

ABSTRACT

ADULT LEARNING THEORY AND PREACHING: THE BARRIERS TO APPLYING ADULT LEARNING THEORY

by

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The field of adult learning theory, or how adults learn, has exploded in recent years yielding increased knowledge and awareness of how adults learn. While preachers do have a wide variety of ages in their congregations, most of the people they preach to are adults. This dissertation looks at preaching and adult learning theory and what the barriers are to harnessing the knowledge and insight adult learning theory provides to those who preach to adults. Every major area of adult learning theory is examined including andragogy, Kolb's learning styles, self-directed learning, and transformative learning. Some of the key theorists discussed are Malcolm Knowles, David Kolb, and Jack Mezirow.

The preachers included in the research were senior pastors, lead pastors, and solo pastors of US Mennonite Brethren churches in California, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, and Washington. All of them are the main preacher of their church. The pastors were invited to take a survey, fill out participants' journals, and participate in a focus group. These asked about how they prepare their sermons, what resources and tools they use in sermon preparation, and if they would be open to changing how they preach.

The findings showed that preachers do not normally consider resources that are not traditional preaching tools. A second finding revealed that preachers do not have

much knowledge about how adults learn. A third finding indicated that preachers are willing to make changes to their preaching style.

ADULT LEARNING THEORY:
THE BARRIERS TO APPLYING ADULT LEARNING THEORY

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter One provides the framework for investigating best practices for preaching from the perspective of adult learning theory in southwestern Minnesota. The rationale for the project comes from personal experience supported by research. Included in the overview of the research project are the research design, purpose statement, research questions, participants, and how results are collected and analyzed. To add support for this project, themes of the literature review and contextual factors are identified. Additional discussion of the anticipated project results establishes the significance for and impact on the practice of ministry.

Personal Introduction

Multiple years ago, I was lead faculty for the Milwaukee campus of the University of Phoenix. The university began a campaign to have its faculty work on research in order to increase the faculty's acceptance in the academic world. As lead faculty, I was encouraged to think about, conduct, and publish research if possible. I started thinking long and hard about what I am passionate about so I could begin to research it. The one aspect of being a pastor that I am most passionate about is preaching. This passion constantly pushes and challenges me to be the best preacher I can be. The desire to spread the gospel is a fire planted deep in my soul when I preached my first sermon at Long Point Baptist Church in Houston, TX at the age of twenty-three. As I was encouraged to research something, my passion for preaching was my first thought. The second passion that came to mind was adult learning. Over the last four years, I have

been reading numerous preaching books in an effort to better my preaching. One thing I have noticed within preaching literature is a dearth of adult learning theory. I am certain the wisdom and expertise that has grown in the realm of adult learning can help pastors preach sermons that are more readily understood.

While I was on a hiatus from the ministry my second passion was born. I started working at West Business Services, a business to business inside sales company, out of the necessity of paying bills and ensuring that my family had shelter and food. While there, the company brought into its training department. Since I was new to the training experience, my fellow trainer took me under her wing. Over the next two to three years, she taught me everything she knew about how adults learn. In addition, she taught me how to develop training materials that would be effective at bringing about change in how employees did their jobs. This was my first exposure to the concept of adult learning.

A few years after I started working in the training department at West Business Services, my family was in need of additional income and my wife found me a job possibility with the University of Phoenix as a faculty member. They were in need of someone to teach their Western religions class, and my education and experience were a perfect fit. I was a part of the University of Phoenix faculty for seven years. During that time, I was able to teach not only religion but philosophy as well as the introductory courses that taught new students how to be a successful University of Phoenix student. The university had the expectation that its faculty would do everything it could to help their adult learner students excel. As such there were numerous training and seminars offered on how to apply adult learning theory in the classroom. One of my duties as an

area chair was to lead some of the training and to evaluate the faculty in my department in regard to how effective they were at incorporating these techniques in their classrooms. It was through these experiences, I began to recognize and care about how adults learn, and my second passion was born.

Statement of the Problem

In the last generation, familiarity with the Bible has abated both inside and outside the Church. The Bible's position in American society is changing because of this. While it is still thought to be sacred by 79% of Americans (Barna Group, 2014 6) its influence and impact have diminished. This is evident since the percentage of people reporting they never read the Bible has increased 5% from 2016 to 2017 (Barna Group, 2017 8) and those reporting they read the Bible once or twice a year or less has hovered around 50% since 2011 (Barna Group, 2016 12). The converse statistic is that 50% of people read the Bible at least several times a year with over half of them reading the Bible at least several times a week (Barna Group, 2017 8). The real challenge though is how little impact all the Bible reading that is supposedly taking place is having (Hagner, "The State" 8). It is the church's responsibility to communicate the necessity of reading the Bible and knowing the Bible as it is the main way God reveals himself.

Another goal for the church is to grow the kingdom of God. This is done numerous ways but one of the most crucial methods for expanding and growing the kingdom of God is preaching. Paul talks about this in Romans, "How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent" (*Christian Standard Bible*, Rom. 10.14-15)? It is therefore tantamount that the

church's preaching is as effective as possible. There is no end of preaching books, articles, websites, and training plans. One area that needs to be expanded is the use of adult learning theory as it pertains to preaching.

The field of adult learning has had an abundance of growth in the last three decades especially with the advent of for-profit universities catering to working adults. According to an EBSCO host search from 1950 to 1980, there were over 25,000 articles written in peer-reviewed academic journals on adult learning theory. Between 1980 to 1989 the number grew to over 38,000. In the years between 1990 to 1999, the number of articles leaped to over 99,000. The number of articles more than doubled to over 250,000 between 2000 to 2009. Again, the number of articles almost doubled to over 429,000 articles from 2010 to 2018. The advances made in adult learning theory need to be applied by preachers to their preaching at every opportunity to increase the understanding and retention of the word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the research was to discover best practices for increasing a preacher's ability to effectively communicate to the widest variety of people when preaching, by applying adult learning theory to the practice of preaching delivery in US Mennonite Brethren churches.

Research Questions

It is important to have an understanding of current habits and thought processes of sermon preparation before one can make suggestions for how to improve upon the process. The first research question of this project addresses the need to understand what disciplines outside of Biblical and theological studies pastors are consulting. The second

research question looks at what barriers there are to implementing the insights the principles of adult learning theory provide to the preaching community. The third research question seeks to discover what best practices need to be suggested to ensure the pastor who is desirous of overcoming the barriers discovered by research question two is able to do so.

Research Question #1

What disciplines and resources outside of hermeneutics, homiletics, and biblical studies do pastors consider when preparing for a sermon?

Research Question #2

What are the barriers to pastors integrating principles from adult learning theories in their preaching?

Research Question #3

What ideas, circumstances, or convictions are preventing preachers from applying adult learning theory in preaching?

Rationale for the Project

The church as a whole has been given a mandate from God to spread the kingdom of God. This is seen in the command of Jesus to, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28.19 CSB). Paul expands on this command when he says, “How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10.14). The church’s vocation is to spread the Gospel, to preach the Word of God. The most common venue for preaching the Gospel is found in the Sunday morning worship of churches

reaching around the globe. It is then that the church gathers, it is then that the church invites unbelievers in to hear the preaching of the Word.

The people who are called and charged with that preaching have a great responsibility to preach the best they are able. It says in Nehemiah, “Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah, who were Levites, explained the law to the people as they stood in their places. They read out of the book of the law of God, translating and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was read” (Neh. 8.7–8). It was the Levites who were tasked with ensuring the people heard and understood what the book of the law of God said.

This is shown in the New Testament when Paul is preaching to the Athenians gathered at the Aereopagus in Acts 17. Paul makes a connection with his audience by connecting to the idol they had erected “To an Unknown God” and used that connection to introduce the men gathered there to the gospel. Understanding is crucial to following the law of God and the growing of the kingdom. It is on the shoulders of preachers that the same burden as the Levites and Paul shouldered falls. Adult learning theory can come alongside and help preachers ensure they are doing their best to help the people understand.

God is a God who reveals himself to his people. He takes initiative in that revelation (Grudem First ed. 130), whether the revelation is general and available to all (Packer 9), or specific. 1 John 1.5 is highly specific about God saying, “God is light”. As it is the nature of light to shine everywhere without distinction, so it is God’s nature to reveal himself (Stott 75). Since God is a God who reveals himself, those who preach his

Gospel to expand his kingdom need to be concerned with ensuring that all who hear understand.

The persons tasked with preaching needs to ensure that they are doing everything they can to make the message understandable. (Mohler 11). One tool the Wesleyan tradition provides is the Wesleyan quadrilateral. The Wesleyan quadrilateral was formulated by Albert Outler in an attempt to summarize John Wesley's understanding of religious authority (Don Thorsen, "Prima Gratia" 146). The quadrilateral involves four lenses through which the church can view and interpret theology and life. These four lenses are: Scripture, tradition, reason, and Christian experience. Outler has admitted he regrets naming his formulation as a quadrilateral (Paul Chilcote) due to the numerous misuses and misunderstandings coming out of the shape of a quadrilateral. David Gyertson prefers the idea of a baseball diamond to understand the quadrilateral (5). In this metaphor Scripture is home plate with tradition, reason, and Christian experience making up the other bases. The entire concept utilizes all four lenses with Scripture being the cornerstone that holds it all together. Those called to preach need to avail themselves of all four lenses to increase the understanding of their preaching. For this study the focus was the lens of reason. This includes critical reason (Outler, *The Wesleyan* 9), which the advances in understanding how adults learn would fall, helping preachers to better communicate with the adults that hear the preaching.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, adult learning theory is defined as a related group of principles, concepts and practices, discovered through social scientific research regarding adult learning and teaching.

Delimitations

The preachers involved in the study were pastoring churches affiliated with the US Mennonite Brethren. This was done for two reasons. The first reason is that as a Protestant denomination preaching plays an integral part of the denomination's worship. The second reason is because the US Mennonite Brethren is the denomination of the researcher and can ensure access to all the preachers and hopefully increase participation. The preachers are the senior, lead, or solo pastors of their churches. This delimitation ensures the participants preach regularly and are invested in improving the delivery of their sermons.

Review of Relevant Literature

Preaching the word of God to those inside and outside the church is of tantamount importance to the church's calling from God. Since adult learning theory helps preachers preach in a way that communicates better to adults it was crucial to ensure as many insights as possible were obtained from it. This allowed for the select and recommend of the most effective strategies and insights possible. The research project looked into literature on several topics in order to gather these strategies and insights. The different areas looked at were the biblical foundation, theological foundation, biblical illiteracy in the US, preaching, adult learning, and research design.

A strong biblical foundation is necessary to make sure any plan or action is following God's desire and will. This research looked at literature addressing Romans 10.14, where Paul asks how anyone can be saved without a preacher. It also considers literature about Nehemiah 8, where Nehemiah reads the Law and the Levites help the people understand what they were hearing was included in the project. Literature on

Paul's sermon in the Areopagus of Athens, Acts 17.22–31 was researched. Literature on another text, Acts 18.24–28, where Priscilla and Aquila teach Apollos to help him be more effective was also considered.

The theological foundation is important to ensure everything lines up with whom God has revealed himself to be. Literature that addresses revelation and how God reveals himself was consulted. Another area of theology that was consulted is the church's ministry to the world and what that ministry looks like and how it effects preaching. The third area of theology considered was the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, especially reason. The idea of spiritual gifts and how their giving to the church and individuals leads and guides the church. The last area of theology considered was the role of Christians, especially preachers, as ambassadors for Christ to the church and the world outside the church.

The third area of research consulted was biblical illiteracy in the United States. Literature from Barna research was consulted. One topic that was researched in Barna's literature was, "How Christians view Scripture?" A second topic looked into was, "What is preaching supposed to do?" The fourth area of literature that was consulted was in reference to preaching itself. Topics researched included the purpose of preaching as well as the role of preaching in the church. Literature was consulted that addressed the differences between preaching and teaching. Literature on the differences between proclamation and instruction were consulted too.

The fifth area of literature the researcher considered was adult learning. Literature on Malcolm Knowles and his idea of self-directed learning was consulted. The topic of andragogy, or teaching adults, was delved into as well as the characteristics of adult learning. Literature on Jack Mezirow and his transformative learning theory was

investigated. Literature on David Kolb's learning styles was included. The sixth area of literature consulted was on research design especially Tim Sensing's work.

Research Methodology

The purpose of research methodology is to guide the project and help ensure the project's success (Sensing 1). This section introduces the dissertation's methodology. It discusses the type of research. Secondly, the participants are described. Next, instrumentation is considered followed by data collection. Lastly, this section discusses data analysis and generalizability.

Type of Research

This pre-intervention research project examined adult learning theory to understand what kinds of communication maximize adults' comprehension and application. The research project used a mixed methods approach. The qualitative research lens was used in addressing the first and third research questions. Participants completed the Outside Discipline Participant Journals to ascertain the disciplines consulted by pastors preparing to preach. The Integration Focus Group was conducted to address means for implementing the best practices. The quantitative research lens was used in addressing the first and second research question. The Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey, used to discover disciplines outside of traditional exegetical disciplines used when preparing sermons and barriers to using adult education theory, was quantitative in nature.

Participants

The participants of the research project were Mennonite Brethren pastors with a Master of Divinity degree. Since the participants were all lead pastors it ensured that they

bore the majority of the preaching task for their church and have an investment in improving their skill in preaching. The participants demonstrated their ability to engage with theoretical ideas by having a Master of Divinity degree.

Instrumentation

This research project used three different instruments to collect data. The first instrument used for data collection was the Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey. This survey was done online through Survey Monkey and sent through an email. Questions addressed research question one and two. The questions gathered information about what aspects of adult learning theory preachers are currently thinking about when preparing sermons. In addition, the questions addressed the barriers preachers have to utilizing adult education theory. The second instrument used was a participant journal. The Outside Discipline Participant Journal was created in SurveyMonkey and sent to the preachers through an email. The participant journal addressed research question one and gathered information about the outside resources the preachers used and the disciplines they consulted during their sermon preparation. The third instrument was the Integration Focus Group. The focus group addressed research question two and three, eliciting stories and generating dialog among the pastors.

Data Collection

The data collection for the research project was done with the following timeline. The questionnaire, that asked the preachers what disciplines they used in sermon preparation, was created using SurveyMonkey and emailed to all the lead pastors in the US Mennonite Brethren. They were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire, with a reminder email sent out at the beginning of the second week. The results were

downloaded. One week after the first questionnaire, the respondents who agreed to participate in the participant journal were emailed the link to the first participant journal file. The participant journal gave the respondents a weekly opportunity to describe the different disciplines used in sermon preparation. At the beginning of week seven, the participants who completed the participant journals were invited to take part in a focus group. The focus group discussed best practices for pastors to integrate adult learning theory into their preaching. The focus group was conducted through Zoom and recorded. The entire data collection process took seven weeks.

Data Analysis

The responses to the Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey were compiled using SurveyMonkey's reporting capability. The answers were then compared and descriptive statistics were generated. The Sermon Preparation Participants' Journals were created as a survey on SurveyMonkey. The participants were emailed a link to the participants' journal each week. The journals were downloaded from SurveyMonkey. The content analysis for the entries included the identification of themes, patterns, and anomalies. The discussion of the Sermon Preparation Focus Group was audio and video recorded and notes were taken. A transcript of the focus group was created based on the recording. The notes and transcript were then coded (Sensing 202-207). The discussion of the focus group was then analyzed for similarities and differences between the participants and in relation to relevant literature.

