project was also an ambassador of the kingdom of God, a representative of the COGA, and a representative of Asbury Theological Seminary. Knowing that there may be consequences for the people who participated, "ethics in research is an issue of accountability" (Sensing 32).

Participants were orally informed of the nature and purpose of this project and later through an informed consent letter sent by e-mail. (See Appendix C.) The informed consent letter also included an abstract of the project. The two interviewees also granted

their permission to record the interviews. They were asked to sign and return the consent letter also by e-mail.

To maintain the participants' confidentiality no identifying information was given. Only the researcher had access to raw data, and just specific research findings were shared.

Instrumentation

Three different researcher-designed instruments were used in this project: tests, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

The Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre-Test consisted of two sections. Section I was a demographic survey to help depict the participants' profile, such as age, gender, number of years in the ministry, number of years as a pastor, and education. Section II was a set of twenty-four questions using a one to four scale forced choice Likert Scale to ensure participants made a choice. Four of the questions had an additional box for questions where participants were asked for specific data. The questions were designed to know the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding preaching before the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation experiment. (See Appendix A.)

The Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Post-Test consisted of only one section with a set of twenty-four questions using a one to four scale forced choice Likert Scale to ensure participants made a choice. Four of the questions had an additional box for questions where participants were asked for specific data. The questions were designed to know the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors

regarding preaching before the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation experiment. (See Appendix A.)

The semi-structured interview consisted of a semi-structured, qualitative instrument applied to two COGA leaders following a protocol. Sensing describes semi-structured interviews as interviews that are neither wholly scripted or devoided of structure. He says, "specified themes, issues, and questions with a predetermined sequence are described in the protocol" but the researcher is "free to pursue matters as situations dictate" according to the problem and purpose statements of the project (Sensing 107).

Questions were designed to encourage leaders to talk openly about their experience as leaders to determine the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding preaching before the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation experiment. (See Appendix B.)

The course called Ministerial Internship Program (MIP) is the only formal academic requirement for ministry applicants. Among the course materials is a manual called *Introducción a los Ministerios Cristianos II* [*Introduction to Christian Ministries II*]. This was the text used for document analysis since it is the only one that refers to the minister's formal preparation in the preaching area.

Expert Review

A cover letter was sent to two Argentinian leaders who were chosen due to their proficiency in the fields of preaching and pastoral formation. (1) Carlos Darío Peralta, DMin candidate and Director of Encuentro Latino Ministries, provided his comments from his perspective as a Latino homiletical professor and Hispanic churches consultant.

(2) Cristina Ottaviano de Villanueva, M.A., former COGA in Buenos Aires' leader and member of its Board provided her comments from the perspective of preaching and pastoral work.

They were invited to be part of this project and were asked to evaluate the researcher-designed instruments. For this purpose, they received the following information: project title, nature and purpose of the project, research questions, researcher-designed instruments, and evaluation forms. The expert reviewers were asked whether the questions in the tests or interviews were considered needed or not, clear or unclear by them, and were asked suggestions to make the instrument's intentions straightforward. (See Appendix E.)

The expert reviewers gave positive comments and valuable suggestions to clarify the instruments. It was suggested to change the order of the questions to group them according to the topics of time, training, and resources to give the test a smooth transition from one question to another. That suggestion was considered. However, the researcher decided to follow the original grouping according to the three aspects evaluated in the project's purpose: knowledge, attitude, and behavior of the participants.

Following one of the expert reviewer's suggestions, the researcher modified question #17 "I could describe the exegetical resources I use for my sermons," in the pre and post tests. The respondents were asked if they strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. To obtain valuable data from the pastors, the question was expanded for those who strongly agreed or agreed, and they were asked to describe the resources they used.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

Reliability deals with the question as to whether the project design is consistent or, in the case of qualitative research, that the data collected is an accurate representation of the facts being studied (Wiersma and Jurs 215). All the participants in the tests received the same instruments through the SurveyMonkey platform. Tests followed best practices for a test, including the use of the Likert Scale. To ensure the researcher-designed instruments' reliability, two expert reviewers evaluated the questions and made valuable suggestions. The interviews included a standard protocol, and they were also positively reviewed by the expert reviewers.

The question of validity is whether or not the study can be interpreted accurately and whether it can be generalized. In qualitative research, validity is mainly determined by a logical analysis of the results (Wiersma and Jurs 215).

The validity of the project is supported by the alignment of the purpose statement, research questions, and the corresponding instruments. Each of the twenty-four questions was matched with the respective research question. This project could be transferred to another context, making the necessary changes to adapt the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation experiment to the new reality.

Researchers may be subject to read their own biases into the data. One assumption of qualitative research is that a participant's perspective of the phenomenon under study should prevail over that of the researcher (Marshall and Rossman 80). For objectivity to happen, researchers must become aware of their prejudices, viewpoints, or assumptions about the study subject.

Data Collection

The Regional Overseer granted permission to contact COGA in Buenos Aires' pastors and leaders. The researcher explained to the overseer the nature of this project and that it was designed to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods using emailed tests, interviews, and document analysis.

The classic qualitative-quantitative debate has been primarily resolved with the recognition that various methodological approaches are needed and credible. Mixed methods can be notably valuable, and that the challenge is to appropriately match methods to questions rather than adhering to some narrow methodological orthodoxy (Patton, xxii).

This project was partly qualitative because of the need to understand the pastoral experiment regarding sermon preparation. "The goal of qualitative research is to discover patterns that emerge after close observation, careful documentation, and thoughtful analysis of the research topic. What can be discovered by qualitative research are not sweeping generalizations, but contextual findings" (Maykut and Morehouse 21). Discovering those patterns among the participant pastors and leaders was the first step to designing an experience useful for the rest of the pastors of the COGA in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

This project incorporates both the in-depth, contextualized, natural, and more time-consuming insights of qualitative research. It also incorporates the more-efficient, predictive power of quantitative research, concerned with generating numerical data that can be transformed into a useable statistic, strengthening the research's validity and reliability.

Qualitative research was chosen for this project because it produces "culturally specific and contextually rich data critical for the design, evaluation, and ongoing health of institutions like churches" (Sensing 58) and "a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases" (Patton 14). Its five characteristics satisfied the purpose of this project: the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of fieldwork, an inductive orientation to analysis, and richly descriptive findings. Since "qualitative research is grounded in the social world of experience and seeks to make sense of lived experiences" (Sensing 57), the researcher believed that this was the optimal way to obtain the most usable results.

Quantitative research was also chosen for this project because it can "measure the reactions of a great many people to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of the data. This gives a broad, generalizable set of findings presented succinctly and parsimoniously" (Patton 14).

This qualitative and quantitative project was designed as an intervention because the researcher sought to experiment with some kind of experience or training to determine its effectiveness. To do that, the researcher conducted pre- and post-tests before and after the experiment.

The names and phone numbers of the participant pastors were obtained from the Regional Overseer. Each of them was contacted initially through Whatsapp messages, later through e-mail and phone, and asked to participate in this project. First, this project's purpose was orally explained; and second, the participants received by e-mail the purpose statement and the research questions, along with some other information vital to follow

this project. Once their participation was confirmed, they received a formal invitation to be part of this project, a statement of confidentiality, and a consent form, along with a link to click on to get access to the test in SurveyMonkey.

The researcher used the criteria for the selection of the interview participants to choose the leaders who were interviewed. The researcher asked the leaders to participate in the project, following the same steps that she used to invite the participating pastors and she established a convenient date and time with the interviewees to conduct the interviews, following the established protocol. The researcher recorded the interviews with the permission of the interviewees. She took detailed notes during the interviews. Since the researcher typed without looking at the keyboard of the computer, she was free to have face to face interviews via Zoom. "Face-to-face interviews increase participation, your ability to clarify, and the probability of gathering additional information" (Sensing 115). "While in-depth interviewing is time-consuming and thus expensive, the procedure allows the researcher to obtain data that may not be retrieved through quantitative methods" (Winston 184).

Document analysis gathered all kinds of materials related to the COGA pastor training, both documents that originated with the COG in the United States but were implemented in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and material made by Argentinian authors. The regional overseer of the church was a crucial element in providing more sources for this document analysis. The experience of the researcher as a teacher of History, Govern, and Discipline of the COG in two seminaries, one in Quito, Ecuador, and the other one in Buenos Aires, Argentina was also important.

All raw data was destroyed six months after the submission of this project. The interviews were conducted utilizing a semi-structured interview protocol throughout December 2020. Both leaders were interviewed via Zoom for approximately one hour. The interviews were conducted via Zoom with preparatory details distributed one week in advance via e-mail and telephone. Each interview consisted of four questions, and it was audiotaped and then transcribed by the researcher. A list of the interview questions and protocols were made for each interview.

Field notes were taken during the interviews, and the interviews were recorded with permission: "a tape recorder is part of the indispensable equipment of the qualitative interviewer" (Patton 279). The researcher transcribed the two interviews to assist in the process of data analysis since "preparing a complete transcript from an audiotaped interview is especially important when interviews are the main source of data for a qualitative study" (Maykut and Morehouse 100).

Interviewing has some limitations and weaknesses. Marshall and Rossman point out that interview involve personal interaction, so the researcher must have the cooperation of the subjects (81).

Additionally, the questions asked may not evoke long narratives from the participants and fail to provide enough data.

Another means of data collection in qualitative studies was a review of documents. Reviewing documents is unobtrusive, and it is "rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting" (Marshall and Rossman 85). Words are the tools of qualitative research. Therefore, items such as meeting minutes, logs, announcements,

policy statements, and letters can be very useful in gaining a broader understanding of a particular setting or group.

Questions follow Patton's indication for "good" questions: "open-ended, neutral, singular, and clear" (353). The interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose determined by the one-party – the interviewer. It is a professional interaction, which goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday conversation and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach to obtain thoroughly tested knowledge. The qualitative research interview is a construction site for knowledge (Kvale 7).

A document analysis was designed by the researcher to look at the records of the officially required course. Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning to an assessment topic. Analyzing documents incorporates coding content into themes similar to how focus group or interview transcripts are analyzed.

"The analytic procedure entails finding, selecting, appraising (making sense of), and synthesizing data contained in documents" (Bowen 28). Merriam pointed out that: "Documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem" (118).

Document analysis has many advantages and limitations, such as documents providing insufficient detail regarding the information the researcher is searching for, difficult access to them, and biased selectivity (Bowen 32).

The researcher established the documents' pertinence and relevance incorporated into the document analysis to answer the research questions.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis involves making sense of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data (some qualitative researchers like to think of this as peeling back the layers of an onion), representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data (Creswell 183).

This project's data was collected in a mixed-method format with quantitative pre- and post-tests sent to twenty COGA in Buenos Aires' pastors. The data was gathered and analyzed utilizing Survey Monkey, an online survey software. Comparative analysis between the pre- and post-tests was made using descriptive statistics to determine the statistical significance of the responses, mean, and standard deviation.

Besides the tests, qualitative, semi-structured interviews were administered to two prominent COGA leaders. An interview made via Zoom as a means of data collection would join the benefits of a phone call:

> (1) Use economic and human resources efficiently, e.g., reduce the need for travel . . . (2) minimize disadvantages of in-person expedient data collection, e.g., researchers can take detailed notes of an interview without making participants feel uncomfortable . . . ; (3) allow research appropriate relationships to develop between interviewer and interviewee; and (4) improve the quality of data collection, e.g., enable greater supervision and support of interviewers. (Musselwhite et al. 1064-70)

After collecting the data, the researcher transcribed the interviews conducted via Zoom and examined the data. She organized the data to generate categories, themes, and patterns among the responses. I then appropriately coded the data. This process helped me organize the data according to content to establish patterns or themes (Creswell 37) to interpret it and arrive at a narrative summary explaining this project's discoveries. I also took notes during the interviews and from the recordings to clarify the answers.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter Four addresses the data analysis collected for this project. Its purpose was to evaluate the change in knowledge, attitude, and behavior in Argentinian pastors of the COGA in Buenos Aires because of an Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation presented as four sermons prepared during a trial experiment.

The COGA in Buenos Aires provision for pastors regarding biblical foundation is far from ideal. Pastoral knowledge of preaching comes primarily from their own experience as members and leaders of the church. Furthermore, pastors do not have ample time to dedicate themselves to study.