The research project used the analytical frames of themes, slippage, and silences (Sensing 197-202). The analytical frame of themes helped uncover the areas of agreement between the participating preachers. The convergences were seen in how the

preachers were thinking of adult learning theory in the initial questionnaire and in response to the focus group. The slippage frame discovered the answers which were unique and not in line with the other answers and reflections. The silences frame brought to bear what was not said and what was implied instead of explicitly stated.

Generalizability

This research project addressed a basic calling to all churches, to preach the gospel. While there may be some applicability of this study in different regions of the world, most adult learning theory research is done in and focused on the West. In the West there is definitely applicability to those preaching to teenagers and older children since there is some overlap with how older children and teenagers learn and how adults learn. The findings and strategies uncovered during the research increases the impact that each preacher has when utilizing them, regardless of the audience. The significance of this research project is found in the calling of Christ to, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28.19–20 CSB). Paul added to this when he wrote, “How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10.14). This research project addressed one of the most significant tasks the church is given, preaching the gospel to spread the kingdom of God.

Project Overview

This research project reviews the relevant literature applicable to adult learning theory and preaching in Chapter Two. Next, it describes the research methodology used

for the project. Chapter Four presents the data from the research for the project. Lastly, Chapter Five explores major findings, implications, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter explores biblical and theological foundations for adult understanding and preaching. The social science field of educational psychology offers insights regarding adult learning theory. The chapter also supports this project's research methodology.

Biblical Foundations

Ever since October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five Theses and began the Protestant Reformation, the Protestant church has believed in *Sola Scriptura*. This is the doctrine that says the Bible provides the foundation and rule for the Christian life. Therefore, it is crucial to establish the Biblical foundation for any calling Christ makes on Christian lives. This section of the literature review examines Romans 10.14-15 and the calling to preach, as well as Nehemiah 8, Acts 18.24-28, and Acts 17.22-31 which illustrate the need to preach to the preacher's greatest capability.

Romans 10.14-15

When discussing preaching one of the first texts to look at is Romans 10.14-15. In Romans 10.13, Paul quotes Joel 2.32 describing how God will pour out his blessing of salvation on those who call on Christ (Kruse 412). Paul then explains what steps are necessary for that salvation to happen in verses fourteen and fifteen. These verses show how preaching is essential in the process of salvation. This section also reviews *κηρύσσω*, the word used for "preacher."

Paul begins his epistle to the Romans in the standard way with a greeting, thanks to God, and he adds his desire to visit and a mention of the power of the gospel. He next proceeds to make it clear that Gentiles as well as the Jews are unrighteous in Romans 1.18-3.20 (Kruse 4). Paul then moves to discuss God's righteousness for all which includes justification by faith, 3.21-4.25, and the hope of salvation, 5.1-8.39 (Moo, *Romans* 28). The next section of Paul's epistle is addressing the challenge of Israel rejecting Jesus and his gospel in 9.1-11.36 (Kruse 6). Paul explains how the message he proclaims is that if a person confesses Jesus as Lord and believes that God has resurrected Him from the dead he or she will be saved (Romans 10.8-10).

In verse 11, Paul quotes Isaiah 28.16 to emphasize how all who believe in God are vindicated. Keying off the word, everyone, from Isaiah, Paul expands the use of the word from all Jews to include all Gentiles as well (Keener *Romans* 445). The word *ἐπικαλέω* is introduced in verse 11 and appears in verses 12 and 14. Romans 10.14 is one of the verses given in BDAG as an example of the first definition for the word which is, "to call upon deity for any purpose, *to call upon, call out*" (373). The word *ἐπικαλέω* is used in the New Testament thirty times. It is used once in Matthew, Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter. It occurs in Acts twenty times; Paul uses it six times, three of which are in Romans 10. Paul continues the theme of the necessity of calling out to God, or calling on God, for salvation by quoting Joel 2.32. Quoting Joel adds to the emphasis of the need to call out to God for salvation and allows Paul to use it as a "jumping off point" (Moo *Romans* 342) for the next paragraph which is the focus of this section.

Having stated the necessity of calling on God for salvation, Paul proceeds to delve into what is necessary for that to happen in incredibly clear language (Rydellnik 452-453).

He does this through a series of three questions in Romans 10.14. These questions inform the Church that before people can call on the Lord they must believe. Before people believe they must hear about the Lord and before they can hear about the Lord, someone must preach him. Another way of saying this is that for people to believe there must be a preacher (Wilkin 8). Paul assumes access to the gospel (Keener *Romans* 128). It is the preacher's job to provide this necessary access. While Douglas Moo states how verse 16 is the crucial verse for the paragraph of Romans 10.14-21 (*The Letter* 272), the preaching mentioned in verse 14 is an essential pre-cursor to the belief in the message of the gospel. Ben Witherington III agrees that the focus is on the necessity of preaching (264) for the conversion of the world and the growth of the kingdom of God.

The word that Paul uses for preacher is *κηρύσσω*. It appears in the New Testament sixty-one times in sixty verses. It is used in the Synoptic Gospels thirty-two times, in Acts eight times, in 1 Peter and Revelation once each, and in Paul's epistles nineteen times. The word *κηρύσσω* is translated several ways. In the CSB it is translated preach, proclaimed, proclaim, preaching, proclaiming, preached, preaches, preacher, and proclamation. The English Standard Version (ESV) translates the word with proclaimed, preach, proclaim, proclaiming, preaching, preached, proclaims, and talk. While the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) uses proclaim, proclaimed, proclaiming, preach, proclaims, announced, preaching, and proclamation. In each instance the word signifies telling people, especially about the gospel. The Bauer–Danker–Arndt–Gingrich Lexicon (BDAG) lists Romans 10.14 as an example of someone who proclaims, a proclaimer (*κηρύσσω*). Paul's use of the word signifies the need for someone to tell those who would

believe about the news of the gospel. In so doing Paul establishes the mandate for Christians to preach.

Nehemiah 8.7-8

The next passage that is relevant to the discussion of preaching is found in Nehemiah 8, especially verses 7-8. Nehemiah 8 is the first chapter of three in a covenant renewal ceremony. The first thing to look at is the word *bîn*. This is an important word in the text as it appears twice in the two verses. Once *bîn* has been discussed, the next thing to look at is what the activity of the Levites was and how that has been interpreted.

Bîn appears in the Old Testament 171 times (Kohlenberger and Mounce para. 2244). Of the 171 appearances, 83 of them are in the books of Job, Psalms, and Proverbs. The word is used 22 times in Daniel and 20 times in Isaiah. The other 46 occurrences of the word are spread throughout Genesis, Deuteronomy, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, Jeremiah, Hosea, Micah, Ecclesiastes, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles. Each of these books use it eight times or less. Nehemiah, the book in question uses the word *bîn* eight times, six of which are in same the chapter as the text in question. *Bîn* is usually translated with some form of the English word understand. Other words used are discern, and consider depending on the translation one is using. While it is typically used of God's knowledge, it is used to describe the knowledge, skill, and wisdom of people as well (Mounce et al. 758). The word does not describe a simple transfer of knowledge, but it conveys helping others to gain discernment or to gain an understanding of something (Zuck 229). John Goldingay translates the word, "understand the teaching" (118), in his commentary on this text in the *Old Testament for Everyone* series.

When it comes to understanding the interpretation of this text, most of the commentators have a similar understanding. Williamson succinctly mentions how the Levites in the text, “gave explanations to the people” (290). Goldingay talks about how the Levites help them understand the implications of the reading (120). Mervin Breneman writes how the Levites helped bridge the cultural and language divide that existed for those who had grown up in a foreign land and most likely could not read or understand Hebrew anymore (225). He goes on to write how this was done through interpretation and application (226). Joseph Too Shao and Rosa Ching Shao agree that there was interpreting happening to ensure that understanding of the reading of the law was achieved (182). Bruce Waltke mentions how the Levites needed to modernize the reading and make it intelligible to the people gathered for the reading of the law. Everyone agrees that the Levites had the responsibility to ensure that the people, the gathered Jews, understood and could make sense of the law that the priests were reading to them. Preachers today need to realize that this responsibility has been passed on to them.

Acts 18.24-28

The third passage to examine is Acts 18.24-28. This text tells the story of how Apollos became involved in the church and how Priscilla and Aquilla reacted to his teaching. The first thing to look at is the word *ἐκτίθημι* and how it is used in the Scriptures. The second item to discuss is how Luke spoke about Apollos. The third topic to address is Apollos’s reaction to being instructed by Priscilla and Aquilla. The fourth matter is the effect of Priscilla and Aquilla’s teaching on Apollos’s ministry.

In the text, Apollos arrives in Ephesus and begins to boldly proclaim Jesus in the synagogues. Priscilla and Aquilla hear his passionate preaching and feel lead to pull him

aside to help him improve and become even better. The word Luke uses in v. 26 is *ἐκτίθημι*. The word is used in the New Testament four times (Mounce) and all of the occurrences happen in the book of Acts. The word had two definitions. It can mean either to expose, abandon, withdraw protection or to explain, expound (Bauer et al.). The former is applicable when *ἐκτίθημι* is an aorist passive participle while the latter is applicable when it is in the middle voice. Luke uses the aorist passive in Acts 7.21, when Luke relates Stephen's sermon and Stephen is talking about Moses being put in the Nile. The other three times that Luke uses *ἐκτίθημι*, Acts 11.4, 18.26, and 28.23, it is in the middle voice and carries the idea of explaining or expounding (Thayer). It is clear that Priscilla and Aquila had the intention and effect of expanding Apollos's knowledge for him to become an even more effective preacher. This shows that preachers today need to expand their knowledge to be more effective in their preaching as well.

When Luke introduces Apollos he describes him quite well listing four attributes about Apollos. The third attribute Luke uses to describe him is *λόγιος*. This word means, eloquent, learned, or cultured (Bauer et al.). Numerous scholars have written about this. Dan Gentry Kent asserts that Apollos was trained in rhetoric (11). Eckhard Schnabel surmises that Apollos had been trained most likely in Greek schools and points out that that means training in rhetoric (784). Clinton Arnold clearly states his belief in Apollos's rhetorical training (404) as does Craig Keener (*Acts* 382). Ajith Fernando takes a slightly different interpretation saying that Apollos worked on his communication skills (504). Developing one's communication skills in the first century AD typically meant learning and practicing rhetoric. I. Howard Marshall attributes Apollos's communication skills to

his upbringing in Alexandria (320). The key is that Apollos was able to use his education in rhetoric, a secular discipline, to make his preaching as effective as possible.

The third item of note in this text is Apollos's reaction to Priscilla and Aquilla pulling Apollos aside and helping him know the way better. Luke is not concerned with what Priscilla and Aquilla actually taught Apollos, but rather his reaction to the teaching (Keener *Acts* 2809). Beverly Roberts Gaventa agrees with Keener about the importance of Apollos's reception of the teaching (146). Witherington agrees that the important issue is that Apollos was taught by Priscilla and Aquilla (567). Fernando points out Apollos's willingness to learn (504-505), and David E. Garland and Adam T. Barr also mention it (193). Garland and Barr point out how Apollos's reaction to the teaching speaks to his character (195). Arnold credits Apollos for responding to Priscilla and Aquilla's teaching with "enthusiasm and delight" (405). The main take away from Apollos's reaction is his willingness to learn everything he could to improve his presentation of the gospel.

The last thing to address in the text is the effect that Priscilla and Aquilla's teaching had on Apollos's ministry. Apollos's boldness in the synagogue brings to mind Paul's preaching described in Acts 9.27-28 (Bock, 593) though most scholars would concur that Priscilla and Aquilla's teaching improved his ministry. Charles Talbert succinctly says that whatever deficiency Apollos had was corrected (166). While Dan Kent (11) and Luke Timothy Johnson (255) agree that the teaching improved Apollos's knowledge of and arguments for Christ. Gaventa mentions how Apollos's ministry was made stronger (146) and Arnold writes that after Priscilla and Aquilla's teaching Apollos now has a better understanding of salvation and the Holy Spirit (405). The education that

Priscilla and Aquilla gave Apollos made him a better preacher. Learning all that can be learned to hone the craft of preaching as Apollos did is important for preachers.

Acts 17.22-31

The last text to examine is Acts 17.22-31, especially verses 22 and 23. This text is Luke's recording of Paul's sermon at the Areopagus and verses 22 and 23 are how Paul sets up the sermon, draws the listeners in, and connects to them. This particular sermon of Paul's is different than his other sermons due to the differences in the audience. The audience for this sermon would have been philosophers, including at least Stoics and Epicureans, as well as the upper echelon of Athenian society (Keener *Acts* 2614). The things Paul does to adjust the way he presents his message are illuminating.

Paul defends himself against the accusation of teaching foreign gods by using the altar "To an Unknown God" (Gempf). The fact that Paul seizes this example impresses I. Howard Marshall as well (302). Fernando recognizes Paul's connecting the Athenians needs to Christ (475). Witherington points out how this is Paul's way to use "points of contact" between Paul and the Athenians and even defines common ground (*Acts* 518). Clinton Arnold is amazed the way Paul tailors his preaching (390) and points out how Paul effectively uses the existence of an altar dedicated "To an Unknown God" as the entry point (390) into the attention of those at the Areopagus. Keener agrees that Paul is preaching in a different way (377) due to this being an audience of philosophers not farmers. F.F. Bruce also recognizes that Paul adapts his message based on his audience (334). Paul's adjustments, connections, and adaptations of his message show how preachers need to use all tools at their disposal to ensure the gospel is communicated in a

clear way that can but understood by the audience whether they are philosophers or farmers.

Theological Foundations

This section of chapter two examines the theological foundation for using adult learning theory in the delivery of sermons. It first looks at how God reveals himself and how that lays the foundation for ensuring understanding. Then it delves into the church's ministry to the world and the implications that has. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral is the next topic discussed and of special significance is its inclusion of reason and how that leads to using adult learning theory. This section next looks at spiritual gifts and the concept of the church being ambassadors for Christ.

Revelation

The first topic to address when establishing the theological foundation for applying adult learning theory to preaching is how God is a God that reveals himself to humanity. This sub-section first looks at the necessity of God to reveal himself. Then it inspects natural revelation followed by special revelation. Next, it studies God's revelation in his Son, Jesus Christ. Lastly, the Holy Spirit is discussed and his role in God revealing himself.

For any person to know God, it is an absolute necessity that God reveals himself (Grudem Ver/2.2 149). Without this revelation no one would be able to relate, understand, or even know he exists (Packer 3). Millard Erickson agrees that knowledge of God is only possible if God manifests himself (178) because humanity cannot attain knowledge of God on its own. God must reveal himself (204). As John Calvin argues mankind is dependent on God's revelation of himself to even be given the drive to find

him by God himself (1:1). R. W. Yarbrough agrees that people are dependent on God's action of allowing himself to be understood (732). Louis Berkhoff argues that God has to bridge the gap so that humanity is enabled to know him (*Systematic* 34) and the only knowledge humanity has of God comes from his revelation through nature and Scripture (*Systematic* 35). Samuel Harris asserts that any knowledge of God by humanity assumes God's activity in revelation (53) and Thomas Oden concurs with this when he maintains that God is the one who allows humanity to know of his existence (18).

One way God's revelation is made available is through nature (Berkhoff, *Systematic* 35). It has been given the name "general revelation" because it is revelation that is available to all people at all times (Packer 9). Sometimes it is also called natural revelation because God chose to reveal himself to everyone through nature or God's creation (Grudem Ver 2.2 149). In addition to God's revelation through nature, or the created order, it encompasses God revealing himself through history and the human nature (Erickson 178). Even if this revelation is not grasped or has been changed due to the effects of sin it is still present (Erickson 19-20). Because of God's general revelation through nature Paul condemns the entirety of the human race in Romans 1.18-3.19 (Packer 10). As Thomas Oden points out, general revelation helps people search for God. General or natural revelation shows that God is a God who longs for all humanity to find him and know him.

A second way God reveals himself is through "special revelation." While general, or natural, revelation is for everyone and widely available through nature and human nature; special revelation is more narrowly focused and is contained in Scripture (Berkhoff, *Summary*). The Christian Scriptures, or the Bible, is the record of God

revealing himself to a person or people at a specific point in time and place (Erickson 201). Similar to general revelation, special revelation originates with God's activity (Bromily 169). It consists of "God's own testimony and teaching in human form" (Packer 3). Special revelation is imperative due to the effects of sin in the world (Berkhoff 1938). It represents God's desire to reach out to and connect with humanity (Oden 648). Special revelation shows that God desires to ensure that he communicates with people in a way they can understand.

The most profound way God reveals himself is through the incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ (Hodge 345). God's revelation of himself in the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth is the most complete revelation especially since, as Hebrews 1.1-2 points out, God speaks through his Son (Erickson 215). The knowledge that Jesus is the Son of God and the full revelation of him is revealed information that God reveals to whom he desires (Bromiley 165–166; Gill chap. 3). Oden points out how God reveals himself through the history of the Israelite people and nation and Jesus (7). It is this revelation of God in and through Jesus of Nazareth that all of God's previous revelations become more purposeful (Oden 21). God is indeed a God who reveals himself because he wants people to know and understand him. This gives urgency to preachers to use every means possible to convey the gospel in the most efficacious way.

One cannot talk about revelation without addressing the Holy Spirit and his role in it. It is the Spirit's work to reveal God (Archer, "A Theology" 143). Since Pentecost after Jesus' ascension, it is through the Holy Spirit that people have come to know Jesus Christ, even when reading or hearing Scripture (Archer, "The Holy" 103). It is not only the basic things and nature of God that the Spirit reveals, but the depths of who God is

and what his plan is (Archer “A Theology” 142). Without the Holy Spirit, no one would know God (Archer “A Theology” 140) or understand the Scripture (Nel “Comparison” 3). God is revealed by the Spirit through Scripture, miracles, preaching, and the gifts of the Spirit (Archer, “A Theology” 143). In fact, Charles Wesley, John Calvin, and others assert that without the Spirit one cannot have an understanding of Scripture or interpret it correctly (Archer, “A Theology” 143; Nel, “Comparison” 7). A person cannot even believe in Scripture or Jesus without the illumination of the Holy Spirit (Thellman 206). The Spirit has become a permanent resident within the Church (Archer “The Holy” 105), empowering the Church to do all it is called to do (Calvin *Calvin’s Commentaries* 1.1.1).

Church’s Ministry to the World – *Missio Dei*

Another important topic to cover when looking into the use of adult learning theory in preaching is the Church’s mission to the world. This subsection first looks at what the Church’s mission to the world is. Then it discusses how that mission is to be carried out by the Church.

At the end of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus gives his disciples the Great Commission to, “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you” (28.19a-20b). It is this commission that gives the church its mission and primary objective of evangelism (Bailey 189). The World Council of Churches (WCC) agrees with that assessment (“Towards” 96) explicitly stating how the Church, “is called to become the good news for all” (“The Church” 107). The transition into continuing the work of Jesus begins in Acts 1 with another commissioning before Jesus ascends through the clouds (Keener, “The Spirit” 32). The Spirit oversees the *missio*

ecclesiae which is communicating the gospel, or evangelizing, the world (Dodds 216). This allows the Church to participate in bringing about God's kingdom (Chu 325), by directing people to Jesus (Chu 327). Christ's position remains preeminent because it is his work that the Church is sent to accomplish (Wabukala 60). A commitment to this mission, the spreading of the gospel, was a core trait of the early church (Bird 122). This stands to reason as spreading the gospel or the *missio Dei* is at the center of the church's existence (Cronshaw 129). The church partners with God through the Spirit in *koinonia* to fulfill this mission in and to the world (WCC, "The Church" 114). Living out the gospel for the redeeming of the watching society is an incredibly necessary thing (Liubinskas 403). Indeed, discipleship and evangelism are so intertwined for Paul they cannot be separated (Liubinskas 410) which makes evangelism not simply an aspect of the church but who and what the church is (Liubinskas 411).

The other aspect of the church's mission that needs to be discussed is how the church fulfills its mission. The church is to spread the gospel to every possible place and every possible person (WCC, "Towards" 96). The church is commanded by the Father, sent by the Son, with the Spirit (Tan 292) to accomplish this. One of the crucial things necessary is the working of the Holy Spirit, his presence allows Christians to participate (Sunquist 232) in the salvific work the church is called to continue. Generations ago, in the nineteenth century the church turned to prayer to extend the gospel to the rest of the world (Keener, "The Spirit" 41) and Christians today need to do the same thing. Jesus commanded the disciples to pray for workers in Luke 10.2 and the church today needs to do that. Typically, those who fervently pray for this are the ones God sends to do the work (Bailey 191). This fervent prayer helps the any and all in the church become a

“Spirit-empowered witness” (Keener, “The Spirit” 40). This Spirit equipped mission needs to be done openhandedly and without expectation of reciprocity (Bailey 193). A requisite part of fulfilling the mission is refusing to alter or diminish the resurrection similar to how Paul acted when presenting to the Areopagus (König 25). Fortunately, God has given each age of the church people who faithfully preach the gospel without caving to culture (Allen 81). It is preaching that is one of the best ways to achieve this (Allen 84) and the church needs to avail itself of all the tools it can to preach as well as possible.

Wesleyan Quadrilateral

One thing that is important to do is ensure a basis and rationale for using adult learning theory in the practice of preaching. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral provides a rationale for this. The first thing that needs to be addressed is a description of what the Wesleyan Quadrilateral is and is not. The second thing that needs to be addressed is a discussion of reason, one part of the quadrilateral, and its application to preaching in light of adult learning theory.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral, according to Donald Thorsen, is the approach to religious authority devised by John Wesley (“Character” 18). John Wesley never used the term Quadrilateral (Outler, “Wesleyan” 16). The term was coined by Albert Outler, a naming he later regretted because of its misconstrual (Outler “Wesleyan” 16). The Quadrilateral helps Christians come to an understanding of God’s Word and his work in the world (Bevins 232). The specific items that make up the Quadrilateral are Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience (Keefer 120, Thorsen “Sola” 15). The most important part of the Quadrilateral is Scripture (Crawford 13; Bevins 232; Outler, “Wesleyan” 9;

Warren 327). Wesley believed that his putting Scripture first was the foundational difference from the Catholics (Wesley 1). The other three parts of the Quadrilateral are tradition, reason, and experience (Bevins 232). The Anglican tradition that Wesley grew up in gave him a unique approach which was included tradition and reason (Thorsen, “Sola” 7). This approach, which included reason, was a halfway point between the Catholic view of tradition and the Protestant view of *sola Scriptura* on the continent (Thorsen “Sola” 8). The idea of taking insight and wisdom from secular sources dates back to Origin who had the idea that “Plundering the Egyptians” (Exodus 3.22 & 36) was a metaphor allowing Christians to freely commandeer knowledge and insight from secular sources; Augustine would later use the same metaphor to justify the same thing (Outler, “Plundering” 77). Wesley would do the same thing as a wide and voracious reader, reading philosophy, science, and literature to apply in his ministry (Outler, “Plundering” 78). The Quadrilateral provides a way to counteract the danger of being too focused on one thing which can result in idolizing any of the four parts—Scripture or biblicism, tradition or traditionalism, reason or rationalism, and experience or empiricism (Maddox 115).

This project’s main emphasis from the Wesleyan Quadrilateral is reason, though all four are supportive of ministry (Stanley 138). Wesley viewed reason with great esteem (Collins 106) and thought understanding Scripture would be impossible without it (Tuttle 21). Reason helps the pastor to interpret Scripture (Keefer 120), preach (Crawford 15), and be persuasive while preaching (Thorsen “Wesleyan Quadrilateral in Contemporary” 49). It was a hope of his that reason would enhance a pastor’s ability to discern and argue (Miles 83). Because of his understanding of God’s unity (Maddox 110), Wesley was

comfortable relying on reason. At one point he calls reason, “a guide” (Wesley “Case” I.6) and thought of it as an instrument (Miles 78) to be used. This makes sense since Wesley lived in the 18th century, a time that was devoted to humanity’s capability to reason (Lodahl 31). Since reason is rational thinking and helps people understand Scripture and God, it should be thought of as a gift from God (Hlatshwayo and Zondi 3). This rational thinking includes the use of logic, philosophy and theology, and scientific exploration (K. Lawson 57) this is acceptable because God is the source of all truth and reflects his creation (K. Lawson 56).

Science is attached to reason in the Quadrilateral (Mann 12). Wesley welcomed the insights that science brought (Mann 17) and was happy for science to demonstrate its findings (Mann 25). Since Wesley’s time reason’s impact and influence has only grown (Hey and Roux 199). It is crucial for preachers to use reason to encourage and grow faith and relationships (Jenkins 42-3). Strengthening people’s faith was the reason that Wesley was so interested in studying the world in which people live (Maddox 90). This is why Wesley was fervent in his hunt for knowledge (Friesen 197). Yet Wesley strived to ensure that he could communicate his thoughts and ideas, doctrine and theology in such a way that the common person with little to no education could understand (Friesen 197). This is precisely the task that adult learning theory aids the preacher with—ensuring that those who hear his message preached are able to understand it.

Spiritual Gifts

When discussing preaching it is important to understand preaching’s relationship and dependence upon God. Preaching has a close and dependent relationship with God

because it is a spiritual gift. This section looks at the origin of preaching as a spiritual gift first. It then discusses making an effort to improve a preacher's skill in preaching.

Preaching as a spiritual gift or *charisma* is a gift given freely and undeservedly from God and his grace (Stitzinger 151-152, McDill ix). It is a tool given to the church to execute ministry (Bowman 61) and reveal the Holy Spirit to the church and world (Mocan 23). Like all spiritual gifts, preaching, is ultimately fulfilled and done in Jesus Christ (Walvoord 44) but given to specific individuals, perpetuating Christians' dependence on one another (Erickson 799). Even though any Christian that is inspired by the Holy Spirit can deliver a sermon (Nel, "Attempting" 5), and all Christians are responsible to some extent for sharing the gospel (Mocan 27), those who practice the *charismata*, or *pneumatikon* (Ellis 129), of preaching are especially seen as speaking God's word (Williams 336). So, the individuals that God calls to preach he gifts with the spiritual gift of preaching (S. Lawson 54) according to his will and desire (Erickson 799).

This facilitates a Christian's ability to carry out ministry for God through the church (Grudem 2nd ed. 793) and is a marker of God's presence in the ministry (640). The gift of preaching is not an ability to study for, plan out, and deliver a sermon but is the Holy Spirit's power and presence in the preacher and the sermon (DeVries 3) and can be an extension of the preacher's natural potential (Stitzinger 158). The gifting of preaching from the Holy Spirit blesses the preacher with a massive amount of authority while preaching the gospel (Doran 115). While everyone shares their spiritual gifting in the church's ministry (Bowman 60) and every gift is not only useful but necessary (Bowman 58), the gifting of preaching is unique (Gordon 59). In the apostolic age of the church what is called prophecy is similar to what preaching is today (Jackson 67). In the early

church, this activity was filled with mighty power from the Holy Spirit (Grudem Ver 2.2 639-640). Today, it is still the working of the Holy Spirit that makes preaching fruitful (Doran 104).

The next question that needs to be addressed is whether effort should be put into improving the ability to and skill of preaching. While spiritual gifts come from the Spirit and are given to all Christians, it is every Christian's duty to improve their use of their gift or gifts (Packer 229). The ultimate responsibility for the effectiveness of preaching is on the Holy Spirit (Doran 104), but it needs to be combined with the preachers' perspectives (Doran 109) which include their training and knowledge. The sermon is written by a preacher using these things: training, intelligence, and work (Smith 85), it is the preacher's responsibility to use their gift to the greatest extent possible (Olford and Olford 232). When the preacher dedicates the work of expanding their ability and skill, the Spirit makes use of this work (Stitzinger 160; DeVries 3). It is crucial that preachers commit to this (V. Gordon 63). One way to expand preaching ability is to utilize adult learning theory in preaching.

Ambassadors of Christ

The last topic to discuss when considering the theological foundation of using adult learning theory is the idea of Christians being ambassadors for Christ. In 2 Corinthians 5.20, Paul says, "We are ambassadors for Christ" (CSB). This section delves into this thought. The first question to talk about is how Christians, preachers specifically, are ambassadors. What they are ambassadors of, is the next query to discuss. The third interrogatory to discuss is why they are ambassadors.

The first question to answer is how Christians, especially preachers, are ambassadors for Christ. Christ has called Christians to the same purpose he had (Goss-Reaves 13; Drew 20). Christ came to redeem the world and he has put his followers under that same obligation (Goss-Reaves 15). The task is to be the personification of God, especially Jesus to the world (Shambare and Kgatla 3). Not only have Christians been called, but Christ has entrusted (Shenk 170; Drew 20) this task to them. God has commissioned, or assigned, this task to be representatives of the King of kings and Lord of lords and his gospel, his kingdom, his love, his grace, and his mercy (Wood 24). God has also sent Christians into the world and divinely appointed them as preachers (Crowe 386).

This is not a new task, as God has sent other ambassadors before, namely the prophets (Hanafin 41) who delivered God's word not only to his people, Israel, and Judah, but also to the nations of the world. Christians are given the task of spreading Christ's offer of salvation, made possible by his death, resurrection, and ascension, as his ambassadors (Khobnya 130). While preachers are given this task especially, all Christians are expected to represent Christ to the best of their capabilities (Willshaw 346). This is made possible through the presence of the Holy Spirit in each Christian's life; this is how all Christians are able to act as an ambassador of Christ (Davies 424). Since Christians, especially preachers, are given the task of being ambassadors for Christ it is incumbent for preachers to do so to the best of their ability. Utilizing the learnings of adult learning theory to shape how the message is delivered helps with this.