Participants

Questions one to ten of the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre-Test addressed a demographic survey. Participants were asked about their age, gender, marital status, if there were children under eighteen living at home, their educational background, biblical/theological training, number of years as Christian preachers and pastors. They were also asked if they were full-time or co-vocational pastors, along with their average preaching monthly time.

A total of thirty-five pre-tests were distributed to the pastors; twenty-one participants agreed to the online consent and filled out the pre-test. A total of twenty-one post-tests were distributed to the pastors that completed the pre-tests; sixteen post-tests were filled out.

Two prominent COGA leaders were interviewed by the researcher. These interviews were recorded.

Age Group

All participants were COGA in Buenos Aires pastors between the ages of forty and seventy-nine. The results showed that 62% of the respondents were between forty and fifty-nine years of age.
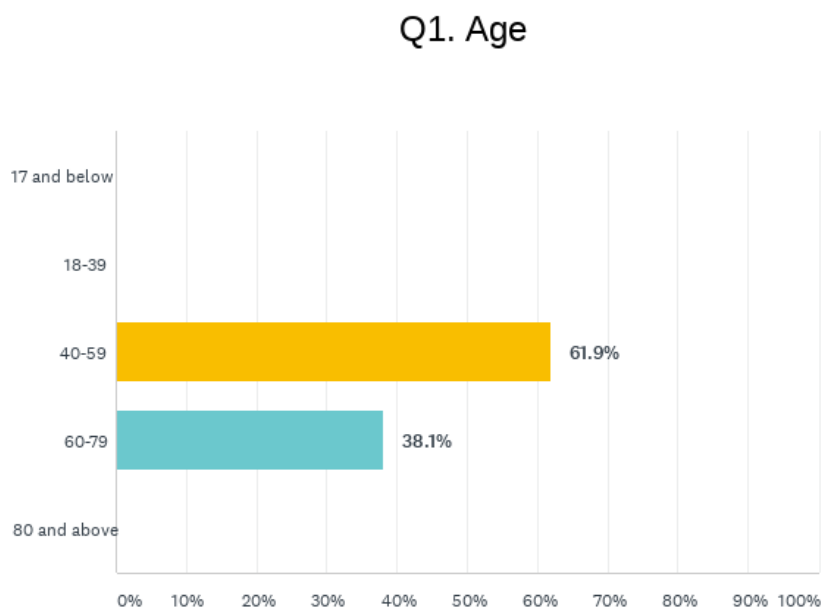
Figure 4.1. Age group**.**

According to information provided by the COGA regional office, among the total number of pastors in the 180 COGA churches, only 5% are under forty years of age. The youngest pastor in the region is 31 years old. The data regarding pastors' age was mentioned in the interviews with the church leaders as a challenging factor when implementing new projects. In particular, considering that most of these pastors have

between twenty and forty years of experience as preachers, it may be difficult for them to

incorporate such a relevant change in their sermon elaboration process.

Gender Group
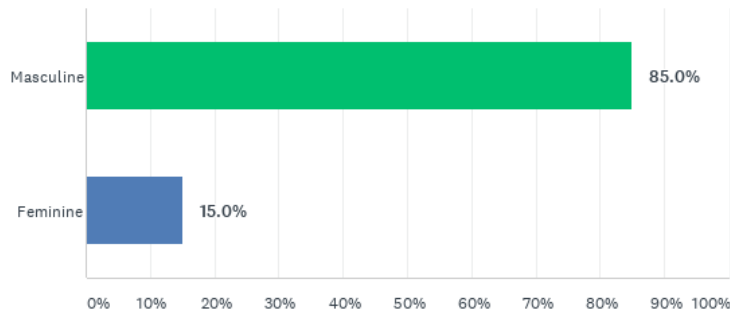
Figure 4.2. Gender group.

Most of the pastors in the COGA are male. This was fairly represented in this

sample. All of the females invited to participate in the tests filled out their tests.

Marital Status
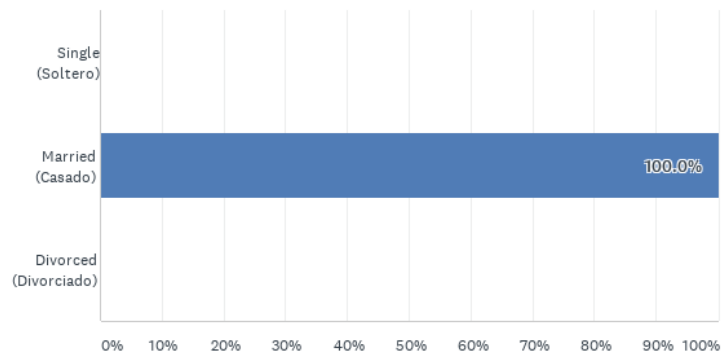
Figure 4.3. Marital status.

Most of the pastors in the COGA are married. This was also fairly represented in this sample.

Minors at Home

The presence of children under eighteen years of age living at home was also considered as a time-consuming factor. The results showed that almost 30% of the pastors have children under the age of eighteen living at home.
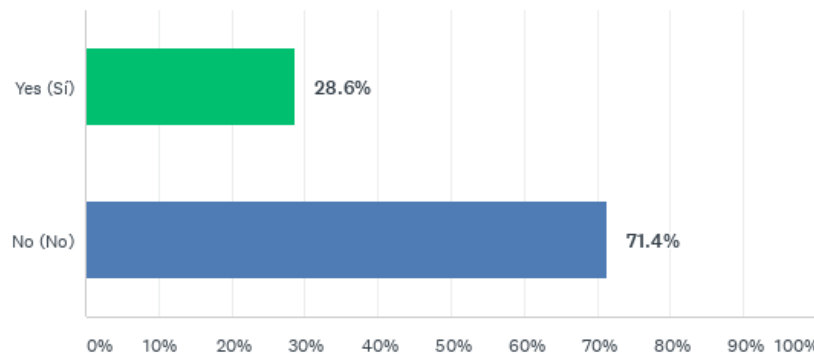
Figure 4.4. Minors at home.

Educational Background

Responses to the question were sorted into the following: Primary education (P), High School (HS), Higher Education Institute (HE), and University (U).

Regarding their educational background, five participants answered that they have primary education; one attended a higher education institute, eight have finished high school, and four have attended university. Three participants skipped this question. Respondent #14 answered "Yes" and this response was left uncoded because it is not usable data.

Biblical/Theological Training

Responses to the question were sorted into the following: Ministerial Internship Program (MIP), Certificate in Theology (C), Bachelor of Arts (BA), Master's Degree (MA), Incomplete answer (I).

Regarding their biblical/theological background, five participants answered that they completed the Ministerial Internship Program (MIP), which is the educational program officially required for laypeople pursuing a ministerial rank; three participants mentioned that they hold a Certificate in Theology; three participants hold a B.A. in Leadership and Theology, and one participant holds a Master's Degree in Theology. Three participants answered this question by stating the name of the institution, but they did not mention a degree; another one mentioned his or her ministerial rank. Two participants skipped this question. Three participants answered "Yes" and this response was left uncoded because it is not usable data.

Years as a Christian Preacher

The minimum answered was fifteen years; the maximum was fifty-four years. Seven participants mentioned that they had from fifteen to thirty-four years of experience as Christian preachers; twelve participants mentioned that they had from thirty-five to fifty-four years as Christian preachers. Two participants skipped this question.

Years as a Pastor

The minimum answered was seven years; the maximum was fifty-two years. Nine participants mentioned that they had from seven to nine-teen years as pastors; eleven participants mentioned that they had from twenty to fifty-two years as pastors. One participant skipped this question.

Full-time Pastor/Co-vocational

Thirteen participants answered that their ministry was full-time; seven participants answered that their ministry was co-vocational; and one participant skipped this question.

Average Preaching Monthly Time

The minimum answered regarding average preaching was four sermons per month; the maximum was sixteen. Eleven participants mentioned that they preached from four to six sermons each month; nine participants mentioned that they preached from eight to sixteen sermons each month. One participant skipped this question.

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Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

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What were the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding preaching before the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation?

The Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre-Test contained a total of 34 questions. The first section containing ten questions addressed a demographic survey. Questions 11-17 addressed knowledge; Q19-25 addressed attitudes; and Q27-33 addressed behavior. Two recognized COGA leaders were interviewed by the researcher (Interviewee A and Interviewee B) and the textbook called *Introducción a los Ministerios Cristianos II* [*Introduction to Christian Ministries*] was analyzed in order to also find answers to this research question.

Knowledge

The first question asked during the semi-structured interview was: Can you describe what kind of biblical interpretation and preaching training do COGA in Buenos

Aires' pastors receive from the church? Responses to the question were sorted into the

following: Mandatory (M) and Optional (O).

Table 4.1.

COGA in Buenos Aires Biblical Interpretation and Preaching Training for Pastors

M	O
Ministerial Internship Program (MIP)	Ministerial courses
(This is the only educational program	Workshops with recognized professors
officially required for laypeople pursuing a	B.A. in Theology
ministerial rank.)	

Interviewee A stated that between 80% and 90% of the COGA in Buenos Aires

pastors hold just the MIP. He also mentioned several instances of ministerial training.

However, he indicated that there is not a specific educational space for Bible studies.

After his initial response naming the educational offer, Interviewee B took a long pause

and concluded: "The training that pastors receive is not much. It has been strengthened

by different programs, but expressly, there is nothing exclusive to exegesis, hermeneutics

and homiletics." Even if a specific course existed, it would be optional. Besides,

Interviewee B stated the need for the invited professor to know his or her audience. He

witnessed precious training opportunities that were wasted because the pastors could not

follow the academic jargon. The professor mentioned names, authors, and books that

were not known for the vast majority of the audience.

The MIP has a section dedicated to the Bible and is divided into the Old and New

Testaments. Another section is dedicated to ministry and it divided into two sections:

Introducción a los Ministerios Cristianos I and *Introducción a los Ministerios Cristianos*

II [*Introduction to Christian Ministries I and II*]. This last manual, written in 1977 and

translated into Spanish in 1995, refers to the minister's formal preparation in the area of

preaching. In a ninety-eight-page manual devoted to pastoral ministry, only fourteen

pages refer to preaching. The themes developed in *Introducción a los Ministerios*

Cristianos I and *Introducción a los Ministerios Cristianos II* [*Introduction to Christian*

Ministries I and II] are as follows: The Pentecostal minister as a preacher, the

prerequisites, the 'what' of preaching, the power of preaching, the preacher and preaching,

the presentation, the preparation to preach, selecting the correct passage, the study of the

passage, the product, organizing the message, choosing how to say it, proclaiming the

message.

Faced with the criteria questions: To what extent do the pastors learn about and

practice biblical exegesis? And also, what resources does the curriculum recommend for

the pastors to use in sermon preparation? The answer was that of the fourteen pages

dedicated to preaching, less than one page contains principles related to exegesis, which

is defined as "leer del pasaje el mensaje que este contiene" 'reading of the passage the

message it contains' (Lombard 65).

The MIP encompasses many areas of ministry life, the COG structure and system,

doctrines, administrative requirements, history; also counseling, accountability, and

others. Certainly, preaching solid Bible sermons is part of the ministry life, but pastors

have to do much more.

It is noteworthy that both interviewees emphasized the commitment that COGA

in Buenos Aires has to sound doctrine. Despite any possible knowledge limitation, the

Word of God is considered as the rule of life and COGA in Buenos Aires pastors are

faithful to this. Interviewee A mentioned something that grabbed his attention. He used to read Bible verses in the social media posted by independent pastors he has as friends and contacts. Slowly, a new fashion began; they started posting their own words and signed them with their name. Interviewee A saw this as a hint of displacement of the Word of God.

The first set of seven questions in the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre-Test sought to learn about the initial participants' knowledge of preaching before the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation.