What Christians, especially preachers, are ambassadors of, is the next question to address. Christ came to redeem all of humanity and as his followers, Christians are

ambassadors of him and his mission (Goss-Reaves 15). Christ has set the Church to this task for himself and the rest of the Trinity (Verster 1). Another way of putting it is that Christians, who are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, are ambassadors of that Kingdom, Christ's Kingdom (Goss-Reaves 13). An ambassador's task is to represent and show the culture and primary concerns (Khobnya 133). This means that Christ's disciples are to show and convey Christ's grace, mercy, light, priorities, and dominion over all of creation as King of kings and Lord of lords (Wood 24). Preachers are to expressly and publicly tell the gospel and the reconciliation it brings (Drew 20) to their congregation, community, even the whole world (Drew 21; Khobnya 135). They are to speak for their God, his message, his word in the face of the needs and longings of the world (Davies 424). Paul envisions this role for himself and all believers who follow Christ by following him (Smillie 200; Kok 5). It is through presence of the Church and its preaching that God has already started to transfigure the world (Drew 21; Shambare and Kgatla 3). With preachers being ambassadors of Christ's redemptive work, it is essential they do so as best as they are able to. Employing the learnings from adult learning theory allows them to do communicate this message in the best possible way.

The last question to ponder is why Christians are ambassadors. As Christ's followers, all Christians (Willshaw 346) are to allow God and Christ to call the world through them (Grassi 466). Since Jesus' departure at the ascension, it has fallen to his Church to deliver the message of reconciliation to the world (Shambare and Kgatla 20; Khobnya 134). This message is to be delivered publicly (Drew 20) and the church needs to ensure that all it does proclaims the gospel (Shambare and Kgatla 3). In everything and in every way the Church is to be like Christ and declare the gospel (Verster 1) to continue

the work of Christ and persuade those opposed to God to end their opposition (Berkhoff *Systematic* 373) to him. By continuing the work of Christ, the Church is situated to be a conduit from God to the world (Neyrey 278).

Another reason Christians are able to do this is that God has made them new creatures no longer solely part of this world but also part of the kingdom of heaven (Goss-Reaves 13). To enlarge this function the gospel needs to be delivered in the church and in other places to whether it be the marketplace or the town center (Stowers 60). Delivering the message of the gospel to different places helps Christians, especially preachers, reach everyone possible (Khobnya 135). Not only those within the Church already but more specifically to those who are not already a part of the Church (Smillie 201). Christians, especially preachers, are given this task by divine commission (Crowe 386) like the Apostle Paul while he ministered (Barentsen 4). Preachers can best fulfill their tasking as ambassadors by using the gleanings of adult learning theory to fulfill the reason why Christ has made them his ambassadors.

Biblical Illiteracy in the United States

This section of Chapter Two looks at the Bible in the United States. It first looks at the Barna research dedicated to the Bible in the annual reports, *State of the Bible*, sponsored by the American Bible Society. Once that has been considered, it reviews how Christians view the Bible and points out the importance of communicating well, while using adult learning theory to do so.

The State of the Bible (Barna Research)

Since 2010 the American Bible Society has commissioned annual research about *The State of the Bible*. When looking over the information gathered through this research,

three things stick out and that this sub-section discusses. The first is the attitude toward the Bible and how it has changed. The next thing to discuss is Bible usage. The third idea to consider is knowledge of the Bible.

One of the things that Barna covers in its research for the American Bible Society is the attitude of Americans to the Bible. In 2014, 79% of Americans responded that they think of the Bible first when talking about a sacred book (Barna Group 6). In 2015, the same percentage said the same thing, as they had for the previous four years (Barna Group 41). In fact, when asked in 2019, while 63% of Americans said that the Bible includes what is necessary to have a good life, only 38% strongly agreed. This is a decrease from 42% in 2018 and the highest level of 53% in 2011 (Barna Group 33). In line with this, 30% Americans believe that the Bible is inspired and inerrant even though somethings in it are meant to be symbolic (Barna Group 2019 41). The fact that the number of Americans who believe this has declined by ten percent is discouraging (Barna Group 2019 41). Another disheartening result is that over half of Americans (58%) do not see a difference between the Bible, the Qur'an, and the Book of Mormon (Barna group 2019 33). In 2020, the percentage of Americans who believed this has increased by 7 percentage points to 65% (Fulks and Plake 22). However, 52% of Practicing Christians that disagree with this idea (Fulks and Plake 22).

Another concerning result is that there is an increase in the number of people who are distrustful of the Bible's influence in American society with a prodigious part of Americans that are impervious to the Bible's claims on their lives (Cooper et al. ii). 2021 has seen even more disappointing news in that the number of those Americans who are disengaged with the Bible has seen a massive increase and is now more than double the

size of the “Movable Middle” (Fulks et al. 5). The “Movable Middle” is the term used by Barna to talk about those Americans who are new to the Christian faith and are just beginning to engage with the Bible as well as those whose faith is tempering or even being abandoned (Fulks et al. 4). Americans who think the country would be worse off if people did not read the Bible shrank by 9 percent (Fulks et al. 6). Over half of Americans did not agree that reading the Bible is crucial to character development in children (Fulks et al. 10). In fact, *The State of the Bible 2022* sums up perfectly when it states, “the current *State of the Bible* is ‘under-engaged’” (Fulks et al. 28). As the country engages less and less with the Bible in any way it is important that preachers use every tool at their disposal to convey the message of the Bible to those who hear their preaching, including adult learning theory.

The next topic of importance that Barna Group covers in its research is use of the Bible. In 2014, 26% of adults reported that they do not read the Bible while 9% say they read the Bible less than once a year outside of a church setting and 11% communicated they read the Bible one to two times a year outside of a church setting (Barna Group 11). This equates to roughly half (46%) of the US population not reading the Bible (Barna group 2014 11). By 2016 things had not really changed and had been stable for five years with roughly half (46-50%) of Americans not reading the Bible (Barna Group 12). The overall picture in 2017 was the same though the break down was different with 32% never reading the Bible, 10% reading the Bible less than once a year, and 8% reading it one to two times a year (“State of the Bible 2017” 8). In 2020 the number of Americans that never read the Bible had grown to 34% or 86.8 million (Fulks and Plake 36).

The more distressing information is that the number of Americans that report reading the Bible daily dropped from 14% to 9% between 2019 and 2020 (Fulks and Plake 36). The COVID-19 pandemic had a reducing effect on Bible usage with roughly 13.1 million more Americans that stopped consistently reading their Bibles (Fulks and Plake 50). In fact, 22% or roughly one-fifth of Americans now live in a household that does not even own a Bible. There was some good news in 2021. This good news is that among those who use the Bible, 90% report that they wish they read the Bible more (Cooper et al. 161). The *State of the Bible 2022* had more disheartening results. The number of Americans who are disengaged from the Bible grew by 45.2 million or 38% (Fulks et al. xi). The number of Americans saying they do not read the Bible ever grew from 29% in 2021 to 40% in 2022, an 11% increase in one year (Fulks et al. 17). Another sad fact is that almost 26 million people lessened their use of the Bible between 2021 and 2022 (Fulks et al. x). Only one in ten Americans or ten percent read the Bible daily (Fulks et al. 22). It is evident that preachers need to help Americans connect with Scripture and learn how to read and interact with their Bibles daily.

The last thing that that is important to make note of from the various *State of the Bible* reports is biblical knowledge. In 2019, the vast majority (72%) of Americans identified that they know some things about the Bible but only 11% say they have a great deal of knowledge about the Bible (Barna Group 37). A third of American adults admit to having little to no knowledge about the Bible or what it says (Barna Group 2019 37). The biggest shock in 2019 was that Americans who claimed to know a great deal about the Bible shrank by 13%, from 47% in 2018 to 34% (Barna Group 37). When people do increase their interaction, especially reading, with the Bible it is because they realize that

it is a significant aspect of their faith (Barna Group 2016 16). In 2022, while 77% of Americans own a Bible (Fulks et al. 16), almost half of American adults can be labeled as “non-practicing Christians” (Fulks et al. 48).

A “practicing Christian” is someone whose faith really important to them, they attend a worship service at least monthly, and say they are a Catholic or Protestant (Fulks et al. 48). A “non-practicing Christian” is anyone that does not meet all the criteria; in 2020 120 million American adults or 46% were non-practicing Christians (Fulks et al. 48). The good news from 2020 though is that one-third of those who do not interact with the Bible were interested by Jesus and the Bible (Fulks et al. 2). Preachers today have the task of helping those engaged with the Bible, interested in the Bible, and those who want to know more about the Bible and Jesus to increase or at least maintain that interest. One of the best tools that preachers have to do this is adult learning theory.

How Christians View Scripture

It is evident that there has been a lessening of the Bible’s influence in western society, but the more important questions aim to find out how the church views Scripture and what its impact is in the church. This subsection addresses how the church views Scripture. To do this, it first examines Scriptural authority in the church. Next, it looks at opposition and challenges to this authority. Thirdly, it examines the necessary responses to the stated opposition.

The first question to address is how the church views the authority of Scripture. Many things have been written about this, but the vast majority of Christians would agree that the Bible is unique in that it is the word of God (Grudem, 2nd ed. 67). In fact, all orthodox Christians would agree that it is through the Bible that we know what God says

(Erickson 221). As God's word, the Bible receives its authority from God himself (King 105), and it has the same authority as if God were to personally command its readers (Erickson 215; Geisler 30). While the Scripture was written by numerous men, God is its ultimate author and source (Watson 127). This gives the Bible more authority than other sources of authority like tradition, church leaders, even ecumenical councils (Messmer 297). This has been upheld by the likes of Cyprian of Carthage (Messmer 298), Augustine (Messmer 299) and of course all Protestants. Scripture is the normative way that God speaks to his church (Douglass 135), and it guides and informs the way the church lives and interacts with one another and the world outside it (O'Brian 175).

The Scriptures are trustworthy, dependable, and show the church the truth. Since it is the word of God, the Bible contains a message that needs to be heard (Douglass 134) and is crucial to how the church believes and practices its faith (Maddix and Thompson s-80). The Bible has an intrinsic power that results in salvation (Grindheim 792-793). Those called to salvation by God hear him speak through Scripture (Ovwigho and Cole 101). The Bible asserts itself as the word of God (Oluwashola and Paul 13) and urges its use in the instruction of the church and instruction by the church (Grindheim 794). Scripture consists of "relational truth" that generates faith within those who read and hear it (Malan 9). Despite all the evidence of Scripture being the word of God, this can only be revealed to someone by the Spirit (Henderson 146).

Challenges to the authority of Scripture have come from outside the church and even within the church, especially in recent time (Van den Belt 434). Paul clearly shows how Scripture can save but it is only when seen through faith in Christ (Grindheim 794). The problem has arisen with the postmodern mindset that calls this into doubt as it

precludes even the concept of absolute truth or that it is shown in any type of Scripture, the Bible included (Douglass 143). This means that outside the church numerous specialties have deemed they work better without the influence of religion in general and Christianity in particular (Paddison 451). In fact, religion, especially Christianity, has become optional even though people still identify with it yet dismiss its claims on their lives (Mohler 7). It is incredibly concerning that even though people describe themselves as engaging with the Bible, they show no change or influence of the Bible in their lives (Hagner, “The State” 8).

The big problem though is that even within the church Scripture does not seem to be having an impact (Douglass 135) even though Scripture points to God, his will, and gives direction for life (Carson 87). This is not surprising as studies have shown that most people who claim to be Christians do not interact with the Bible at all, outside of a worship experience, in a given week (Ovwigbo and Cole 102, 111). Even in worship services most Christians only encounter one Scripture passage (Douglass 142). This is happening because the church is not showing that the Bible is necessary which allows them to think the Bible is immaterial and unimportant (Maddix and Thompson s-91).

The challenges listed above require a response from the church and its preachers specifically. The preacher needs to acknowledge that the ideals espoused in the sphere of education are making their way into the mainstream culture (Mohler 9). The malice, confusion, and detachment that greets preachers and their message is growing (Mohler 10). However, the more people are engaged with the Bible the less likely they are to participate in activity that is not beneficial for them (Ovwigbo and Cole 103), in other words a deeper engagement with the Bible reduces unsafe activity (Ovwigbo and Cole

109). This makes sense with the Bible being the normal way God speaks to his church (Watson 143) and the more one interacts with the Bible the more a person hears God speaking to them (Ovwigho and Cole 111). While small group study and individual study of the Bible are important (Maddix and Thompson s-87), it is the pastor's responsibility to lead Christians in growing and deepening their faith (Carson 89) and embrace a vigorous stance on Scripture to help them develop and strengthen their faith (Carson 93).

Preachers also bear the responsibility to expose their churches to the regenerative power of the Bible through the Holy Spirit (Maddix and Thompson s-98) as well as show how Scripture's main purpose is this regeneration (Maddix and Thompson s-91). The church's main purpose is to bring this message of regeneration, the gospel, to those in the world who have not heard it yet (Henderson 151) trusting that God's promise from Isaiah 55 will be fulfilled (Giere 326). Another responsibility the preacher bears, especially in Protestant circles, is to help every disciple interpret the Scripture well (Spangenberg 2). While expositional preaching helps show Christians how to study the Bible (King 108), and Scripture itself guides people in preaching through the records of the sermons from the early years of the church (Lamp 11), the knowledge humanity has gained about adult learning theory helps preachers craft their sermons for maximum impact and communication (Carson 94). This is why it is crucial to use adult learning theory in preaching.

Preaching

This section of Chapter Two looks at preaching itself as an idea. It explores the purpose of preaching, the role of preaching, and the future of preaching in the Christian church.

Purpose of Preaching

When looking at the purpose of preaching, there are two main concepts that come to the fore: growing faith and coping with life. This subsection discusses both of them as well as techniques to accomplish them.

The first purpose of preaching is to grow the faith of the church as a whole and individually. The importance of this purpose is seen in Origin attempting to involve every aspect of his hearers in his sermons (Niesécior 88). Ambrose of Milan likewise states that God brings about faith through preaching (Satterlee 271). As Pseudo-Clementine told his opponent, the charge of the preacher is to declare the work of Christ (Roberts et al.). Preaching is an intricate activity, but one thing is certain that it is a charisma, a gift, from the Holy Spirit (Mocan 22) and the Holy Spirit speaks through each sermon (Kruger 2). Since the beginning of the Church, all the Church Fathers agreed that not only should Christ be present in every sermon, but he should be the guiding light of each sermon (Van de Beek 7). As a gift from the Holy Spirit one of the main things a sermon does is help the church's faith grows (Nafzger 51) and helps the Christian to know and truly understand "God, the world, and the human condition" (Nafzger 57). This shows the congregation who Christ is which helps build faith (Monson 309), since forming and growing a relationship with God through Christ is an important goal of preaching (Wilson 76). Indeed, as Augustine makes clear, it is through preaching that the church spreads into nation after nation (Schaff).

Another way preaching should grow a congregant's faith is by leading them and encouraging them to pray (Troeger 1242) this includes numerous things such as adoration, confession, intercession, thanksgiving, and lament (Troeger 1242). When a

church is moved to gratitude toward God, the sermon is a triumph (Dunn 47). When someone hears a sermon, they need to be moved to pause and focus on God (Dunn 58). A sermon grows the church's faith when it gives hope (Vos 325) especially to those who have no hope (Vos 333). When a sermon proclaims the love of God it gives hope (Vos 339). A sermon should help those who hear it not only have hope but understand their lives through biblical truth (Huh 44). A preacher's task when preaching is to help their congregation see their life through this biblical truth regularly (Kruger 2). Preaching is ideally situated to help with this since it reaches a bigger audience than the printed word (Baker 634). This helps since preaching should be both theological and ethical (Thompson 81) which helps the preacher disciple both the church and individual Christians (Hussey 68).

The second purpose of preaching is to help people cope with life. One of the first things preaching must do to help with this is to show the might of biblical preaching (Huh 40). The congregation one preaches to needs to be receptive to receiving help with the challenges of daily life (Kruger and de Klerk 2). Things that encourage this happening are when preachers let their congregations know they are trying to make sense of their world (Kruger and de Klerk 4) and helping the congregation remember that they are always in the forefront of God's thoughts (Kruger and de Klerk 8). Preaching that encourages these changes from the new life in Christ should be consistently present (Kruger 3) in every preaching ministry. One thing that is imperative to accomplish this is for the preacher to be able to connect with her listeners (Mocan 26). To help people cope with life, a sermon must present hope to people and society especially in the face of crises and concrete life (Adam 176).

There are certain techniques that can be used to increase the probability of attaining the foresaid purposes of preaching. The first thing to do is to pray; a preachers must start their sermon preparation with prayer (Troeger 1248). Augustine makes the same suggestion in “On Christian Doctrine” (Schaff Ch 30). Another basic thing that needs to be in place in the heart of preachers is a love for those they are preaching to (Kruger and de Klerk 8). These two practices help the preachers open the eyes of their listeners to the possibilities of what God can do in their lives and hearts (Nafzger 57). An additional principle that needs to be consistent is ensuring the sermon is biblically based and oriented (Wilson 66) so that it grows the listeners’ faith and relationship with Christ (Wilson 76). To do this, the preacher must constantly check in with the Scripture, not only the text one is preaching but all of Scripture (Ives 219). Keeping in mind that preaching is a charisma from the Holy Spirit (Neal 27) helps the preacher trust in God to ensure that the sermons are geared to the community being addressed (Thompson 76). Using adult learning helps with this endeavor as well.

Role of Preaching

The second idea that needs to be looked at in this section is the role of preaching in the church. When talking about the role of preaching in the church one should talk about how preaching fits into the worship of the church.

Preaching plays a crucial role in the worship and life of the church. A church is identified as a gathering where Scripture is wholeheartedly preached and received (Calvin *Institutes* par. 4.1.9). In fact, preaching cannot be sundered from the sacraments and normally is the longest part of a church’s worship service; preaching is sometimes used as a synecdoche for the entire worship service (Davis 18). In most Protestant

churches preaching is not only normally the longest portion of worship but is an essential element of it (Mogoane 1). One reason for preaching's intrinsic need to be included in worship is that it allows the church to meditate on God's word and its impact and influence on life in all its circumstances (Stadelmann 171). Undeniably the reason most attend worship at a church is to hear the word of God preached (Davison 235).

The Protestant church has emphasized preaching (Pugh 146) since the Reformation. The reformers, especially Luther, could not stress the significance of preaching to the church too much (Pugh 148), emphasizing that preaching is the chief part of worship (Pugh 151). According to Calvin, Christ elevates the ministry of preaching to a preeminent position (*Institutes* par. 2.9.5) which makes sense since the preached word was the chief way to encounter God himself (Pugh 157). Anglicans formally acknowledged this at the Lambeth Conference in 1988, saying that preaching the gospel is one of the five facets of the church's mission (Yarnell 13). Even the Orthodox tradition claims that preaching has primacy in its liturgy (Chiganos 170), with the essence of the preaching consisting of the gospel of Christ (Streza 147).

The Future of Preaching

It is important to keep an eye on the future of preaching, especially considering the last few tumultuous years that the world has experienced. This segment discusses the importance of preaching moving forward as well as what should not change and challenges that have arisen.

It is not a surprise that many people are not interested in preaching anymore (J. Gordon 81). Nor is it a surprise that bad preaching that does not connect is leading to challenges in attendance and even people leaving the church (Gregory 370). However,

the sermon is becoming even more crucial because of the changes that have happened in the world (Gregory 362). The sermon's importance to the church cannot be underestimated since it is one of the main tools in helping Christians learn the Scripture (Hagner "The Bible" 28). As all the effects of COVID shake out preaching is even more important to the faithful as they strive to remain faithful (J. Gordon 82). It is imperative for preachers to use their imagination to be an effective preacher (Nhiwatiwa 283).

While things change with the passing of time and changes in attitude and accepted norms occur, it is important that the core of Christian preaching does not change. One thing that COVID did was make many preachers examine the role of preaching in light of the drastic changes that were occurring with the resulting centrality of the gospel (Hoezee 94). Nhiwatiwa also adheres to the centrality of the gospel in preaching for the twenty-first century from his African perspective (286). To help with this, each sermon should focus on and be built around a Scripture text or texts (J. Gordon 87). This type of preaching helps transform the faithful so that they can fulfill the Great Commission of bring the gospel to all nations (Yarnell 11). Another expectation of preachers is that they live out what they preach (Nhiwatiwa 282). This helps considering that the best sermons are the ones preached from the heart (Kim 14).

There are several challenges facing preachers today. Many of these have stemmed from COVID and the quarantines and inability to meet in person as a church (Sigmon 125). These ushered in a new digital age in the church that has called aspects of preaching into question (O'Lynn 8). This digital age where preaching is done via recorded video, podcasts, and livestreaming makes it challenging for the preacher to gauge listener feedback and participation (Nash 145). To overcome this challenge preachers,

need to focus on helping listeners engage whether in person or virtually (O'Lynn 9). Thinking about how to motivate listeners to be participants of the sermon before preaching the sermon facilitates this as well (Nash 149). Another way to improve listener engagement is to remove barriers, even perceived barriers, to good communication (Nhiwatiwa 282). Being aware of and speaking to the context of those listening to the sermon helps eliminate communication barriers (Nhiwatiwa 273). Adult learning theory is a good source of knowledge that preachers can bring to bear to address all of these challenges.

Adult Learning Theory

This section of Chapter Two explores adult learning theory. Adult learning has a long history and simultaneously a short history. All the ancient greats, Socrates, Plato, and others, including Jesus, taught adults which means that adult learning is ancient indeed. In the twentieth century, Malcolm Knowles is responsible for the scholarly interest in andragogy with his book, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* published in 1970. David Kolb, a psychologist, professor, and educational theorist developed an experiential learning cycle focused on how adults learn and change from experiences in 1974 (Clove). Self-directed learning can be traced back to the ancient Greek philosophers (Hiemstra, "Self-Directed"), yet it was Malcolm Knowles and his book *Self-Directed Learning* in 1975 that kicked off scholarly interest in the topic. Transformative learning theory appeared when Jack Mezirow wrote a white paper and article in 1978, but it did not gain serious academic attention until 1990s when it became a full-fledged theory (Hoggan "Transformative"). A major distinction that came about with transformative learning was the consideration of the whole person including ideas, experiences, and

others to effect change in the person's frame of reference (Kurnia 80). This section looks at the different theories of adult learning that have developed in a chronological order: andragogy; Kolb's learning styles; self-directed learning; and transformative learning.

Andragogy

The first adult learning theory this section considers is andragogy. The theory of andragogy has several aspects to discuss. The first is the history of Andragogy followed by a description of the basic theory. The third aspect looks at the application of andragogy.

A good starting place for a discussion of andragogy is its history. The present day understanding of andragogy in the west stems from 1970 when Malcolm S. Knowles published his book, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* (St. Clair and K  pplinger 272). However, andragogy predates that by a long while since the German teacher, Alexander Kapp, used the term in 1833 to describe the style of teaching used by Plato (Ozuah 83; Savicevic 180). Kapp was correct, as parts of the theory of andragogy were used by Confucius, Lao Tse, Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Evelid, Quintillian, the Old Testament prophets, and Jesus himself (Ozuah 84-85; Savicevic 180). While the instruction of adults was seen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Savicevic 180), it really took off in the Weimer Republic after World War I when andragogical ideas were used to teach workers for work in trade unions (Savicevic 181). It was still being used in Germany after World War II which had an impact on all the European countries (Savicevic 184). andragogy could be seen in the Ukraine as organizations tried to meet the desires of people of all ages to learn and grow in knowledge and skills outside of the traditional public schools (Tymchuk et al. 190). Multiple types of people from teachers,

to county government officials, to Sunday school groups that were all familiar with progressive pedagogy first made these efforts (Tymchuk et al. 190). These groups shifted their main focus to provide knowledge that was applicable to the real world (Tymchuk et al. 191).

In the twentieth century in the United States of America Malcolm Knowles made his contribution to andragogy which made him a leading person in the field (St. Clair and K  pplinger 273). He desired to create a unifying theory of adult education (St. Clair and K  pplinger 274) when confronted by the needs of various businesses and organizations (St. Clair and K  pplinger 285). Knowles did not enter the scene in the 1970s as a revolutionary but had been involved in the field of adult education by the 1960s (St. Clair and K  pplinger 277). In fact, Knowles names andragogy from the Greek word *andros* and gives it the definition of, “the art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, “Andragogy” 351) several years before he uses the same definition in his book (Knowles, *The Modern* 38). In the same article Knowles asserts that up until this time adult education has not done a good job, but that adult education had grown rapidly in the decade previous (Knowles, “Andragogy” 350). This is why he developed as a new way teach adults customized to how they learn which is different than how children learn (Knowles, “Andragogy” 351). It is due to his work that there has been a vast quantity written about (St. Clair and K  pplinger 282) which is the longest lasting adult education project of the twentieth century (St. Clair and K  pplinger 274).

The next topic to discuss when dealing with is the basic theory which can be talked about in terms of differences from how children learn, the six tenets of , and commonalities with pedagogy and critique of . Andragogy is based on the idea that adults

learn differently than children (McGrath 99), and society's continuance depends on people learning past initial schooling (Knowles "Andragogy" 350). This difference is especially true when the adults are learning outside a school type setting (Tymchuk et al. 190). Andragogy helps with this difference in that it is learner focused and the learner needs to have a bigger say in the learning experience (Zmeyov 106). Another way helps adults learn is that when adults learn it makes life meaningful and helps them see the meaning in their life (Loeng 3). One reason this works is that adults' capacity for learning can be much deeper than children's (Knowles "Andragogy" 352). Andragogy has different assumptions about adult learners than pedagogy has about children or youth learners (Ozuah 86). A result of this is that focuses on learning through experimentation (Knowles, "Andragogy" 386). A large body of research supports this focus that has on experimentation (Tice 19).

Another aspect is its insistence that adults be involved in every step of the learning process (Conway 364), which includes deciding what is learned (Knowles, "Andragogy" 352). When adults are involved like this in their learning, they are essentially carrying out their own learning which requires, including the evaluation of learning which is basically a re-self-evaluation (Knowles "Andragogy" 352). One other main difference between adult students and child or youth students is that the adult learners have a great deal of pressure in their lives from other things (McGrath 106). These pressures have the effect of necessitating an immediate application for adults of what is being learned (Knowles, "Andragogy" 386). Andragogy knows all this and encourages instructors to treat adult learners like the adults they are (Knowles, "Andragogy" 351). Of course, when talking of, the assumption is that it is Knowles's

ideas and theory one is talking about (Loeng 2), which makes sense since it offers both a theory and recommendations for adult educators (St. Clair and K  pplinger 280).

The core of andragogy is based on six tenets developed by Malcom Knowles. These six assumptions are: self-concept, prior experience, readiness to learn, problem centered learning, the need to know, and motivation (Knowles, "The Modern" 39-49; Knowles et al. 64-69). These six tenets show a constructivist bent (Cox 29) that approaches education differently than pedagogy (Alajlan 151) by including new ideas (Ozuah 84). The tenet of Self-Concept recognizes that adult learners must be recognized for the independent adults that they are (St. Clair and K  pplinger 279). This idea of Self-Concept is probably the most important distinction between how youths, young children and teenagers, and adults learn (Knowles, "Andragogy" 351). Prior experience is talking about the knowledge and experience collected through the learner's life prior to the current learning situation (Woodard 45), especially experiences that relate specifically to the topic at hand (Purwati 89). This focus on prior experience should lead teachers of facilitators to value and incorporate the learners' perspective (Conway 363). An environment that treats the learners like adults and is not geared toward children or teenagers is important (Knowles, "Andragogy" 351). This tenet encourages the instructor to put the emphasis on the critical aspect of (Conway 374) which helps the teacher and learner be joint discoverers in the learning experience (Egizii 1744).

The idea behind the tenet of ready to learn is that an adult learner is eager to learn knowledge and skills that impact their current daily lives (Moore 3). When facilitators create an environment in the learning experience that encourages exploration it helps achieve this tenet (Mahdi and Bright 18). The next tenet of problem centered learning is

referring to the desire to learn what is necessary to fix or deal with an immediate problem or situation (Woodard 45). When adults learn starting with the problem that is being addressed or dealt with is incredibly important (Knowles, “Andragogy” 386). Once the adult learner is aware of the problem they are learning to overcome, their engagement in the learning process is vastly better (McGrath 99).

The need to know refers to the reality that if an adult does not perceive a need to learn something, they do not learn it (Conway 367). As soon as they are able to see how the knowledge or skills that they are learning is applicable, right away, the learning increases greatly (Knowles “Andragogy” 386). The last tenet of Motivation speaks to why adults learn whether it is an external motivator, like for work, or an intrinsic motivator, like fulfilling a dream (Moore 3). When this motivation comes from the adult learner it is a much more powerful force that is capable of seeing people accomplish great things in their careers and home lives (Pew 15). This intrinsic motivation makes it more likely that adults actually learn more and more effectively and have a greater sense of pride as well (Pew 22). The result of intrinsic motivation and learning well is being self-reliant, which then becomes a contributor to the learner’s motivation for maximum impact (Pew 23). When instructors attempt to appeal to external motivation when their adult learners are intrinsically motivated can bring challenges to the learning environment (Pew 14).

The relationship between and pedagogy is not black and white, but rather exists on a continuum with one extreme consisting of and the other side being pedagogy (Loeng 8). This makes sense since the historic version of pedagogy that Knowles espoused is on the opposite end of the spectrum (Loeng 6). This shows that and pedagogy are not

radically opposed (Ozuah 84) and rather share some similarity and connection (Loeng 8). One of the benefits that brings is a greater opportunity for communication and an increased potential for learning (Stuart 127). Another benefit has is that it is effective in every culture (Manangsa 387). It is not without critics though, with some calling attention to the lack of a communal aspect and social impact of adult learning (Merriam and Bierema 61). A different criticism that faces is that no adults measure up to the expectations of adults that makes of them (Merriam and Bierema 6). This shows that is an approach to teaching that is applicable in every situation (St. Clair and K  pplinger 281).

The last concept to talk about in regard to is the application of it. When adults think about education or learning something, most of them will think back to their previous experience in elementary, middle, or high school where pedagogy was promoted, even if they are unaware of it (McGrath 101). Andragogy provides a good framework to overcome those biases and help adults with the learning experience (Carpenter-Aeby and Aeby 3). One big change that proposes is that those leading the learning experience focus on being a facilitator rather than a traditional teacher (Taylor and Kroth 3). Andragogy helps with the planning how to do exactly that (Roessger, et al. 14) and gives insight to educators on how to make the learning experience effective (Manangsa et al. 387). Andragogy can be used in multiple situations, including onboarding new employees or volunteers (Woodard 47) and helps with the designing of the learning experience (Knowles, “Andragogy” 352).