Answering Q11, "I identify relevant exegetical resources for preparing my sermons," 67% of the participants agreed; 24% strongly agreed and 9% of the participants disagreed. These figures contrast with the answers to Q32, "I could describe the exegetical resources I use for my sermons," where 76% of participants agreed and 14% strongly agreed that they could describe their resources. However, regarding the description of the exegetical resources used by them, only three participants gave an accurate description of their exegetical resources. One of the more complete answers belonged to Respondent #19:

> I examine and compare the text in different versions and I look up the text
> in other books of the Bible. I ask the text questions and investigate the
> background and context that originated the text that I am going to use. I
> take into account the thinking of the biblical writer, to whom the text was
> addressed and in what situation. Then I compare with the thought of a
> book on the subject.

Respondent #15 considered *"nature, life experiences…,"* as relevant exegetical resources; respondent #14 replied *"COGA training"* and respondent #8 answered "the Bible and my personal experience." Other answers made reference to dictionaries, Bibles, commentaries and Internet. Six participants skipped this specification.

Regarding Q12, "I know how to research in order to find exegetical resources," 75% of the participants agreed; 20% strongly agreed; and 5% of the participants disagreed. Such agreement could be connected to the definition each participant had for "exegetical resources". This could also be the case for Q13.

In Q13, "I evaluate the quality of the sources where I find exegetical resources for my sermons," 67% of the participants agreed; 24% strongly agreed; and 10% strongly disagreed.

For Question 14, "I consider myself a self-educated preacher," 52% of the participants agreed, and 19% strongly agreed. However, 19% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed. This 29% of disagreement is remarkable since beside the initial pastoral course, pastors have been mostly self-educated.

It is true that there are instances of training provided by the COGA in Buenos Aires, not specifically for exegesis, hermeneutics and homiletics, but on biblical studies that would lay the foundations for later studies. However, it is also true that there are no requirements of this sort to practice the ministry. There are no Bible mandatory courses in the preparation of candidates and there are no updating requirements for pastors who are already leading a local church. The academic level that each pastor has is that which they themselves have endeavored to have. For many pastors, this means stagnation, the product of many years of working the same way. Interviewee B nearly lamented: *"Some*

pastors survive, conforming to what they came to know about the Word twenty years ago and understand what the Gospel is, but they are not updated, they have no interest. That is worrisome. How can new workers be trained in the congregation in this way? They will be equal to the pastor."

Answering Q15, "I can explain the benefits of receiving exegetical resources that help me to prepare my sermons," there were only two options chosen, but both of them were in agreement: 65% of the participants agreed and 35% strongly agreed, so 100% of them agreed on this.

Regarding Q16, "I feel I could improve my sermons if I had more time to incorporate exegetical insights into them," the same results as Q15 occurred: 57% of the participants agreed and 43% strongly agreed, so 100% of them agreed on this.

In Q17, "I feel I could improve my sermons if I had the proper training to do research and find exegetical resources," 55% of the participants agreed and 35% strongly agreed; however, 10% disagreed. The difference between this affirmation and the previous one is that Q16 referred to time and Q17 to proper training to do research. Participants agreed 100% that they could improve their sermons if they had more time to incorporate exegetical insights into them; however, in Q17 10% of the participants disagreed. Lack of time is an easily perceived challenging factor.
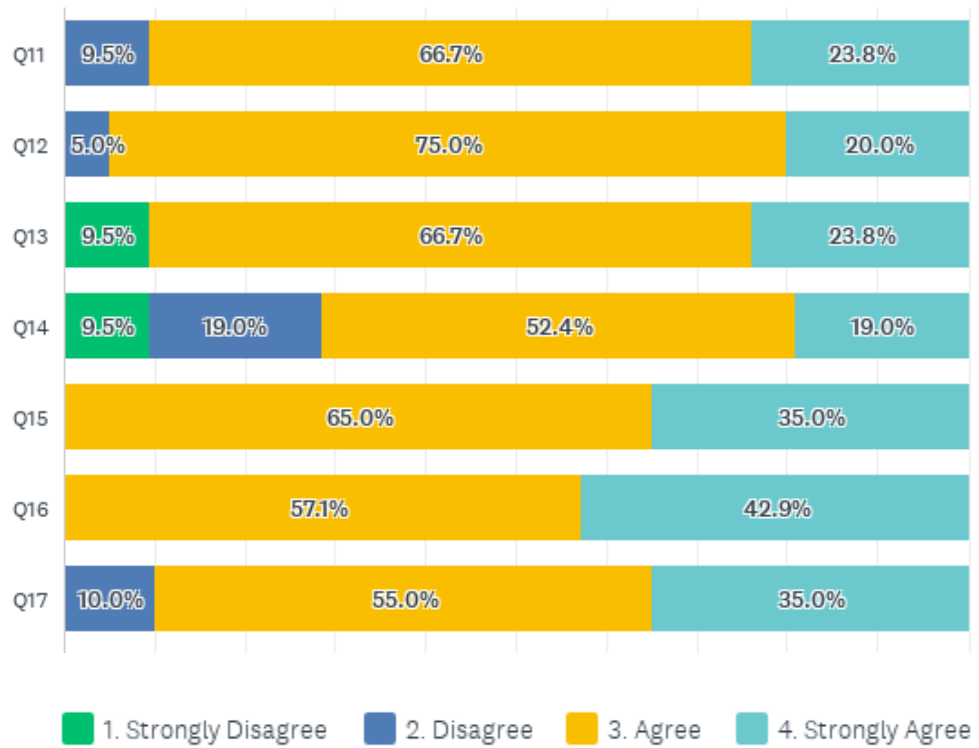
Figure 4.5. Pre-test questions addressing knowledge.

Attitude

The semi-structured interview question two asked, "How well prepared are COGA in Buenos Aires' pastors for biblical interpretation and preaching?" Pastors are prepared according to their time and biblical formation. Most pastors barely have enough time to prepare their weekly sermon. This is especially true for co-vocational pastors. Reflecting on lack of time as a challenging factor for sermon elaboration, Interviewee B stated, "The pastor should recognize that he does not have time and that love for research that the other brother has. He has to allow himself to be helped."

The second set of seven questions in the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre-Test sought to learn about the initial participants' attitude toward preaching before the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation.

For Q19, "I feel anxious when the time comes to write my sermon," 57% of the participants agreed and 33% strongly agreed; 10% disagreed with this affirmation. Anxiety is not a feeling that would naturally be linked to sermon preparation; however, 90% of the participants agreed with this statement.

Regarding Q20, "I lack the time to properly incorporate exegetical resources into my sermons," 45% of the participants disagreed. Conversely, 50% agreed and 5% strongly agreed. The answers to this statement may seem contradictory to the answers to the statement in Q16, "I feel I could improve my sermons if I had more time to incorporate exegetical insights into them," where 100% agreed.

Similar to the previous question, in Q21, "I lack the proper training to find high-quality exegetical resources to use in my sermon preparation," nearly half of the participants disagreed and the other half agreed. It appears that half of the participants consider they have the proper training to find exegetical resources for their sermons. These answers may reflect the disparity between pastors with primary education and the basic ministerial course (MIP) and those pastors with higher education and degrees in theology.

There was total agreement in the answers to Q22, "I like the idea of receiving exegetical resources to help me prepare my sermons," since 67% of the participants agreed and 33% strongly agreed.

The answers to the next statement were diverse. Question 23 said "I am satisfied with the current depth of the exegetical content of the sermons that I preach." Five percent of the participants strongly disagreed and 33% disagreed with this affirmation. On the other hand, 43% of the participants agreed and 19% strongly agreed. These figures could be related to the definition each participant has of "exegetical content." If this refers to the use of Bible texts and personal experience along the years or with having been a student in a biblical institution, it is clear why participants may feel satisfied with the exegetical content in their sermons.

For Q24, "I prepare a full manuscript for all of my sermons," 57% of the participants agreed, 33% strongly agreed and only 10% disagreed. This ultra-consuming time activity is rare even among seminary students. Perhaps the participants referred to sermon outlines. Considering the fact that many preachers do not use any kind of written paper, viewing an outline as a full manuscript makes sense.

The answers for Q25, "I have easy access to high-quality material where I can find exegetical resources for my sermons," were similar to the previous statement; 67% agreed, 24% strongly agreed and 10% disagreed. Interviewee B mentioned that for a pastor with an average salary, the price of books and Bibles was extremely expensive. He also mentioned that some pastors had serious difficulties with using the Internet. If the participants considered they have easy access to high-quality material where to find exegetical resources may be because they have a good library at home or at the church.
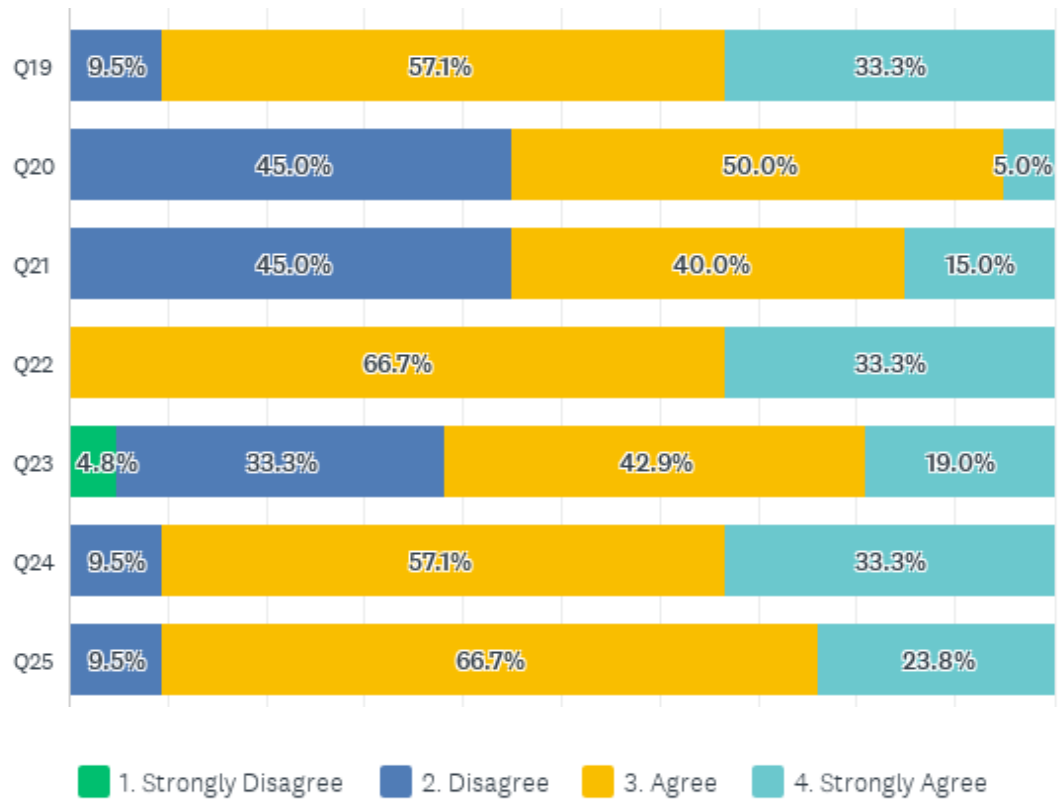
Figure 4.6. Pre-test questions addressing attitude.

Behavior

The semi-structured interview question three asked, "What is the result of that training regarding preaching for sermon preparation?" Responses to the question led to a connection between the academic requirements demanded by the church from candidates and pastors, and the poor sermon preparation that both interviewees witnessed.

The third and final set of seven questions in the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre-Test sought to learn about the participants' initial behavior toward preaching before the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation.

In Q27, "I regularly preach from Biblical texts that are unfamiliar or difficult to me," the four levels of agreement and disagreement appeared, and the answers were equally divided into both agreement and disagreement. Forty-five percent of the

participants disagreed and 45% agreed, while 5% strongly disagreed and 5% strongly agreed.

The affirmation in Q28, "I do incorporate exegetical resources into my sermons," received an ample consensus of agreement among 90% of the participants. Also 10% of them strongly agreed. Both interviewees agreed on the sound doctrine pastors preach. They draw this statement from their experience traveling, listening, and talking to COGA in Buenos Aires pastors. However, they also agreed on the need for deeper Biblical content.

For Q29, "I evaluate my sermons after I preach them," 48% of the participants agreed with the statement and 43% strongly agreed. There was a minor percentage of disagreement at 9%. Clarification was not requested for this statement.

In Q30, "I gratefully accept the exegetical resources given to me to help me prepare my sermons," 52% of the participants agreed, 38% strongly agreed, but 10% disagreed.

Regarding Q31, "I allocate a certain number of hours for exegetical research for my sermons. If 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree,' mention how much time you dedicate," 62% of the participants agreed and 38% strongly agreed. About the dedicated time, the minimum mentioned was one hour, and the maximum was more than 10 hours. It is interesting to note that the question regarding number of hours is not usually asked, not only for sermons, but for pastoral activities in general. Even so, five participants answered a specific time while the rest, 11 participants, gave an approximate amount of time. Finally, five participants skipped this specification. Responses to the question were

sorted into the following: Hours per day (HD), Hours per sermon (HS), Hours per week

(HW) and Hours without any specification (H).

Table 4.2.

Allocated Number of Hours for Exegetical Research for Sermons

HD	HS	HW	H
2	5-6	an hour and a half	1-2 (two participants)
1 (two participants)			3
+3			8 (two participants)
			4-6
			5
			2-3
			+10
			+4

The question that referred to the allocated amount of time for exegetical research

was particularly important because 57% of the participants agreed and 33% strongly

agreed to Q19, "I feel anxious when the time comes to write my sermon." Despite the

five participants that skipped the question, all of the rest mentioned a specific amount of

time, that is to say, they do dedicate (more or less) time to study. Perhaps a lower level of

anxiety could be expected, unless that anxiety responded to other reasons rather than lack

of preparation.

In Q32, "I could describe the exegetical resources I use for my sermons. If

'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree,' describe them," 76% of the participants agreed and 14%

strongly agreed; however, 10% disagreed. Regarding the description of the exegetical

resources used by them, only three gave an accurate description of their exegetical

resources. Six participants skipped this specification.

In Q33, "I allocate a certain number of hours to practice the delivery of my

sermons. If 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree,' mention how much time you dedicate," 52% of

participants agreed and 19% strongly agreed; 24% of the participants disagreed and 5%

strongly disagreed. Regarding the amount of time dedicated to the delivery of sermons,

the minimum mentioned was twenty-five minutes, the maximum was six hours. Six

participants skipped this question; two participants mentioned they did not practice the

delivery of sermons.
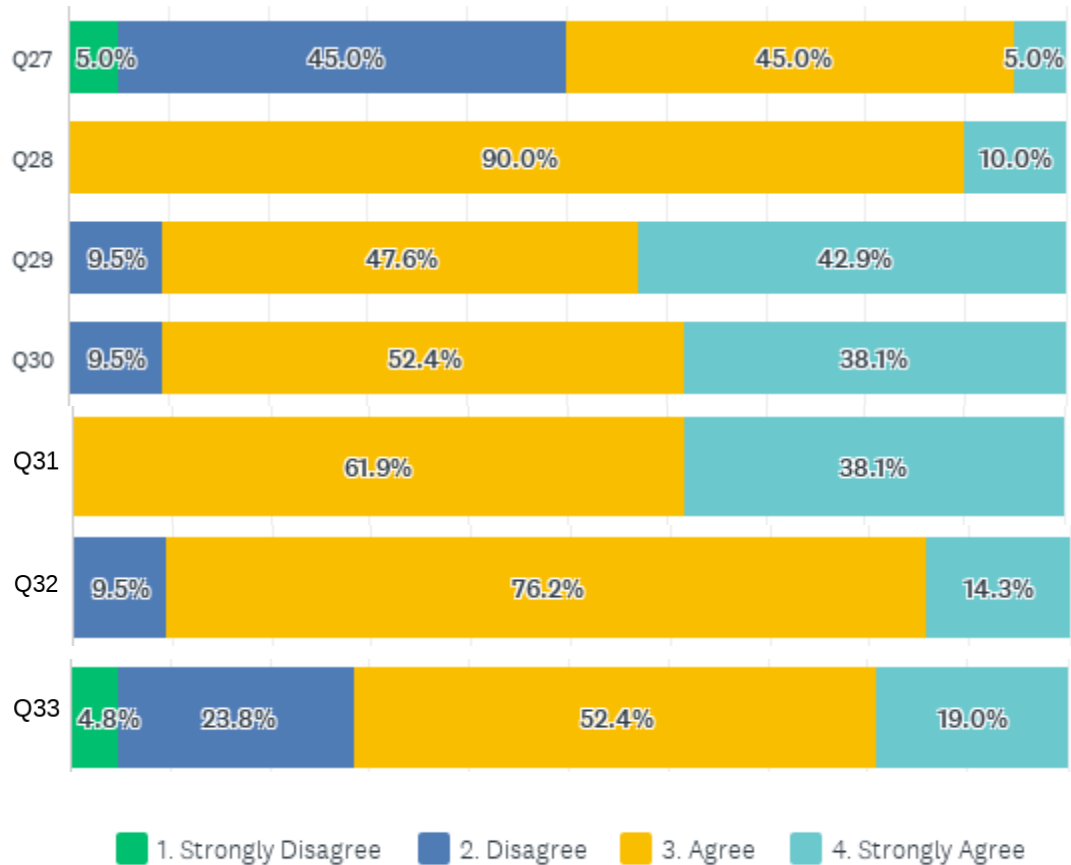
Figure 4.7. Pre-test questions addressing behavior.

Finally, semi-structured interview question 4 asked, "What are the main obstacles to improve sermon preparation?" The two main responses were time and knowledge.

From the interviews and the document analysis, it was clear that pastors do not receive from the COGA in Buenos Aires the proper training to do research and find exegetical resources for their sermons. Those pastors that actually implement exegetical resources do it as a result of the personal desire that had guided them to obtain such training. Many pastors have been able to obtain a degree thanks to a COG scholarship, but this was achieved due to personal effort and not as part of a systematic preparation plan for pastors of COGA in Buenos Aires.

Both interviewees made some final comments summarizing their ideas to answer semi-structured interview question five that asked if they had anything else they would like to share about sermon preparation.

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

What were the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding preaching after the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation?

This research question addressed the purpose of determining the participants' self-perceived understanding of sermon preparation. The twenty-four-question Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Post-Test was filled out after the process of sermon elaboration using the exegetical resources provided by the researcher. The goal was to afford participants the experience of being helped in the sermon preparation process by a person who is gifted in biblical exegesis or the word of knowledge.

The distribution on the post-test questions was as follows: Q1-7 addressed knowledge; Q9-15 addressed attitudes; Q17-23 addressed behavior.

Knowledge

The first set of seven questions sought to learn about the participants' knowledge of preaching after the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation.

The answers for post-test Q1, "I identify relevant exegetical resources for preparing my sermons", changed in the post-test. The 9% of participants that disagreed with this same affirmation in the pre-test did not appear. In the final result, 50% of the participants agreed and 50% strongly agreed.

For post-test Q2, "I know how to research in order to find exegetical resources," the responses changed. Five percent of the participants disagreed with this statement in the pre-test, but in the post-test, 44% of the participants agreed and 56% strongly agreed.

The affirmation in post-test Q3, "I evaluate the quality of the sources where I find exegetical resources for my sermons," had in the pre-test 10% of strong disagreement. For the same question on the post-test, that disagreement percentage disappeared. Almost half of the participants agreed with the same statement in the post-test, and 57% strongly agreed.

Regarding post-test Q4 "I consider myself a self-educated preacher," the answers did not change much. The total percentage of agreement increased from 71% in the pre-test to 81% in the post-test.

The answers for post-test Q5 "I can explain the benefits of receiving exegetical resources that help me to prepare my sermons" increased the level of strong agreement from 35% to 56%.

Surprisingly, the 100% agreement for post-test Q6 "I feel I could improve my sermons if I had more time to incorporate exegetical insights into them" in the Pre-Test decreased to 94% in the post-test, and 6% of the participants disagreed.

Regarding post-test Q7 "I feel I could improve my sermons if I had the proper training to do research and find exegetical resources," 10% of participants that disagreed in the Pre-Test changed to 6% of strong disagreement. Conversely, the 35% that strongly agreed with this affirmation increased to 63%.
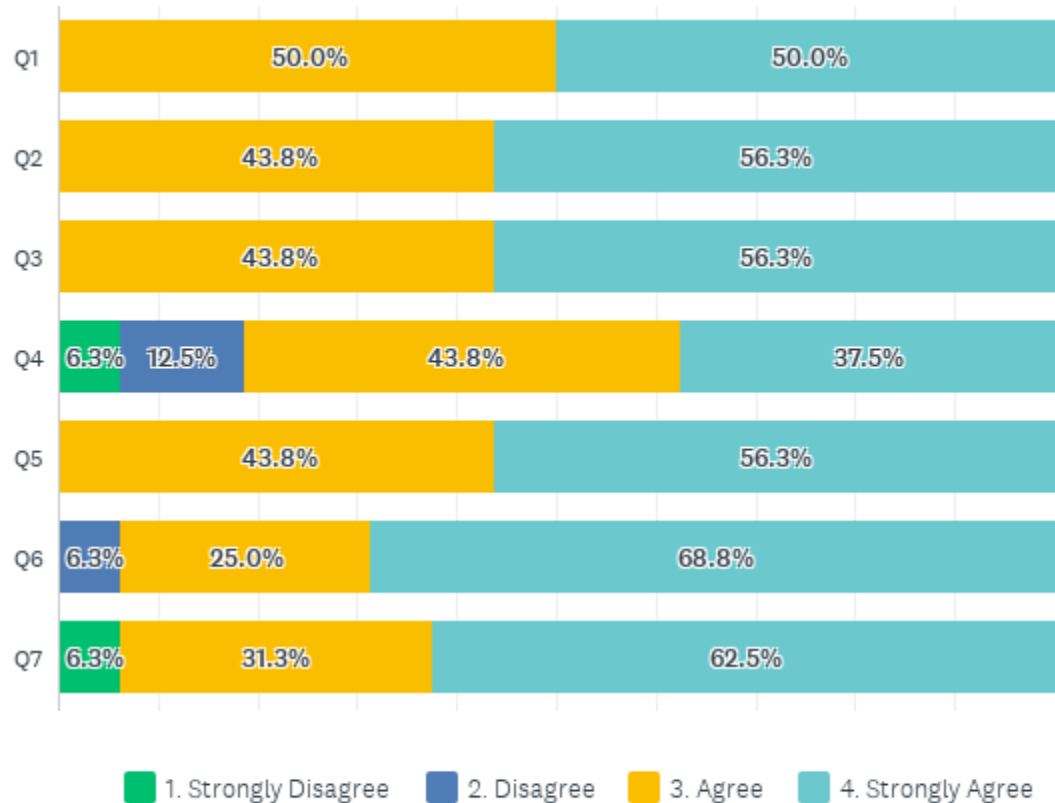
Figure 4.8. Post-test questions addressing knowledge.

Attitude

The second set of seven questions sought to learn about the initial participants'
attitude toward preaching before the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon
Preparation.

In the pre-test 90% of the respondents agreed with Q9 "I feel anxious when the
time comes to write my sermon." This figure was reduced to 38% in the post-test, and the
10% disagreement escalated to 62%. Regarding post-test Q10, "I lack the time to
properly incorporate exegetical resources into my sermons," both the pre-test and the
post-test remained nearly unchanged. In the post-test 50% of participants disagreed;
however, 44% agreed and 6% strongly agreed.

Similar to the previous question, in post-test Q11, "I lack the proper training to
find high-quality exegetical resources to use in my sermon preparation," nearly half of
the participants disagreed, and the other half agreed.

For post-test Q12, "I like the idea of receiving exegetical resources to help me
prepare my sermons," the total agreement in the answers to this affirmation remained.
However, the level of agreement increased. While the percentage of those who agreed
dropped from 67% to 31%, the percentage of those who strongly agreed increased from
33% to 69%.

For Post-Test Q13, "I am satisfied with the current depth of the exegetical content
of the sermons that I preach," comparing this same question from the pre-test to the post-
test, the 5% of strong disagreement disappeared and there was also a reduction in the
disagreement from 33% to 24%. On the other hand, the over-all level of agreement

increased. Those who agreed went down from 43% to 31%, however, the level of strong agreement increased from 19% to 43%.

Regarding post-test Q14, "I prepare a full manuscript for all of my sermons," the answers for both the pre-test and the post-test were similar: 56% of the participants agreed, 31% strongly agreed, and only 10% disagreed.