When planning learning experiences, shows that the learning experience is better and more effective for adults when structured around problems (Knowles, “Andragogy” 386). Andragogy demands that the facilitator excel at being flexible to adapt to the

learner's needs and desires to learn (Alajlan 150). This shows how helps instructors encourage and adapt to diversity of all kinds in the learners they are helping (Conway 362). Andragogy helps even with differences in every culture when people are in a learning environment (Mahdi and Bright 19). When being flexible, a facilitator needs to keep in mind that not everyone is ready to have their core commitments challenged which may pose a challenge to the learning environment (McGrath 107). One way helps with this is by recognizing that the learners need to be engaged in the decision to determine the learning objectives and approach (Manangsa 389). Andragogy recognizes adult learners want to learn what they need to know to help themselves improve their work and their lives (Moore 2). Andragogy is applicable in ministry settings, especially for preachers who are not only the teacher but also a fellow Christian (Stuart 124). The challenge makes to congregation members is that when they are listening to sermons, they need to actively listen rather than being uninvolved (Stuart 126). Congregation members are unique learners and preachers must take this into account in their preparation (Stuart 126).

Kolb Learning Styles

The last adult learning theory to discuss is Kolb's learning styles. To understand this important theory, one must first look at the theory itself. The second topic to look at is how the learning styles have been used. Lastly, one should discuss the reaction that Kolb's theory on learning styles has generated.

David Kolb is the most dominant voice on learning styles (Healey et al. 31). The learning cycle addresses numerous aspects involved in the learning process such as thoughts, feelings, behavior, and perceptions (Kolb and Kolb 43; Kolb *Experiential*

Learning: Experience 43). No two learners are the same (Kiliç 110) and everyone learns in a unique way (Kiliç 108). Other reasons that everyone learns in a unique way are culture, personality, temperament, abilities, and interests (Dyrud 124; Tabrizi et al. 35). The learning styles are grounded in the differences in people who use different ways to learn (Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience* 103) and the preferences they develop (Peterson et al. 231). The learning process starts with experiencing something, then moves into reflection, next is thinking, followed by an application of what has been learned (Peterson and Rutledge 11-12; Kolb and Kolb 44). The first aspect of the cycle is focused on acquisition aspect while the second aspect is focused on change (Holtbrügge and Mohr 623). These two aspects break into four ways learners experience and transform what they experienced into knowledge: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Dantas and Cunha 2). This leads to the four learning styles: divergers, assimilators, convergers, and accommodators (Woods 174).

Convergers or pragmatists tend to focus on how to apply knowledge especially to a given problem or situation, they also like lists and case studies (Eubank and Pitts 73; Dantas and Cunha 2; Woods 174). Divergers tend to focus on understanding things from different perspectives as well as liking visual information, working in groups, sharing ideas, are people focused, and can be creative and imaginative (Eubank and Pitts 73; Dantas and Cunha 2; Woods 174; Turesky and Gallagher 8; Tien-Chi et al. 72). Assimilators tend to focus on putting things together, dealing with texts, explanations, making things concise, dealing with abstract ideas, and inductive reasoning (Eubank and Pitts 73; Dantas and Cunha 2; Woods 174; Turesky and Gallagher 8). Accommodators

tend to follow their gut feelings, make plans, are typically fine taking risks, enjoy variety, and like experimental activities (Eubank and Pitts 73; Dantas and Cunha 2; Woods 174).

Kolb's system of learning styles is not the only system (Dantas and Cunha 1).

Richard Felder and Linda Silverman have proposed a four-style learning system that consists of active, sensitive, visual, and sequential learners (680) Another learning style system was developed by Neil Fleming and Charles Bonwell consisting of visual, aural, reading/writing, and kinesthetic learners (Chp. 1). Regardless of the learning style, most people see their preferred style as the best way or the right way to learn (Sugarman 265). People tend to emphasize the learning style they most identify with (Freedman and Stumpf 445). It is relatively easy to figure out what a person's learning style is since there are around 100 different assessments to help people discover their learning style (Peterson et al. 231). Everyone can use all the learning styles to learn (Woods 174; Kiliç 121). The more adept someone is at all the learning styles the better their learning experiences are (Kiliç 121). The great news here is that since learning styles are a preference, a person can learn to use all of them. All of this is helpful since the ultimate challenge is to learn better (Tabrizi et al. 35).

When a teacher or facilitator knows a student's learning style it helps improve the student's learning experience (Eubank and Pitts 72). Knowing students' learning styles helps teachers or facilitators craft experiences that better communicate to the students (Sharp 129) with a more effective lesson (Kiliç 109). Teachers are more effective when teaching with different learning styles (Woods 172), but it is important for not only students to be stretched to learn with a different learning style than their own, but also the teachers (Srivastava and Shah 168). This helps make Kolb's learning styles a great guide

for teaching people (Sugarman 264). Applying learning styles is not limited only to the classroom environment (Raschick et al.) and can be used by numerous other professions (Raschick et al.). Field educators (Raschick et al.), coaches (Turesky and Gallagher 5), trainers (Sugarman 267), and even counselors (Sugarman 267) can use Kolb's learning styles. Regardless of who is using the learning styles, when planning an educational experience, it is important to consider who the leader is leading through the exercise as well as the content and how to communicate it effectively (Woods 174). When the facilitator models the proper use of all learning styles the students also learn how to use them (Sharp 134). Using students' learning styles tends to bring out the best for the students (Srivastava and Shah 168). When a facilitator matches the learner's learning style there is an opportunity to stretch the facilitator and make them better, especially if they are using learning styles that are not their preference (Turesky and Gallagher 5). Learning styles can help teachers teach increasingly diverse groups of individuals (Healey et al. 30) especially given that learning styles are flexible and continue to evolve (Peterson et al. 231). Due to this flexibility and tendency to change the facilitator's role is likely to change (Srivastava and Shah 173).

The reaction that has occurred to Kolb's learning style theory as well are important. Most of the research has been turned out in favor of Kolb's learning styles (Sugarman 65). However, some feel the support for learning styles is not incredibly strong (Stumpf and Freedman 298). While some argue that learning styles are not useful, they are widely used in varied environments (Atkinson). Others believe that learning styles are inherited and static and oppose Kolb (Tabrizi et al. 35-36, Kolb "Experiential Learning Theory" 291). Another challenge is that a person's age affects their learning

style (Kiliç 122). The older a person is they tend to be more set in their learning style and less apt to change (Peterson et al. 231).

Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning occurs when the person leading the learning provides ways and means for a learner to acquire knowledge and comprehension of a topic, the ability to perform a task, or the ability to perform a task better themselves (Knowles “Human” 117). In other words, self-directed learning is when a learner learns by themselves without someone teaching them (Tarhan 2). This is typically a product of the American individualistic mindset. When writing about self-directed learning, the questions that need to be answered are, Who can be a self-directed learner, what things are needed for self-directed learning to be successful, and what are the results of self-directed learning?

Who can be a self-learner? The short answer is everyone (Tarhan 9). It must be noted that self-directed learning can be seen as far back as the Greek philosophers (Pimdee et al. 1). Recently though, the depth of understanding how people, especially adults, learn has grown by leaps and bounds (Wickett 160). Those who are able to have access to the right sources, evaluate them, and decide how to use them can be a self-directed learner (Butcher and Sumner 123). While not necessarily a delightful experience, it is a central ability in today’s world (Tarhan 2). It is not, however, an easy thing (Wickett 156). When able to take advantage of self-directed learning, adults tend to learn better with a deeper understanding of the topic or skill being learned (Du Toit-Brits 56). Not every person in every learning situation is able to be a self-directed learner and different aptitudes for it are evident (van der Walt 9). When a person or a group is

capable and successful in learning in a self-directed way it can be a powerful experience (Hiemstra “More Than” 7).

What needs to be present for self-directed learning to happen? While self-directed learning is guided by the learner (Mok 422), it is necessary at times to have some guidance from an instructor (Altan 298). It is important to ensure that this guidance is not the instructor imparting knowledge but rather working the process with the learners (van der Walt 5). This process needs to utilize the learner’s pre-existing knowledge and skills (Chen 407). Taking these things into account increases the amount of self-confidence in the learner’s knowledge and skills learned (Chen 409). The learner must be willing to take on the burden of ensuring they are learning the correct information and skills (Abdullah et al. 68). This means that the learner needs to dedicate the time necessary to understanding what must be learned, what is needed to learn the information desired, as well as how to ascertain that the learning has been successful (Abdullah et al. 68). While there are ways for self-directed learning to be used as teaching technique, there are traits that help people learn this way (Abdullah et al. 67).

Numerous scholars have suggested different stages of self-directed learning (Abdullah et al. 68; Black 206-208). Taylor suggests the phases of detachment, divergence, engagement, and convergence (133-146). Renninger lists four phases as: triggered situational interest, maintained situational interest, emerging individual interest, and well-developed individual interest (108). Grow has given another set of stages that are different yet, but possibly the most helpful: dependent, interested, involved, and self-directed (125-149). The stages make sense as self-directed learning should be an endeavor to last a lifetime (Tarhan 2).

Current research has helped people come to a better grasp of the traits for having success as a self-directed learner (van der Walt 13). One of these traits that helps self-directed learning become a lifetime experience is the proper motivation (Cronin-Golomb and Bauer 2) without motivation the learner is not able to direct their own learning (Cronin-Golomb and Bauer 3). This motivation typically comes from multiple sources (Cronin-Golomb and Bauer 3). In addition to motivation, learners must have access to the good materials (Erlina et al. 21). One resource that the vast majority of learners in western society have access to is the technology to access the internet (Mok 423). Another technique that helps with self-directed learning is the ability to replicate skills and knowledge seen in other people (Mok 424). It is important to have beneficial external factors in addition to the internal factors already mentioned (Tarhan 6). These factors can include but are not limited to the room, the ambient noise, the temperature, and even the learner's schedule (Tarhan 6). All of these things help learners do the self-directed learning that is necessary (Erlina et al. 21).

The third question to address is, what are the results of self-directed learning. The ultimate point of self-directed learning is learner independence (Altan 298), the ability to learn without a teacher. Self-directed learning helps learners learn everything in a superior way (Abdullah et al. 68). There is nothing new about adult learners taking ownership of what and how they learn (Canipe and Brockett 4) which gives them confidence and self-assurance in the information they learn and the skills they acquire (Chen 409). This allows self-directed learners to create an individual knowledge structure for themselves that is not limited by the typical dimensions of traditional teaching (Cronin-Golomb and Bauer 2). This result spurs learners on to continue learning and to

make learning a lifelong endeavor (Cronin-Golomb and Bauer 1), which sets up a new cycle for the learner to set new learning goals and source new material to achieve the new goals (Chukwuere and Gorejena 235). All of these results help motivated self-directed learners to learn more about the abundant creation that God has blessed us with (van der Walt 4). Preachers can guide their listeners to become self-directed learners to deepen their knowledge of God and their faith in him. While sermons are preached in a communal setting, self-directed learning is more individually focused. Preachers can use their sermons to encourage their congregation to continue to apply the sermons and deepen their faith on their own throughout their lives. Being aware of self-directed learning helps preachers in this task.

Transformative Learning

The third adult learning theory to look at is transformative learning, an approach to adult learning that emphasizes change in the learner (Backfish 282); it explains a process for effecting change (Kurnia 73). In fact, transformative learning theory says that change is the central goal of adult learning (Nichols et al. 43). To obtain the goal, every aspect of the person is necessary including their mind and body (Backfish 283). When transformative learning is followed, it can lead to change for the adult learner and the leader of the learning experience as well (Cheung et al. 71). This all makes sense given transformative learning's delineation of how adults grow and change (Eschenbacher and Fleming 659). As for the history of transformative learning, it can be seen as far back as the ancient Greeks in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* (Michel et al. 177-178) and can be seen in the ideal of a Socratic discussion (Kurnia 76). If discovery is to meet the standard of transformative learning it must meet the standard of having depth, breath, and stability

(Hoggan, “Defining” 120), because transformative learning is different than simply obtaining information (Michel et al. 178). Transformational learning helps adults think individually and critically about any given idea or perspective (Kurnia 74). To help this process a best practice is to provide a safe space to for people to discuss the dilemma (Parson et al. 1346). There are several types of change brought about by transformative learning: personal in relation to other people, self-identity, increase in a sense of responsibility, self-awareness, clarity in one’s purpose, the flow of one’s story, and a personality change (Hoggan, “Defining” 118).

In addition to the types of change, there are three types of learning: instrumental, communicative, and transformative (Bueddefeld et al. 569). The expectation is that most learning comes from the communicative type (Moyer and Sinclair 352) that deals with communication and understanding. Included in this are metaphors and finding similarities and differences between situations (Kurnia 76). Instrumental learning happens when a person learns through experimentation which includes learning through perception and function that is typically discovered by extensive analyzation (Kurnia 76). Instrumental learning is crucial as recent research has discovered (Moyer and Sinclair 352).

Transformative learning deals with frames of reference as well, these frames of reference and expectations dictate a person’s point of view (Michel et al. 178). According to transformative learning adults learn in four ways: through existing schemes, through creating new schemes, through transformation of current schemes, and through transformation of perspectives (Kurnia 74). In an ideal situation, transformative learning follows a sequence (Dzvinchuk et al. 15). Jack Mezirow developed ten phases to transformative learning: a disorienting dilemma, self-examination, critical assessment of

current assumptions, recognition that others have done the same thing, exploration of new options, planning a course of action, acquiring knowledge, working the plan, gaining confidence, and reintegration (168-169; Eschenbacher and Fleming 660; Tung and Tri 48; Nichols et al. 44). These phases fall into three stages: greater awareness through self-reflection, deep and integrative construction, and metacognitive development (Tsimane and Downing 271).

Some requirements must be met for transformative learning to happen. They are mostly related to the fact that transformative learning is all about change (Backfish 282). As work and information becomes more complex, handling and understanding information becomes more important (Kurnia 76). What helps with this is that adults tend to build knowledge through activity (Tsimane and Downing 269). When the foresaid activity helps change one's frame of reference it translates into transformative learning (Parson et al. 1335). Fortunately, things can be done to help ensure that transformative learning happens (Gajparia et al. 4). Another crucial requirement is to get to the underlying issues (Kurnia 74) and intent alone does not get a person there, rather action is necessary (Parson et al. 1346). Transformative learning is vastly dependent on reason and does not factor emotion into its process (Lamont 178). As with everything else, learning is dependent on environment (Backfish 286). It is not just the external environment that matters, a person's internal environment, their presuppositions, and frames of reference matter too (Backfish 285). With the environment being as important as it is to transformative learning a person needs to be aware of their environment (Tung and Tri 49).

One of the first things necessary for the transformative learning process is a challenging experience that makes one question a preconception (Parson et al. 1336). This preconception being called into question is a shock as it makes one call a belief, sometimes deeply held, into question (Backfish 282). One thing that can lead to this challenging experience is breaking one's routines (Day et al. 991). Another necessity for transformative learning is questioning previous assumptions (Hunziker and Hofstetter R18). Questioning one's core assumptions is made possible by deep engagement and reflection (Tsimane and Downing 273) which forces people to change or adopt new frames of reference (Michel et al. 180). The greatest challenging experience is coming face to face with the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Backfish 288). Another necessary part of transformative learning is reflective conversation which helps people reinterpret their experience (Hunziker and Hofstetter R18). If the changes brought about by transformative learning are not long lasting though, they cannot be considered transformative (Hoggan, "Defining" 114-115). One more challenge is that typically the younger one is the easier it is to change (Dzvinchuk et al. 16).