The answers for post-test Q15, "I have easy access to high-quality material where I can find exegetical resources for my sermons," changed in the pre-test compared to the post-test from 67% of the participants in agreement to 37% but from 24% to 50% in strong agreement. The level of disagreement was 13%.
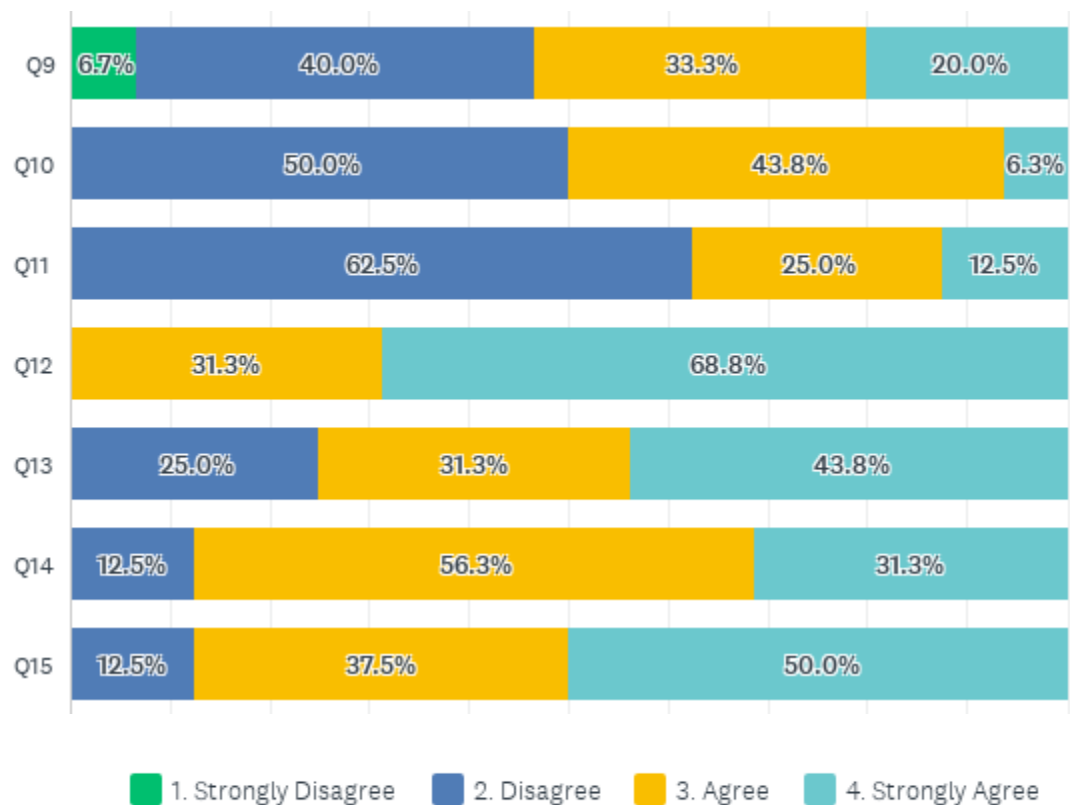
Figure 4.9. Post-test questions addressing attitude.

Behavior

The third and final set of seven questions sought to learn about the initial participants' behavior toward preaching before the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation.

In post-test Q17, "I regularly preach from biblical texts that are unfamiliar or difficult to me," the 5% that strongly disagreed in the pre-test disappeared in the post-test and the 45% that disagreed was reduced to 40%. Meanwhile, 40% of the participants agreed and 20% strongly agreed with the affirmation.

In post-test Q18, "I do incorporate exegetical resources into my sermons," the answers in the post-test were also of agreement, as in the pre-test, but the numbers changed slightly; 50% of the participants agreed and the other 50% strongly agreed.

Regarding post-test Q19, "I evaluate my sermons after I preach them," the percentage of agreement went from 48% to 63%. The percentage that chose the option "strongly agree" went down from 42% to 31%. The disagreement also went down from 9% to 6%.

Regarding post-test Q20, "I gratefully accept the exegetical resources given to me to help me prepare my sermons," the 10% disagreement this statement received in the pre-test disappeared in the post-test. Sixty-two percent of the participants strongly agreed and 38% agreed with this affirmation.

Regarding post-test Q21, "I allocate a certain number of hours for exegetical research for my sermons," the answers to the question in the pre-test differed from the responses to same question in the post-test. In the post-test 7% disagreed. The percentage of agreement went from 62% in the pre-test to 53% in the post-test. The percentage of

strong agreement went from 38% in the pre-test to 40% in the post-test. Question 21 specified: "If 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree,' mention how much time you dedicate." The minimum answer was thirty minutes and the maximum was 10 hours. One participant skipped this specification.

In post-test Q22, "I could describe the exegetical resources I use for my sermons. If 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree,' describe them," most of the participants chose the two options in agreement both in the pre- and post-tests, 50% strongly agreed and 38% agreed; 6% strongly disagreed and another 6% disagreed. Regarding the description of the exegetical resources used by them, six participants gave an accurate description of their exegetical resources. Two participants skipped this question.

In post-test Q23, "I allocate a certain number of hours to practice the delivery of my sermons. If 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree,' mention how much time you dedicate," the 5% of participants that strongly disagreed in the pre-test disappeared. The 25% that disagreed remained almost identical in both the pre- and post-tests: 44% of participants agreed and 31% strongly agreed. Regarding the amount of time dedicated to the delivery of sermons, the minimum mentioned was fifteen minutes and the maximum was twelve hours. Four participants skipped this question.
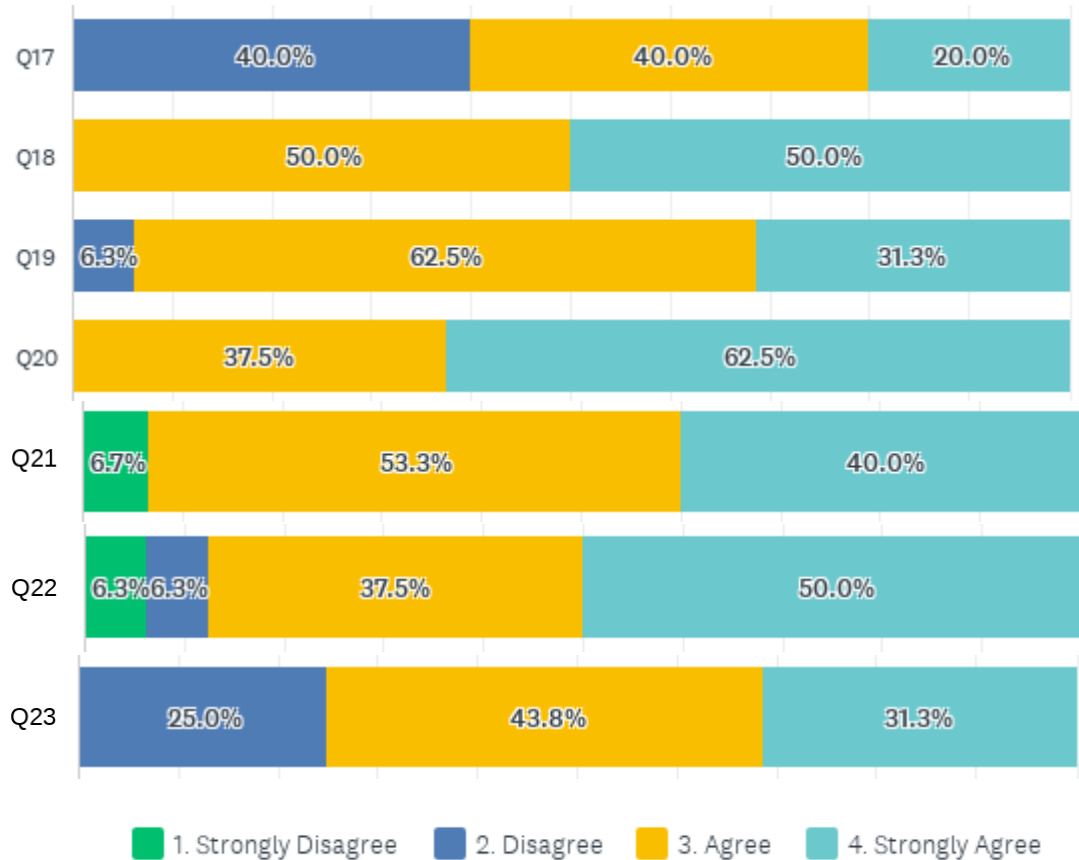
Figure 4.10. Post-test questions addressing behavior.

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

What did the participants identify as the most and least helpful aspects of the

Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation?

This research question sought to establish which part of the intervention made an

impact on the participants.

In the pre-test Q18, "I would appreciate training from the COGA in Buenos Aires

regarding incorporating exegetical resources into my preaching," 5% of the participants

disagreed with this affirmation. This number disappeared in the same question of the

post-test (Q8). The 62% who agreed decreased to 37%, but the 33% who strongly agreed

increased to 63%. The total level of agreement rose from 95% to 100%.

For the pre-test Q26, "I keep an accurate record of the sermons that I have preached," 14% of the participants disagreed, but this number decreased to 6% in the same question of the post-test (Q16). In the pre-test, 62% of the participants agreed and this number decreased to 56%, but 24% strongly agreed in the pre-test and this number increased to 38% in the post-test.

In pre-test Q34, "I dedicate adequate time to find exegetical resources for my sermons. If 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree,' mention how much time you dedicate," the level of disagreement also went down from 16% in the pre-test to 13% on the same question of the post-test (Q24). In the pre-test 58% of the participants agreed and this number decreased to 31% in the post-test. However, 26% of the participants strongly agreed in the pre-test, and this number increased to 56% in the post-test.
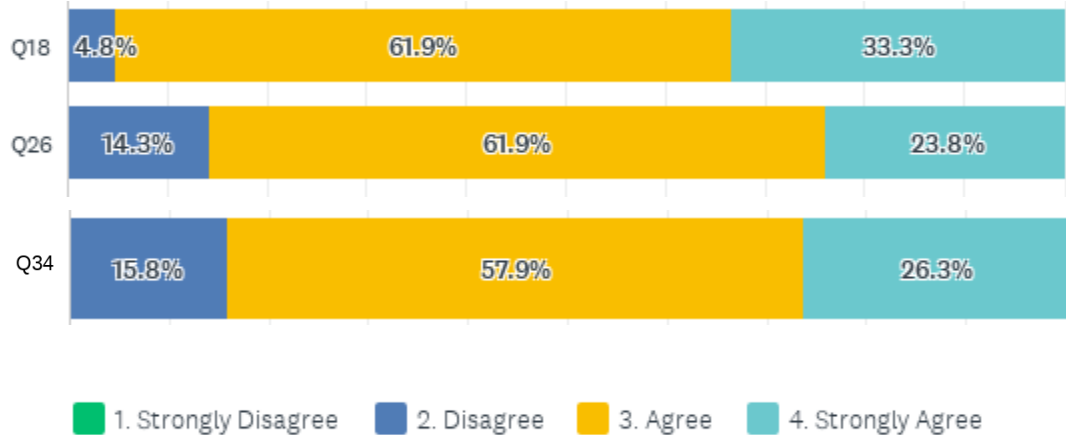
Figure 4.11. Pre-test impact on participants.
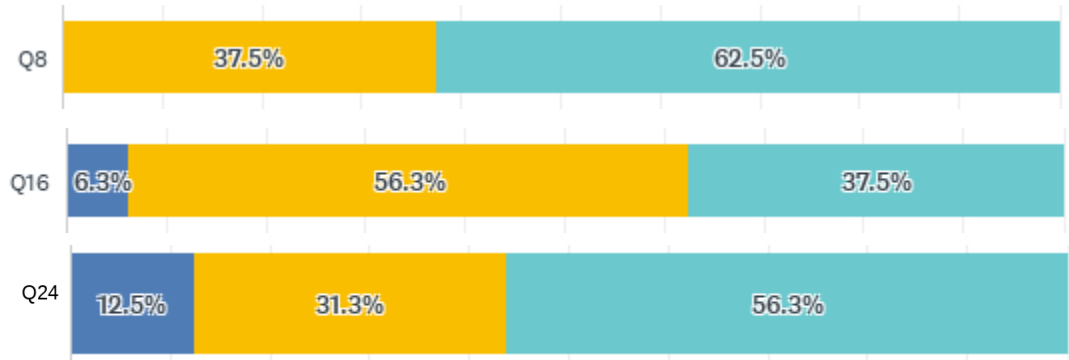
Figure 4.12. Post-test impact on participants.