The last thing to investigate for transformative learning is the impact it can have. The first thing to note is that transformative learning has changed how people think about learning, especially adult learning (Tung and Tri 48). Transformative learning also effects change especially in perspectives (Kurnia 80), which makes sense given its focus on change. One type of change that can be seen is in how people respond (Day et al. 989). The change brought about through or by transformative learning can be drastic (Hoggan, "Defining" 110). When done correctly these changes are genuine and evident (Tsimane and Downing 272). Not everyone considers or agrees that every change brought about by

transformative learning is good and not bad (Hogan, “Defining” 116). In fact, even though the transformational learning process is followed there is no guarantee that it always leads to a change in behavior or perception (Moyer and Sinclair 353). Not every participant experiences the same kind or amount of change (Day et al. 990). At times transformational learning can lead to experiences that simply refresh or renew learnings and changes were mastered previously but that have fallen away (Day et al. 990). The change brought about by transformational learning is not always the change people are looking for or expecting (Hunziker and Hofstetter R23). It can, however, change the way people connect to ideas like science (Day et al. 989). Transformative learning forces people to think through change that is culturally sensitive as well (Baheretibeb et al. 2). Transformative learning compels those who take it seriously to understand a transition to a reflective and integrated frame of reference (Kurnia 80). It results in learners having more confidence and the ability to do more (Moyer and Sinclair 352). A great example of what transformative learning requires from the Scripture is Job, through his reflection he was able to learn to trust God despite the environment and his circumstances (Backfish 286).

Research Design Literature

This research project is a pre-intervention research project that used a survey, a participant journal, and a focus group to collect data. This section discusses the type of project and each type of research tool utilized.

The research was a mixed methods project, which consisted of quantitative and qualitative methods (Tashakkori and Creswell 3). Quantitative methods rely on well-ordered scrutinization often involving numerical values (Allen et al. 6). Quantitative

research can be used to make general assumptions (Allen et al. 7). A survey was used to conduct half of the quantitative research. The survey consisted of an appropriate mixture of the fourteen types of questions laid out by Tim Sensing (86-88). The survey helped gauge the preachers' use of adult learning theory and what beliefs impact this behavior (Leong and Austin 114). The qualitative aspect of the research was fulfilled by two tools. Qualitative research helped the researcher dig deeper into the reasoning as to why preachers used or did not use adult learning theory and the things that factored into that decision (Bhangu et al. 41). The first tool that was used qualitatively was a participant journal. A participant journal is a record written by the subjects over a given period (Giraud 2). The participant journal allowed the participants to reflect over their sermon preparation process weekly without needing to take time out each week for an interview (Giraud 2). The last qualitative research tool that was used was a focus group (Hennink 1). The focus group allowed the researcher to gather information from multiple perspectives, (Hennink 2) regarding the use of adult learning theory in preaching, in a synchronous setting.

Summary of Literature

Preaching is a foundational function of the church's calling and ministry. This literature review has shown that there is a biblical foundation for this assertion. Paul shows the importance of preaching in Romans 10.14-15. In Nehemiah 8.7-8 the importance of making sure God's word is understood is evident. The need for preachers to constantly learn and grow in their gifting of preaching is seen in Acts 18.24-28. Especially of note from this text is how Apollos uses the secular discipline of rhetoric to make his preaching effective. Acts 17.22-31 gives an example of Paul himself changing

the way he preached to ensure that those listening to him could resonate with the gospel he was preaching.

Theology supplies another foundation for the use of adult learning theory in preaching. The fact that God revealed himself to humanity shows that he is a God who longs to be known and understood. When his people preach his word, they should do the same thing, making every effort to communicate well. The church's ministry to the world necessitates that its ministry, especially preaching, happens in a way that is understandable to the whole world. Another basis for the use of adult learning theory comes from the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. It's recognition that science and reason help people understand Scripture adds validity to the use of adult learning theory when preaching. The fact that preaching is a spiritual gift should also spur preachers on to make every effort to improve their usage of their gift. Another reason to use adult learning theory is provided by the idea of Christians being ambassadors for Christ. Christians, especially preachers, are tasked with effectively communicating the word of God and adult learning theory helps with effective communication.

The struggles with Biblical illiteracy in the US show the need to ensure that people have a basic understanding of the Bible. The average person in the US generally does not know the Bible as well as they used to. However, the Church still sees Scripture as vital to its existence and to people's lives in general. This is the gap that preaching is meant to fill. For preaching to accomplish this purpose preachers need to communicate well with their hearers. Another reason preaching is important is because of its role in the Church's worship. Preachers, therefore, need to communicate as well as possible to

everyone who hears their sermons. Adult learning theory helps preachers communicate well with the adults they are preaching to.

Adult learning theory is made up of several ideas. The first idea this literature review examined was self-directed learning. Self-directed learning guides the preacher to exhort his listeners to embrace being a self-directed learner and becoming involved in growing their faith by ensuring they know where to find good resources, utilize their previous knowledge, and taking ownership and responsibility for their learning.

Andragogy shows the preacher that everyone is unique and learns in unique ways.

Andragogy guides the preacher to give adults a practical application of the message. It also encourages preachers to exhort their listeners to act on what they have learned, even in an experimental way. Andragogy prompts preachers to remember that they are deepening their faith along with their congregation and to show this in their sermons.

Transformative learning helps preachers remember that the main goal of preaching is to transform those who hear the preaching. Transformative learning theory works hand in hand with the growing of one's faith, as the ten phases of transformative learning align perfectly with a deepening and growing faith. Kolb's learning styles theory motivates the preacher to remember that while everyone can learn from all the styles, everyone has style preferences that help them learn better when used. Preachers should figure out a way to learn what their listeners' learning styles are.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter introduces how this project's research was conducted. It first reviews the nature and purpose of the project and then reviews the research questions and discusses how each question was researched. It covers the ministry context for the project as well as the participants. The chapter concludes with details regarding instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

Before Jesus ascended through the clouds, he gave the disciples, and thereby the Church, their paramount calling. At the end of Mathew's gospel, he gave the disciples, and thereby the Church, the same calling. In addition, Jesus gave a similar charge to the disciples, and thereby the Church at the end of Luke's gospel. This charge is to be witnesses of Christ, to share and tell his gospel: who he is and what he has done. The main way the church accomplishes this calling is through preaching. This makes preaching one of the most important tasks of the Church. This makes it essential that preachers preach to the best of their skill and ability using every tool at their disposal. The purpose of this project is to discover how adult learning theory can help enhance the preaching in the churches of the US Mennonite Brethren and to make suggestions toward that end.

Research Questions

RQ #1. What outside disciplines do pastors consider when preparing for a sermon?

This question was addressed in all three research tools. The Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey addressed Research Question #1 with questions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, and 23. The questions are listed below:

14. What biblical study resources do you typically use during sermon preparation (dictionaries, cross-references, etc.)?
15. What commentaries do you regularly consult during your sermon preparation?
16. What resources do you use for sermon illustrations during sermon preparation?
17. What resources do you use when thinking through preaching the sermon (sermon delivery)?
18. What other resources do you typically use during sermon preparation?
20. Are you familiar with the field of adult learning or adult learning theory?
21. What do you know about adult learning theory?
22. How are you using adult learning theory in your preaching?
23. Which learning style is your preaching usually geared to?
 - Audio (hearing word and music)
 - Visual (pictures & videos)
 - Kinetic (movement)
 - Practical (concrete application)
 - None of the above

The sermon preparation participant journal addressed Research Question #1 in questions 6, 7, 8, and 9. The questions are as follows:

6. What resources (including media, podcasts, websites, personal experience, etc.) did you consult for sermon illustrations this week in your sermon preparation?
7. What resources did you consult when thinking through preaching your sermon (sermon delivery) this week?
8. What other resources did you think of using this week in your sermon preparation?
9. What other resources did you consult this week in your sermon preparation?

The Sermon Preparation Focus Group focused on Research Question #1 with questions 3, 4, and 13. These questions are:

3. How were you taught to connect with your listeners when you preach?
4. What do you do while preaching to connect to your listeners?
13. Last thoughts on the topic?

RQ #2. What are the barriers to pastors integrating principles from adult learning theories in their preaching?

The Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey and the Sermon Preparation Focus Group engaged with Research Question #2.

The Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey looked at Research Question #2 in questions 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25. These questions are listed below:

19. What was your major for your bachelor's degree?

20. Are you familiar with the field of adult learning or adult learning theory?

Yes

No

21. What do you know about adult learning theory?

22. How are you using adult learning theory in your preaching?

23. Which learning style is your preaching usually geared to?

Audio (hearing word and music)

Visual (pictures & videos)

Kinetic (movement)

Practical (concrete application)

None of the above

24. How open are you to making changes in your preaching?

A great deal

A lot

A moderate amount

A little

None at all

25. Are you open to using insights from adult learning theories to improve the impact of your preaching?

Yes

No

The Sermon Preparation Focus Groups considered Research Question #2 in question 5, 6, 7, 8, 14, and 15. These questions are:

5. What has been your exposure, if any, to adult learning theory?
6. How would your listeners react if you were to drastically change your sermon delivery?
7. How willing are you to making changes to your preaching style (not content)?
8. What is your reaction to the idea of allowing a secular field of study influence how you preach?
12. If the USMB or your district were to do something like those suggestions, would you realistically participate?
13. Last thoughts on the topic?

RQ #3. What ideas, circumstances, or convictions are preventing preachers from applying adult learning theory in preaching?

Research Question #3 was targeted in the Sermon Preparation Focus Group. It does this with questions 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. These questions are listed below:

6. How would your listeners react if you were to somewhat change your sermon delivery?
7. How would your listeners react if you were to significantly change your sermon delivery?
8. If you knew certain changes would increase your ability to connect with men and women in worship, how willing are you to making changes to your preaching style (not content)?
9. What is your reaction to the idea of allowing a secular field of study influence how you preach?

10. What are the challenges you would face making changes in your preaching style?
11. What are the theological challenges to allowing adult learning theory to impact your preaching style?

Ministry Context

The ministry context of this project is the US Mennonite Brethren (USMB) denomination of churches, specifically the preaching ministry of its churches. Mennonite Brethren came out of the Mennonite movement started in the early 16th century. The group began in and around Holland and moved to the Vistula Delta close to Danzig in Poland where they stayed until Prussian militarism became unbearable. Beginning in 1788, the Mennonites moved to Russia with the blessing of Catherine the Great's land settlement policy. The Russian Mennonite congregations eventually began acting like state churches and the previous faith was replaced with ritual and conformity. It was in this situation that small groups started gathering for prayer and revival broke out amongst some of the Mennonites. In 1860, a group of brethren meet and laid out their reasons for seceding from the mother church and formed the Mennonite Brethren church. Eventually the Russian government planned to introduce universal military service which prompted the first migration of Mennonite Brethren to North America from 1874 to 1880. There was a second wave of migration to the Western hemisphere caused by the Russian revolution in 1917-18. The USMB is a direct descendant of those Mennonite Brethren that immigrated to the USA in those two waves (Faber and Jost 21-42).

The US Mennonite Brethren is a conservative, evangelical denomination. The main thing that separates it from other conservative evangelical denominations is the traditional

Mennonite focus on love, peacemaking, and reconciliation. However, the author has heard numerous times a joke that says MB stands for mostly Baptist. The USMB supports and encourages women to be involved in all levels and positions except the lead pastorate (*Official Statement*). This statement does not prohibit women from preaching in the USMB, but it does have the effect of ensuring that those tasked with most of the preaching are male. While the origin of the USMB stems from Europe, it is an ethnically diverse denomination. As of 2023, there were 231 churches in the USMB with 107 being Caucasian speaking English, 6 African American congregations, 54 Hispanic congregations, 30 Slavic congregations, 14 Ethiopian congregations, 10 Congolese congregations (with more working on joining), 4 Korean congregations, 2 Native American congregations, 2 Filipino congregations, 2 Japanese congregations, and 1 Chinese congregation.

Participants

This section of the chapter discusses the criteria for selecting the participants, the description of the participants, and ethical considerations regarding the participants.

Criteria for Selection

The participants for the research are all pastors in USMB churches. All the denomination's senior pastors, lead pastors, or solo pastors were invited to join the research project via email. The email made them aware that there were three potential levels of involvement including a survey, a four-week journaling experience, and a focus group. Since this project focused on the preaching aspect of the church's ministry, it made sense to seek participants from the denomination who do most of the preaching or are responsible for the preaching ministry of the church. The pastors who responded to the survey were invited to take part in the four-week journaling experience. Those who

responded well to the journaling experience were invited to take part in the focus group. The focus group participants needed to be able to participate in the focus group remotely.

Description of Participants

The participants of the research project were all male, due to the theological beliefs of the USMB. As the pastor of their church, the participants were all highly involved in their churches. The participants do the majority of the preaching at their respective churches and were invested in ensuring that their preaching is the best it can be. The ethnic makeup of the participants was mostly Caucasian, but there were other ethnicities represented with a good portion being Hispanic. The level of education was also diverse as there is no denominational mandate for pastors to have achieved a certain level of education.

Ethical Considerations

This research project involved working with people and their habits, thoughts, and skills. Due to the sensitivity of the questions that were asked, behaviors that were tracked, and thoughts that were asked for, the researcher took the participants' confidentiality extremely seriously. The researcher took every step possible to ensure that this confidentiality was maintained for the duration of the project and after.

All the participants for the survey and participant journals completed a consent form (see Appendix C) at the beginning of the survey, which was done in SurveyMonkey. The consent form addressed the strict confidentiality required by the research project necessary for the participants to uphold. The consent was downloaded and saved with the survey results. The survey results were downloaded and stored in an

encrypted disk image that was password protected on the researcher's computer. The researcher was the only one with the password.

A link to the participant journal was sent out each week via email with. To keep the recipients' email addresses confidential, they all received the email via blind carbon copy. The researcher downloaded the responses for the participant's journal from SurveyMonkey and stored the responses in an encrypted disk image that was password protected on his computer. The researcher was the only person with the password.

The focus group participants all completed a consent form (see Appendix C). The consent form was a fillable PDF sent to them via email, that the participants filled out and emailed to the researcher before participating in the focus group. The consent form addressed the strict confidentiality required by the research project necessary for the participants to uphold. The focus group facilitator signed a consent form as well. The consent forms were saved in an encrypted disk image that was password protected on the researcher's computer. The focus group was held via Zoom due to the geographic range of the participants. The entire the focus group discussion was audio and video recorded with the participants' consent. The recordings were downloaded to the researcher's computer and stored in an encrypted disk image that was password protected on the researcher's computer. The researcher was the only person with the password. The researcher and focus group facilitator completed the Protecting Human Participants Training Course offered by Asbury Theological Seminary's Institutional Review Board.

Instrumentation

The researcher chose to use a mixed methods approach to this research project. The goal was to find an explanation for why adult learning theory was not being applied

to preaching. To achieve this goal, the research used three instruments: a survey entitled the Outside Resource and Barrier Survey, a participant journal entitled Sermon Preparation Participant Journal, and a focus group called the Sermon Preparation Focus Group. The Outside Resource and Barrier Survey was quantitative in nature while the Sermon Preparation Participant Journal and Sermon Preparation Focus Group were qualitative in nature.