Additional responses to pre-test Q34 and post-test Q24 were sorted into the following: Hours per day (HD), Hours without any specification (H), Explanations (E). Five participants skipped this question in the pre-test and two participants in the post-test.

Table 4.3.

Adequate time to find exegetical resources for sermons in the Pre-Test

HD	H	E
2 hours	1 hour (3 participants)	Until I am satisfied.
3 hours	2 hours (2 participants)	I make an effort since I have to accommodate my
	2-3 hours	schedules for my secular work
	3 hours	Time would be missing
	4 hours	Weeks
	5 hours	
	6 hours	

Table 4.4.

Adequate time to find exegetical resources for sermons in the Post-Test

H	D	E
1 hour (6 participants)	4-5 days	While I am working on my sermon
2 hours (2 participants)	During several days	According to time and commitments, 1-2 hours
2 or more hours		
3 hours		

A final question was asked, both in the pre-test and the post-test: "Do you have anything else you'd like to share about sermon preparation?" In the Pre-Test five participants responded "No"; one participant skipped the question. The rest answered the following: "I consider exegesis a very important and valuable investigation to know truths of the biblical time, and the past, and to be applied in the present, without leading to confusion and error." "I spend one to two hours a day." "Have more knowledge." "Yes, update me and have greater access to different materials." "That I appreciate this survey, it is a great blessing for my preparation and learning." "It is good to always learn and inform yourself. Jesus said, search the Scriptures because in them you have eternal life (John 5:39)."

In the post-test four participants responded "No"; one responded "Yes," and four skipped the question. The rest of participants answered the following: "I would like to dedicate myself more, sometimes it is difficult for work reasons." "I try to analyze the text to be preached to identify the historical proper by the text. And from there extract the truths or teachings that apply to today. Differentiating precepts and commandments that do not have space or time that are immovable for any generation, such as the principles

given in the commandments." "Something important in the preparation of sermons is to be able to get from the biblical text to the current reality of people, understanding their experiences today and their current problems. That is, make a good application today of the Word of God." "More time to pray …" "Observe the times we live in, human behaviors and the intervention of the Holy Spirit." "Personally I seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, He is my greatest source of knowledge. Also, I look in some training that I have taken, Bible dictionary, and so forth." "Pretext text, introduction, body, illustration, compilation and conclusion." "Yes, what the Lord Jesus commanded us, fasting, prayer and reading the Word because if not, there is no effectiveness." "I totally believe that learning and incorporating adequate tools for the knowledge of the word of God is a wealth!" "All effort and dedication to the task is never enough." "I look for parallel passages, as well as a biblical story if necessary or a testimony according to the topic of the sermon." "I seek in prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit." The answers were diverse, in some sense, they reflect the content of the tests' answers.

<div align="center">**Summary of Major Findings**</div>

The following is a summary of the four major findings that emerged from the data analysis of the research tools used for this project.

1. Pastors who filled out the pre- and post-tests had different definitions for the key terminology of this project, particularly, for "exegetical resources."

2. The COGA in Buenos Aires plays a major role in the implementation of any proposal to improve the sermon elaboration for pastors.

3. Some of the data drawn from the tests do not coincide with the vision from the two prominent leaders interviewed and some answers contradict others.

4. The gift of knowledge recognition in the body of Christ is crucial to improve the current depth of the exegetical content of the sermons.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter Five addresses the project's four major findings, along with the ministry implications of those findings, the limitations of the study and unexpected observations. The chapter ends with recommendations and a postscript that shares the researcher's personal journey with the project.

The project's purpose was to evaluate the change in knowledge, attitude, and behavior in Argentinian pastors of the COGA in Buenos Aires because of an Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation presented as four sermons prepared during a trial experiment. It was stated as a problem that the COGA provision for pastors regarding biblical foundation is far from ideal. Pastoral knowledge of preaching comes primarily from their own experience as members and leaders of the church. Furthermore, pastors do not have ample time to dedicate themselves to study.

Major Findings

The research concerning the sermon preparation by fulltime COGA in Buenos Aires pastors led to four major findings.

Varying Definitions of Exegetical Resources

I know that conducting human research may bring some diversity; however, this certainly turned out differently than what I anticipated. It was evident even from the demographic survey that pastors had various understandings of the terminology.

I do not need to mention that every pastor was treated with total respect. I gave my best in order to explain what I intended to do and the importance of each pastor's

participation. I recorded a video, sent audio messages, called by telephone, sent Whatsapp messages and emails, and tried to explain when I was asked for further information. I know it was a new experience for many participants. One of my expert reviewers anticipated some difficulty for pastors due to the test's design. However, I did not anticipate that the key element of the project would be misunderstood.

An exegetical resource is not the Bible, is not a dictionary, not a Bible institution, nor Internet, and it is not life experience. It refers to etymological references in Greek or Hebrew, information related to the text's original setting and meaning, theological, historical, geographical, and political issues, social customs, and so forth. Every piece of information that could help to explain a difficult text or to delve into the Bible's richness could be considered as an exegetical resource.

This seemed to be fully understood by some of the participants. For the rest, I was like that professor that speaks a language that students cannot understand. Still, I am convinced that every aspect of this project can be carefully adapted to the COGA in Buenos Aires pastoral need in order to make them see this project as a useful tool to improve their sermon preparation.

The task of preaching up to three sermons a week is extremely demanding. Interviewee B told the story of a pastor with a short time in the pastorate that used to carry his agenda everywhere to invite different preachers every week because he did not feel qualified to preach the Word. Clearly, this was an extreme that was very damaging to the congregation and to himself. At the other extreme are pastors who have become accustomed to preaching without spending more than the minimum time necessary to put together a couple of ideas connected with some biblical texts. The other extreme is just as

damaging to the congregation and to the pastor himself. The Bible is so rich and inexhaustible because it is the Word of God, and that is how it must feel when the preacher opens his mouth to speak of it.

Exegetical resources are not exegesis, but they are helpful in implementing exegesis, the Greek term that means explanation. The verb *exegeomai* means "explain, interpret, tell, report, describe" (Goodrich and Lukaszewski 113).

The Word of God needs to be explained. Thousands of years separate us from those first writers and readers. That time was a whole different world. It was so different that people cannot unfold those differences without a guide.

> Most persons study without any definite aim and without an established method or a persistent purpose. Their studies inevitably become desultory and lead, if not into positive error, at least to no large and permanent results. They learn many things but acquire no coherent, organic body of knowledge. (Stevens 198)

The lack of knowledge is the final result of talking about the Bible without studying it. Exegetical resources are vital to nurture preaching.

As an explanation of the Scriptures, biblical exegesis was given from the first years of spreading the divine message in writing. Since more people had access to the writings without the author's presence, explanation became necessary. The original recipients of the biblical text understood the message upon hearing it. Revelation, which is the New Testament book that most often quotes the Old Testament, begins as follows:

> The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his

angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the

word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who

reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it

and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near (Rev. 1:1-

3).

Revelation 1:3 says that blessed people are not those who manage to decipher

hidden riddles, but those who listen and keep what is written, that is to say, those who

obey. It is understood that those who hear that message will understand it. Otherwise, it

would not be possible to obey. So, assuming that the first recipients of the text would

understand the message, the question is whether or not they will obey it. The message

would be understood with such clarity that it would challenge listeners and put them in

need of deciding whether to obey the divine message or disobey it.

That was the reality of the first century, but then the text remained in use for other

churches, with other realities, and the author of the text was no longer present to explain

what he meant. The recipients were no longer those who shared the context of the author

of the text in such a way that they could clearly understand what he wanted to convey.

The need to explain the text became evident. Exegetical resources will help to explain

difficult passages and enrich those easy ones.

The topic of exegetical resources for sermon elaboration has emerged as both a

cause of concern from leaders and an opportunity for pastors to grow.

COGA in Buenos Aires's Major Role in Implementing Proposal for Improving

Pastors' Sermon Elaboration

COGA in Buenos Aires pastors are not independent pastors. There is a structure, and the pastors carry out their ministry considering the voice of the authorities. Pastors are not alone, they count on the institution. Institutional support is manifested in the legal coverage to function in the country, in ministerial training, national and international connection, and other instances. The Church of God is a recognized Pentecostal institution in the world.

Pastors can participate in a variety of programs to grow as ministers as their congregation grows. Unfortunately, as has already been established in this project, the COGA does not offer any course or program dedicated exclusively to the preaching of the Word incorporating exegetical resources.

When the institution started in 1884, the founder and the members of this new church broke with other more consolidated churches because they did not believe that those churches were preaching the gospel as it is outlined in the New Testament. After the first years of formation that small congregation experienced rapid growth followed by persecution. The church also experienced periods of great fanaticism, which was the product of a misinterpretation of the Word of God. Brothers and sisters believed that the baptism in the Holy Spirit had different levels that could be achieved with fasting and fervent prayer, and they viewed intellectual preparation with suspicion. Fundamentalism grew, and the church became more concerned with banning certain hairstyles and certain foods than with delving into the Word of God. Fanaticism and fundamentalism nearly destroyed the fledgling church.

The passage of time and the realization that excesses were not healthy for the church led the congregation to a healthier experience of spiritual practices. The church of our day has freed itself from excesses and fanaticism, but the suspicion of academic preparation continues. These are not isolated cases, but a large percentage of pastors lack academic preparation. According to Interviewee A, between 80% and 90% of the pastors only had the basic course required for their ministerial exercise.

The intervention of the church is key for the implementation of ministerial proposals because the pastors work within the framework of the church. The order that is given for church members is also given to them as members of the Body of Christ: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17, KJV).

Both of the COGA in Buenos Aires leaders who were interviewed agreed on the need for an institutional guideline to lead this training, and also to prioritize it. If biblical training were left to the will of each one, some would do it while others would not. Institutional intervention would ensure that those pastors who are not interested in learning or do not prioritize biblical training do so anyway. "Some are not interested in learning because they consider that the Lord guides them," said Interviewee B. However, this particular interpretation reinforces ignorance.

Certainly God guides the ones He has called to preach, and He does so through the hard way of reading, studying, writing, practicing, and evaluating to better communicate His message to His people.

Differences in Data from Tests Results and Leaders' Interviewees and

Contradictory Answers from Participants

Crucial to this project was the participation of two COGA in Buenos Aires

prominent leaders, not only for their vast knowledge of the pastoral reality of the region,

but also for their feedback for this ministerial proposal.

The interview with the leaders left central elements in which both agreed. Sound

doctrine is not in jeopardy. Historically, the COGA in Buenos Aires as well as in the rest

of the world has committed itself to correctly tracing the Word of God. With greater or

lesser flaw, pastors preach and teach sound doctrine. On the other hand, it is also true that

the messages lack exegetical depth. Time and training are essential elements, but the

pastors usually lack both when they sit down to prepare a sermon. The result is preaching

with an already known and accepted message that rarely challenges the listener.

Pastors responded to the tests by saying that they knew how to find exegetical

resources and how to assess the quality of sources. Only 5% and 10% did not agree with

these statements. The interviewed leaders inverted this percentage. The explanation for

this discrepancy could be in the definition that each pastor has of "exegetical resources."

It makes sense to consider that there may be different definitions. If one takes into

account the diversity in terms of intellectual formation within and outside the Christian

sphere, then the difference in definitions makes sense. As has been said, sound doctrine is

not in jeopardy, ministerial capacity and commitment to God's work are not questioned.

But it is evident that if further training is not compulsory for pastors, and if secondary or

higher education is not required, then the academic level of pastors who do not study will

be different and far below of those who on their own initiative have decided to study in an institution or even study as a self-educated person.

The institution does not provide the bases for the exegesis of the Word to the candidates for the ministry, nor did it require the pastors who are already working to take continuing education. Even in its recent history some pastors who wanted to study were reprimanded, and others were unmotivated. As Interviewee B reported: When the desire to study, to prepare more for work arose in the hearts of pastors from two prosperous churches, they thought about going to a seminar. They asked their overseer who said: "You don't need it. You already have a ministry. You have growing churches; a position as leaders in the district; God uses you; why are you going to go? While grateful for the current ministry, Interviewee B believes his ministry could have been more uplifting, more helpful, and he could have taught many more people if they had had support from the institution. So the institution not only failed to foster preparation for the exegesis of the Word, but it effectively stopped individual attempts of those pastors that had recognized their need to better prepare.

Crucial to this project was the participation of two COGA in Buenos Aires prominent leaders because they know this reality through first hand experience. The dissonance between what COGA in Buenos Aires pastors and leaders see could be reduced if pastors were familiar with self-assessment and were familiar with being evaluated.

Evaluation is considered as one of the four principles for the Biblical Model for Discipleship Training (Bates 118):

       ▪ Observation – The disciples observed how Christ performed ministry.

▪ Instruction – Christ instructed His disciples on various Christian

principles.

▪ Application – Christ gave His disciples opportunities to apply lessons

learned through practice by providing them with ministry responsibilities.

▪ Evaluation – Christ evaluated their ministry efforts, giving them

feedback so they could improve their ministry skills.

The Bible tells us that after being rejected at Nazareth and sending out the Twelve

that Jesus faced the death of John the Baptist. The next event is the arrival of His

disciples: "The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and

taught" (Mark 6:30, NIV). Other Bible versions instead of saying "reported to him" say

"told him" (KJV, NLT, ESV). The Greek word that is translated as "reported" or "told" is

apangellō (G518). According to the Strong's Greek Lexicon, this word means: "to bring

tidings (from a person or a thing), bring word, report; to proclaim, to make known

openly, declare." It is possible to imagine the disciples' excitement while telling their

Master all they did and taught. Jesus listened to them as they recalled what they had done.

The capacity of looking back at what has been done and reflecting on it must be

not only indispensable in Christian life, but also indispensable for sermon preparation.

Evaluation should be an important step as is praying and reading the Bible. Through

evaluation each pastor would be able to grasp what the audience is hearing.

There is not a unique way to do sermon evaluation; seminary professor of

Homiletics Don Wardlaw provides more than twenty, but he clarifies that even in a

Homiletic class:

The most important standard in assessing sermons is what preachers

internalize and use in evaluating their sermons throughout their ministry of

proclamation. More significant than any grade for a course, this is the

standard that will be effectively shaping the preacher's work for years.

Therefore, the purpose of assessment in a preaching course is to engage,

expand, and refine our student's own skills of self-evaluation. (125)

This should also be true for pastors in local churches.

Recognition of the Gift of Knowledge in the Body of Christ Crucial to Improving

Exegetical Depth in Sermons

According to the COG scholar, Hiram Almirudis, the gift of knowledge could be

described as follows:

Conocimiento, tanto en la literatura secular como en la religiosa, es la

facultad de percibir, de comprender. Por lo tanto, el conocimiento como un

don espiritual es la habilidad de percibir, informarse, documentarse, tener

nociones profundas de las verdades de Dios. No se puede negar que el don

de conocimiento tiene que ver más con el aspecto teórico, intelectual de las

verdades cristianas, la percepción correcta de las mismas. (40)

Knowledge, both in secular and religious literature, is the faculty of

perceiving, of understanding. Therefore, knowledge as a spiritual gift is

the ability to perceive, inform, document, and have deep notions of God's

truths. It cannot be denied that the gift of knowledge has more to do with

the theoretical, intellectual aspect of Christian truths, the correct

perception of them.

The gift of knowledge is a crucial gift for this project. "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). Many people do not know that they have it. They also ignore the blessing they could bring if they used their gift to seek exegetical information for their pastor's sermons.

Interviewee A told me an anecdote about a pastor who had very powerful preaching. This pastor one day revealed his secret: literally under the pulpit, there was a room where a group of people prayed for him, so that God would anoint him with His grace. The leader joined this anecdote with the proposal for sermons elaboration and said that it would be a similar situation: a group of members who support their pastor with their gifts. He believed that this would be well understood by the local pastors. Both interviewees agreed that it was very important that the pastor actively participate in the project. Interviewee A mentioned "the difficulty and need of teamwork, to leave egos aside." Interviewee B also mentioned the importance of teamwork and the need of breaking individualism and have a dialogue space like the one he was having with the researcher while being interviewed. He added:

> Pastors must be aware of the gifts that exist in God's people. The Lord gave them to be used. And then they must actively get involved in recognizing the gifts that are in the congregation, in this case, the gift of knowledge, and not leave it in something general, but to seek that gift clearly and intentionally. If the pastor has little knowledge of the spiritual gifts, he or she will not be able to find them either.
>
> If the pastor is a closed person, who does not give members that space where they feel comfortable, grateful, happy, to do this task, it is

likely that they have the gift, but they will apply it to something else.

Pastors need to be humble, recognize and use the member gifts.

The root of the word *gnoseos* is *gnosis,* which means understanding, knowledge, science. The message of knowledge, *logos gnoseos*, is not repeated in the four lists of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-10; 12:28-30; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11). The message of wisdom, faith, gifts of healing, miraculous powers, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in different kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues, gifts of helping, gifts of guidance, serving, encouraging, giving, and showing mercy do not appear in the four lists of spiritual gifts either. The message of knowledge only appears in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, but this does not undermine its authority. It is as valuable as any other gift. It must be known, studied and put into practice "so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:12).

Ministry Implications of the Findings

Every pastor that was invited to participate in this project was somehow also evaluated. They themselves were forced to analyze every aspect of their sermon elaboration process. I think this is highly positive. Pastors should know that their sermons can be and must be evaluated. It is not about questioning the Word of God or God Himself. It is about self-evaluation in order to improve the quality of the sermons. If they are good, they could be excellent.

Self-evaluation is essential. However, the evaluation of members, colleagues and leaders would provide a unique assessment. Pastors do not need to be afraid of this, since it is important and useful to grow.

Past generations of pastors were subjected to minimumal requirements in order to serve as pastors. More of what is needed can be required of the new generations of pastors in order to have a greater in-depth understanding of the Word of God.

I would emphasize that the project would be important even if the COGA in Buenos Aires improves its educational program and changes its ministerial requirements. COGA could eliminate the problem of a lack of education, but they cannot eliminate the problem of a lack of time. This speaks to the lasting importance of having laity take part in exegetical preparation. Laity taking part in such an important event as preaching could bring enormous benefit to the whole congregation. Not only will they grow in the commitment with the kingdom, but also, they will get to know our Lord better. In words of Interviewee B, "The church would take a very important quality step forward if this happened."

Limitations of the Study

Regarding the generalization of this project, I think it would be wise to implement the use of a glossary, so that there would be unity of criteria regarding the terms that are handled, especially in surveys, where there is no possibility of clarifying doubts. I would try to have more contact with the pastors before the surveys to get their feedback and do some practice exercises to ensure that they all have the same vocabulary.

Since the voice of pastors and church leaders was heard, it would be important to hear what church members have to say about the exegetical devices used in the sermons they hear each week and whether they can appreciate development or stagnation in their Christian growth from faithful attendance at services where they hear the Word of God

preached. Finally, I would reduce the number of questions to make the questionnaire more accessible to pastors.

Unexpected Observations

A very pleasant surprise arose during the interviews with the two prominent leaders of the COGA in Buenos Aires. After listening carefully to a summary of this project, they began to present in parallel both the objections to implement the project and the arguments to defend it. It seemed like they were thinking aloud, analyzing the possible scenarios. I realized that they were really considering, not only the possibility of implementing the proposal in their experience as preachers, but of initiating it at the regional level, and even Interviewee B mentioned at the national level. An initial step should be to write the proposal in detail to present it in the different decision-making bodies of the church.

It was also unexpected that while working on this project, other proposals to improve the quality of the sermons emerged in the dialogue, such as the pastors recording their sermons on audio and sending them to a colleague, or another person who could provide feedback. Exchanging sermons with a colleague would promote mutual growth.

Recommendations

I always considered the possibility of receiving help in order to improve the exegetical quality of the sermons as something positive. From the interviews, the possibility arose that the pastors might feel threatened in some way and might feel fear. It would be wise to hear the opinion of pastors before starting any proposal for change, so that they can feel that their voice is heard, and that they are given all the necessary information so as not to experience an unfounded fear.

The recommendation for denominational leaders involves starting to demand from pastors some form of evaluation: self-evaluation, peer evaluation, congregational evaluation, and so forth. The evaluation could be conducted by a seminary professor, a leader, a member of the board or any other qualified person.

The recommendation for pastors involves leaving enough time between sermons to have the proper time to adequately prepare them. Also, they should start recording their sermons in audio or video so they can do an exhaustive evaluation before the next sermon.

I would also propose future surveys to investigate where pastors obtain their resources to elaborate their sermons.

Postscript

I practice Taekwondo. One of the things that I love about this discipline is that in each class the master makes me perform better than I would if I had trained alone. In 2017, when I returned home after a beautiful three-week experience in Florida, I lost the entire folder that we received for our dissertation at the airport. That was a very strong blow because there I had everything, even my notes. And although the information was always available on the Internet, I felt lost. It is thanks to Ellen Marmon that this dissertation reaches this point, to her wisdom and professionalism, because my limited resources had been exhausted. I thank God for her life.

APPENDIXES

Appendix A. Tests

1. Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre-Test

Section I
Demographic Survey
1. Age:
2. Gender: Masculine ____   Feminine ____
3. Marital Status: Single ____   Married ____   Divorced ____
4. Children under eighteen living at home: Yes ____   No ____ (If yes, please specify)
5. Educational Background:
6. Biblical/Theological Training:
7. Years as a Christian preacher:
8. Years as a Pastor:
9. Full-time Pastor/Co-vocational:
10. Average preaching monthly time:

Section II
Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre-Test
11. I identify relevant exegetical resources for preparing my sermons.
12. I know how to research in order to find exegetical resources.
13. I evaluate the quality of the sources where I find exegetical resources for my sermons.
14. I consider myself a self-educated preacher.
15. I can explain the benefits of receiving exegetical resources that help me to prepare my sermons.
16. I feel I could improve my sermons if I had more time to incorporate exegetical insights into them.
17. I feel I could improve my sermons if I had the proper training to do research and find exegetical resources.
18. I would appreciate training from the COGA in Buenos Aires regarding incorporating exegetical resources into my preaching.
19. I feel anxious when the time comes to write my sermon.
20. I lack the time to properly incorporate exegetical resources into my sermons.
21. I lack the proper training to find high-quality exegetical resources to use in my sermon preparation.
22. I like the idea of receiving exegetical resources to help me prepare my sermons.
23. I am satisfied with the current depth of the exegetical content of the sermons that I preach.
24. I prepare a full manuscript for all of my sermons.
25. I have easy access to high-quality material where I can find exegetical resources for my sermons.
26. I keep an accurate record of the sermons that I have preached.

27. I regularly preach from Biblical texts that are unfamiliar or difficult to me.
28. I do incorporate exegetical resources into my sermons.
29. I evaluate my sermons after I preach them.
30. I gratefully accept the exegetical resources given to me to help me prepare my sermons.
31. I allocate a certain number of hours for exegetical research for my sermons. If "Strongly agree" or "Agree," mention how much time you dedicate.
32. I could describe the exegetical resources I use for my sermons. If "Strongly agree" or "Agree," describe them.
33. I allocate a certain number of hours to practice the delivery of my sermons. If "Strongly agree" or "Agree," mention how much time you dedicate.
34. I dedicate adequate time to find exegetical resources for my sermons. If "Strongly agree" or "Agree," mention how much time you dedicate.

2. Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Post-Test

1. I identify relevant exegetical resources for preparing my sermons.
2. I know how to research in order to find exegetical resources.
3. I evaluate the quality of the sources where I find exegetical resources for my sermons.
4. I consider myself a self-educated preacher.
5. I can explain the benefits of receiving exegetical resources that help me to prepare my sermons.
6. I feel I could improve my sermons if I had more time to incorporate exegetical insights into them.
7. I feel I could improve my sermons if I had the proper training to do research and find exegetical resources.
8. I would appreciate training from the COGA in Buenos Aires regarding incorporating exegetical resources into my preaching.
9. I feel anxious when the time comes to write my sermon.
10. I lack the time to properly incorporate exegetical resources into my sermons.
11. I lack the proper training to find high-quality exegetical resources to use in my sermon preparation.
12. I like the idea of receiving exegetical resources to help me prepare my sermons.
13. I am satisfied with the current depth of the exegetical content of the sermons that I preach.
14. I prepare a full manuscript for all of my sermons.
15. I have easy access to high-quality material where I can find exegetical resources for my sermons.
16. I keep an accurate record of the sermons that I have preached.
17. I regularly preach from Biblical texts that are unfamiliar or difficult to me.
18. I do incorporate exegetical resources into my sermons.
19. I evaluate my sermons after I preach them.
20. I gratefully accept the exegetical resources given to me to help me prepare my sermons.
21. I allocate a certain number of hours for exegetical research for my sermons. If "Strongly agree" or "Agree," mention how much time you dedicate.
22. I could describe the exegetical resources I use for my sermons. If "Strongly agree" or "Agree," describe them.
23. I allocate a certain number of hours to practice the delivery of my sermons. If "Strongly agree" or "Agree," mention how much time you dedicate.
24. I dedicate adequate time to find exegetical resources for my sermons. If "Strongly agree" or "Agree," mention how much time you dedicate.

Appendix B. Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

	Introduction
Welcome	Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. You are one of the two COGA in Buenos Aires' leaders interviewed.
	Before we start, I'd like to check if you received the information I sent you through e-mail regarding this project and if you had the opportunity to take a look at that. Do you want a couple of minutes to do it now?
	Questions
SI1.	Can you describe what kind of biblical interpretation and preaching training do COGA in Buenos Aires' pastors receive from the Church?
SI2.	How well prepared are COGA in Buenos Aires' pastors for biblical interpretation and preaching?
SI3.	What is the result of that training regarding preaching for sermon preparation?
SI4.	What are the main obstacles to improve sermon preparation?
SI5.	Do you have anything else you'd like to share about sermon preparation?

Appendix C. Document Analysis Protocol Sheet

The document to be analyzed is a translation of a text originally written in English. The source information is provided between brackets.

1. Title: *Introducción a los Ministerios Cristianos II* [*Introduction to Christian Ministries*]
2. Author: Lombard, John A.
3. Translator: Rubén Lugo
4. Type of document: Textbook
5. Purpose: Ministerial training
6. Publication year: 1995 (1977)
7. Published by: Oficinas Internacionales de la Iglesia de Dios: Cleveland, TN (External Studies Program, Lee College: Cleveland, TN)
8. Length: 98 pages
9. Format: Spiral-bound
10. Chapters, subsections: Eight lessons, thirty-two chapters
11. Methodology: Every lesson has an objective, questions, and homework that must be carefully studied.
12. Tone or bias: Formal
13: Writing style: Expository writing

Appendix D. Informed Consent Letters

1. Informed Consent Letter for Tests

Dear Pastor,

As a COGA in Buenos Aires Pastor and Preacher, you are invited to be in this DMin project being done by Verónica Elizabeth Aguilar from the Asbury Theological Seminary. The chosen topic is: "Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation by Fulltime Church of God Pastors in Buenos Aires."

Suppose you agree to be in this project. In that case, you will be asked to answer two online tests of approximately twenty minutes each. Participation in four sermons experiment consists of receiving exegetical resources to source four sermons. The first online test should be completed before the four sermons experiment, and the second should be completed right after such an experiment.

As usual, in this kind of projects, your name will be kept confidential in every part of the process. The data collected from your tests will be identified with a number.

By signing below, you agree to answer the tests and allow the researcher to use that information for further analysis. If you decide at any time you do not want to continue, feel free to stop.

You have received the researcher's contact information; do not hesitate to contact her if you have any questions regarding this project.

Your experience as a preacher is precious for this project, and it will certainly help to a better understanding of pastoral needs and possible contributions from the Body of Christ. Thank you for your time and dedication.

Participant's signature	Print name	Date Signed

Researcher contact information:
Verónica E. Aguilar
Asbury Theological Seminary
veronica.aguilar@asburyseminary.edu
Rua K, 285 – Jardim Primavera, Iguape-Sp, Brazil
55 13 997472592

2. Informed Consent Letter for Interviews

Dear Pastor,

As a COGA in Buenos Aires Leader and Preacher, you are invited to be in this DMin project done by Verónica Elizabeth Aguilar from the Asbury Theological Seminary. The chosen topic is: "Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation by Fulltime Church of God Pastors in Buenos Aires."

If you agree to be in this project, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview of approximately sixty minutes via Zoom.

As usual, in this kind of projects, your name will be kept confidential in every part of the process. The data collected from your interview will be identified with a number.

By signing below, you agree to answer the interview questions and allow the researcher to record it and use that information for further analysis. If you decide at any time you do not want to continue, feel free to stop.

You have received the researcher's contact information; do not hesitate to contact her if you have any questions regarding this project.

Your experience as a leader and preacher is precious for this project, and it will certainly help to a better understanding of pastoral needs and possible contributions from the Body of Christ. Thank you for your time and dedication.

Participant's signature	Print name	Date Signed

Researcher contact information:
Verónica E. Aguilar
Asbury Theological Seminary
veronica.aguilar@asburyseminary.edu
Rua K, 285 – Jardim Primavera, Iguape-Sp, Brazil
55 13 997472592

Appendix E. Regional Overseer Permission Letter

Dear Pastor Marcos Franco,

The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to contact twenty-five pastors of the CEA Region in order to work with them in my ministry transformation project, which is the final academic requirement to obtain the Doctor of Ministry degree at Asbury Theological Seminary. I am coming to you out of respect for your position as the Church of God Overseer of Buenos Aires, Argentina. The topic of my project addresses the collaborative experience for sermon preparation in local churches of the CEA Region.

I would appreciate any pastor referrals that you believe could be a part of the project. I trust that participation will prove to be beneficial for these pastors and their congregations. Participants can rely on their responses being identified by a non-identifying code, so they will remain confidential.

Thank you for your consideration and support. If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

May the peace of our Lord be with you

Sincerely,

Researcher contact information:
Verónica E. Aguilar
Asbury Theological Seminary
veronica.aguilar@asburyseminary.edu
Rua K, 285 – Jardim Primavera, Iguape-Sp, Brazil
55 13 997472592

I MARCOS GUILLERMO FRANCO give permission for members of, or participants in, CHURCH OF GOD ASSOCIATION IN BUENOS AIRES to participate in the doctoral research being conducted by Verónica E. Aguilar of Asbury Theological Seminary in December 2020–January 2021.

Signature:_____ Date:_____

Appendix F. Expert Review

1. Expert Reviewer Letter

Dear Pastor,

As a recognized nationally and internationally Leader and Preacher, you are invited to be in this DMin project being done by Verónica Elizabeth Aguilar from the Asbury Theological Seminary. The chosen topic is: *"Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation by Fulltime Church of God Pastors in Buenos Aires."*

If you agree to be in this project, you will be asked to participate as an expert reviewer to share any comments that you believe would help improve the data collection.

Attached, you will find the following information:

• Project title

• Nature and purpose of the project

• Research questions

• Researcher-designed instruments and evaluation forms for Expert Review

Your participation as an expert reviewer is essential for validity and reliability purposes given your academic and ministerial expertise. It is very appreciated.

Please, feel free to share your observations and return the evaluation forms via email to veronica.aguilar@asburyseminary.edu by September 20th, 2020.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

2. Information for Expert Reviewer

Project Title
Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation by Fulltime Church of God Pastors in Buenos Aires

Nature and Purpose of the Project
This project noted the need for high-quality exegetical resources for sermon preparation and how difficult it was for pastors to obtain them due to the lack of preparation and the lack of time. Therefore, a proposal of exegetical resources first provided by the researcher emerged.

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the change in knowledge, attitude, and behavior in Argentinian pastors of the COGA in Buenos Aires because of an Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation presented as four sermons experiment.

Research Questions
What were the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding preaching before the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation?

What were the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding preaching after the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation?

What did the participants identify as the most and least helpful aspects of the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation?

Instruments and evaluation forms for Expert Review

Section I - Demographic Survey

1. Age:
2. Gender:
3. Marital Status:
4. Children under eighteen living at home:
5. Educational Background:
6. Biblical/Theological Training:
7. Years as a Cristian preacher:
8. Years as a Pastor:
9. Full-time Pastor/Co-vocational:
10. Average preaching monthly time:

Section II - Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre- and Post-Tests

The purpose of these tests is to gather responses on participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding preaching before and after the Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation.

The following statements address Research Questions #1 and # 2, except for questions 18, 26, and 34, that address Research Question # 3. A four-point interval scale measures them:

1 – Strongly Disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Agree
4 – Strongly Agree

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
11. I identify relevant exegetical resources for preparing my sermons.				
12. I know how to research in order to find exegetical resources.				
13. I evaluate the quality of the sources where I find exegetical resources for my sermons.				
14. I consider myself a self-educated preacher.				
15. I can explain the benefits of receiving exegetical resources that help me to prepare my sermons.				
16. I feel I could improve my sermons if I had more time to incorporate exegetical insights into them.				
17. I feel I could improve my sermons if I had the proper training to do research and find exegetical resources.				
18. I would appreciate training from the COGA in Buenos Aires regarding incorporating exegetical resources into my preaching.				
19. I feel anxious when the time comes to write my sermon.				
20. I lack the time to properly incorporate exegetical resources into my sermons.				
21. I lack the proper training to find high-quality exegetical resources to use in my sermon preparation.				

22. I like the idea of receiving exegetical resources to help me prepare my sermons.				
23. I am satisfied with the current depth of the exegetical content of the sermons that I preach.				
24. I prepare a full manuscript for all of my sermons.				
25. I have easy access to high-quality material where I can find exegetical resources for my sermons.				
26. I keep an accurate record of the sermons that I have preached.				
27. I regularly preach from Biblical texts that are unfamiliar or difficult to me.				
28. I do incorporate exegetical resources into my sermons.				
29. I evaluate my sermons after I preach them.				
30. I gratefully accept the exegetical resources given to me to help me prepare my sermons.				
31. I allocate a certain number of hours for exegetical research for my sermons. If "Strongly agree" or "Agree," mention how much time you dedicate.				
32. I could describe the exegetical resources I use for my sermons. If "Strongly agree" or "Agree," describe them.				
33. I allocate a certain number of hours to practice the delivery of my sermons. If "Strongly agree" or "Agree," mention how much time you dedicate.				
34. I dedicate adequate time to find exegetical resources for my sermons. If "Strongly agree" or "Agree," mention how much time you dedicate.				

Expert Review Evaluation Form: Exegetical Assistance to Enhance Sermon Preparation Pre- and Post-Tests

Question #	Needed	Not Needed	Clear	Unclear	Suggestions
11.					
12.					
13.					
14.					
15.					
16.					
17.					
18.					
19.					
20.					
21.					
22.					
23.					
24.					
25.					
26.					
27.					
28.					
29.					
30.					
31.					
32.					
33.					
34.					
Any question(s) that were not asked that should be asked?					

Section III - Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

	Introduction
Welcome	Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. You are one of the two COGA in Buenos Aires' leaders interviewed.
	Before we start, I'd like to check if you received the information I sent you through e-mail regarding this project and if you had the opportunity to take a look at that. Do you want a couple of minutes to do it now?
	Questions
SI1.	Can you describe what kind of biblical interpretation and preaching training do COGA in Buenos Aires' pastors receive from the Church?
SI2.	How well prepared are COGA in Buenos Aires' pastors for biblical interpretation and preaching?
SI3.	What is the result of that training regarding preaching for sermon preparation?
SI4.	What are the main obstacles to improve sermon preparation?
SI5.	Do you have anything else you'd like to share about sermon preparation?

Expert Review Evaluation Form: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Question #	Needed	Not Needed	Clear	Unclear	Suggestions
1.					
2.					
Any question(s) that were not asked that should be asked?					

Review completed by: _____

Signature: _____

Date completed: _____

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