The Outside Resource and Barrier Survey was the first research tool. The survey that was taken on SurveyMonkey. It was a researcher designed research tool. The rationale behind using it in the project was to get a broad understanding of the process and tools that the participants use in their sermon preparation. The Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey consisted of 24 questions. The first 8 questions asked about the participants' demographics. Questions 9 through 17 asked about the participant's sermon preparation. Questions 18 through 24 were question about the participant's knowledge of adult learning theory and their openness to using it. The survey was introduced to all the senior, lead, and solo pastors of the USMB via an email. The email included an invitation to be a participant in the research project and contained a link to the survey in SurveyMonkey.

The Sermon Preparation Participant Journal was the second research tool that was used in the project. This tool was a researcher-designed participant journal. The rationale for this tool was to obtain a deep look into the sermon preparation habits of the participants. The participant's journal contained eight questions about the participant's sermon preparation for that week. A link to the Sermon Preparation Participant Journal

was sent out each week for four weeks. The participants filled it out and the researcher downloaded the responses.

The Sermon Preparation Focus Group was the third research tool for the project. It was a focus group discussion that was researcher designed. The rationale for using it in this project was to gather preachers together and facilitate a discussion about the challenges and barriers to allowing adult learning theory to shape the way they preach their sermons. This focus group allowed for a deep discussion from multiple points of view about applying adult learning theory to preaching. The focus group had 13 questions to discuss. After 2 ice-breaker questions, items 3, 4, and 5 warmed up the discussion by getting background information that was relevant to the topic. Questions 6 through 10 made up the heart of the discussion, asking questions about challenges faced when applying adult learning theory to preaching. The last 3 questions wrapped up the discussion by asking about ideas to make it possible to apply adult learning theory to preaching. The focus group met over a Zoom call due to the geographic distance between participants. Alex Janzen, who had taken the human subject training along with the researcher facilitated the Sermon Preparation Focus Group.

Expert Review

All three of the research tools for this project are researcher-designed. This necessitated an expert review of all three tools. Michelle Hall, the Director of Institutional Research at Southeastern Louisiana University did the first expert review. Dr. Hall holds a PhD in Research Psychology. She reviewed the research tools from the perspective of a professional researcher. Alex Janzen, who is a USMB pastor from a town that neighbors the researcher's town, did a second expert review. He holds a Master of

Divinity and is the solo pastor of his church which means he has all the responsibility for all the preaching at his church. He reviewed the research tools from the perspective of a participant who would be using them. Both experts were sent an email (see Appendix B) with the project's purpose and research questions attached as well as the research tools and the Expert Review Instrument (see Appendix B). Hall's recommendations were used to tighten up several of the questions and to change some of the survey questions from open-ended to close-ended to help with data analysis. Janzen's recommendations were used to clarify directions and to broaden the number of participants.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

This research project included the use of a survey, a participant journal, and a focus group to determine what the challenges were preventing adult learning theory from being applied to preaching. Each research tool was designed to obtain the necessary information. The Outside Resource and Barrier Survey was designed to collect a general idea of the background exposure of the preachers who participated and their sermon preparation process. The Sermon Preparation Participant Journal was designed to verify that the preachers are doing in their weekly sermon preparation what they say they are. The Sermon Preparation Focus Group was designed to generate a positive and in-depth discussion of the thoughts and challenges of allowing a secular field of study influence how one preaches.

The research tools were reliable because of the rigorous process used to develop them. The researcher used best practices as laid out by Sensing in his book about qualitative research (86-90) for crafting productive questions. Once the tools were created, they were subjected to expert review by a research professional and a member of

the participant group. Consistent procedures were written and instituted to ensure reliability and validity of the results. Each expert was asked to weigh in on whether the questions of the research tools aligned with the research questions of the project. The use of SurveyMonkey for the survey, the same PDF for the participant journal, and a facilitator for the focus group also helped ensure validity.

Data Collection

The data collection for the project occurred over seven weeks. The first research tool, the Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey was sent out via email with a description of the project, an invitation to participate and a link to the survey in SurveyMonkey. The participants were given two weeks to respond. A reminder email was sent out during the second week, encouraging other pastors to participate. The invitation was then sent to fill out a Sermon Preparation Participant Journal for four weeks via email. Each week a link to the Sermon Preparation Participant Journal was sent out. The participants for the Sermon Preparation Focus Group were chosen from the respondents to the Sermon Preparation Participant Journal. The selection was based on the thoroughness of the answers given in the Sermon Preparation Participants Journal. The focus group was held in the seventh week of the project via Zoom. The facilitator of the focus group took the same Human Subjects Training as the researcher.

The Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey was researcher created. A survey enabled the inclusion of as broad a group as possible to gain as much insight as possible. Sensing made it clear that a survey would be best (115) for this. The researcher followed the suggestions that Sensing makes regarding question type and development (86-90). Once the survey was created it was subjected to the first round of expert review. After

using the expert's suggestions and tightening up the questions of the survey, it was then sent for another round of expert review. That input was assimilated into the survey that was then put into SurveyMonkey and administered through that provider.

The Sermon Preparation Participant Journal was researcher created. A participant journal, or diary, helps a researcher obtain a view of “ongoing experiences...within everyday experiences.” (Bolger et al. 580). Another benefit of a participant journal is that it reduces the amount of deliberation and hones in on the actions taken because of the immediacy of answering it (Bolger et al. 580). As with the survey, once the Sermon Preparation Participant Journal was developed, it was submitted to a round of expert review. After the expert review, suggested changes were made and the journal was subjected to another round of expert review. The input from the second round of expert review was incorporated into the participant journal. The journal questions were converted to a survey on SurveyMonkey. A link to the journal was sent out to the participants every week for four weeks and the researcher downloaded the responses. The journals provided insights into the types and names of resources preachers consult while preparing their sermons and the type and name of resources preachers think about consulting. This helped evaluate the use of adult learning theory.

The Sermon Participant Focus Group guide was a researcher created tool. A focus group was used because the researcher wanted to discover a multitude of perspectives around the concept of allowing adult learning theory to affect the way a preacher preaches. The focus group guide was subjected to the same strenuous expert review as the two other research tools. The focus group was conducted on a Zoom call that recoded both audio and video. Both the facilitator and the researcher have taken and passed the

Human Subjects Training. The facilitator guided the discussion of the focus group, and the researcher took notes. The call recording was downloaded and securely saved by the researcher. The focus group gave information about concerns, anticipated reactions, and openness to using adult learning theory to affect preaching.

Data Analysis

In this research project several different types of analysis were used to compile the data from the Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey, Sermon Preparation Participant Journal, and Sermon Preparation Focus Group.

The Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey results were downloaded from SurveyMonkey. Once this was accomplished, the researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the demographic questions as well as the close ended questions, especially the questions with scaled answers. The answers to the open-ended questions are coded appropriately to gain a wide view of what types of resources and what specific resources were being used in sermon preparation. This helped identify themes, categories, and outliers.

The Sermon Preparation Participant Journal responses were downloaded by the researcher each week. They were compiled and analyzed each week. Descriptive statistics were used for the closed-ended questions. Coding was used for the open-ended questions to gain a wide view of the types of resources as well as specific resources used in sermon preparation. The same codes used for the Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey were used in coding the Sermon Preparation Participant Journals. Using the same codes for both tools increased recognition of the themes, categories, and outliers.

The Sermon Preparation Focus Group recordings were downloaded from Zoom. A transcript of the recording was made. The transcript, the recording, and the notes were analyzed. They were coded to identify themes, categories, and outliers. The researcher also used documentary analysis on the transcript of the focus group. A literal reading was done first, followed by an interpretive reading, and lastly a reflexive reading. These readings paired with the coding helped identify themes, slippage, and silences.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter reports the data that was gathered for this project. It identifies the participants of the study. Chapter Four also considers the data gathered from each research instrument in relationship to the four Research Questions for the project. This chapter concludes with the research's major findings.

Participants

This section describes the participants for each of the three research methods, beginning with the Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey, then the Participant Journals, and finally the Sermon Preparation Focus Group.

Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey

The first research instrument was the Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey designed for senior, solo, or lead pastors. The initial thirty-six respondents were reduced by three, as they refused to sign the informed consent. Due to branching and the ability to not answer any question the respondents did not wish to, not all the survey item responses equal thirty-three. The participants were asked about their educational background (Figure 4.1). Three respondents had earned a doctorate, one was working on his doctorate. Twenty respondents had earned a master's degree, counting the one person working on his doctorate. Twelve of those who earned a master's degree had earned an M.Div. Four respondents had earned a bachelor's degree and two had other educational credentials. One of the respondents who responded "other," completed high school and

some college; the other person who responded “other,” went to a Bible college for three years. The majority of participants had a master’s degree or higher.

The participants were asked about the average worship attendance at their church (Figure 4.2). Eight responded in the 1-50 attendance range. Eight led churches in the 51-100 attendance range. Seven selected the 101-200 attendance range. Only four pastors selected the 201-500 attendance range. No one selected the 500 plus attendance range, and two respondents did not answer the question. The majority of participants pastor a church with an average worship attendance under 200. The participants were asked how frequently they preach in an average month. (Figure 4.3). Most of the respondents preach every week, since twenty-one said they preach four times in the average month. Six of the respondents reported they preach three weeks on average, with only two responding that they preach two weeks a month. No one responded that they preach only one week per month, and one respondent did not answer the question.

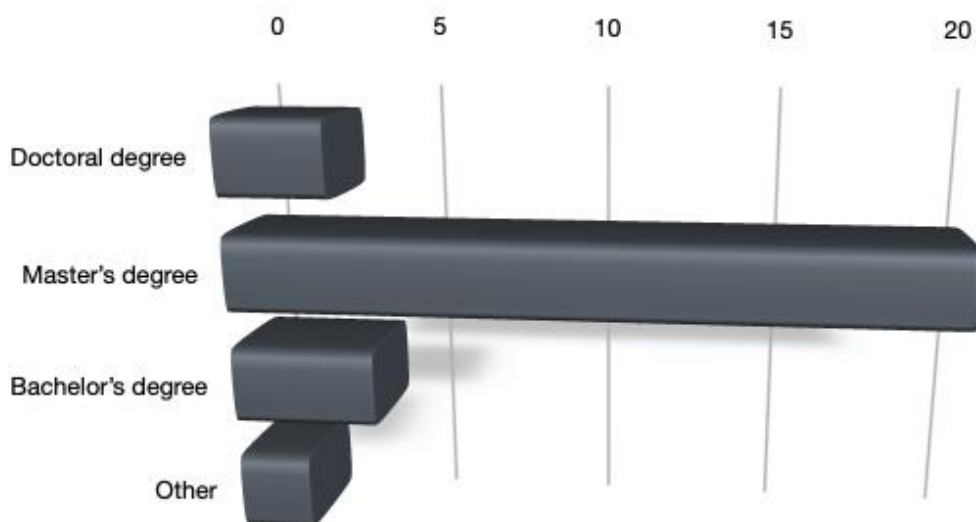


Fig..1 **Highest degree achieved.**

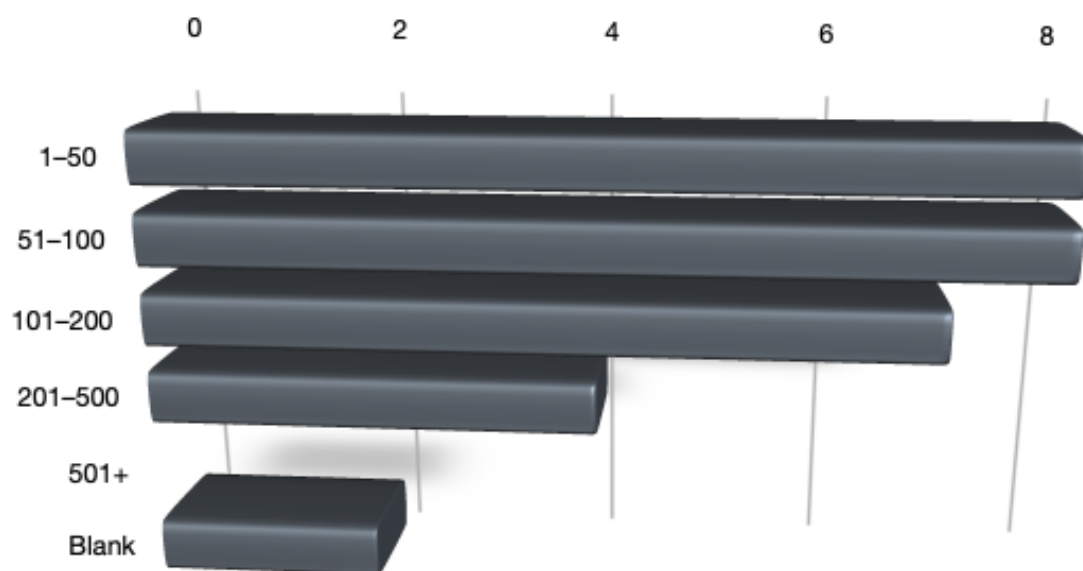


Fig. 4.2. Average weekly worship attendance.

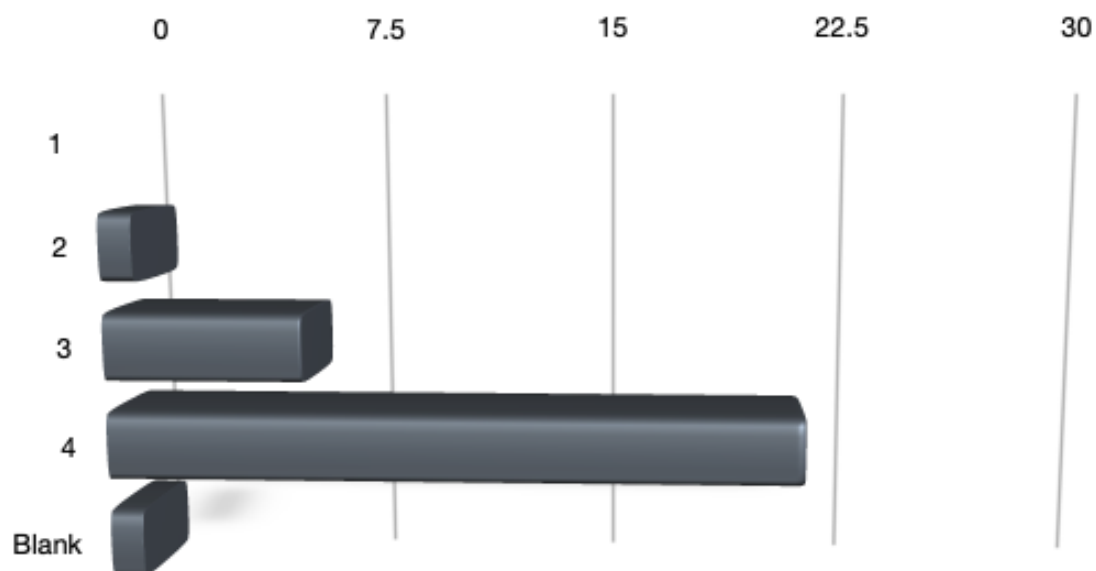


Fig. 4.3. Weeks preached in typical month.

Sermon Preparation Participant Journal

The second research tool in this project was a four-week participant journal, the Sermon Preparation Participant Journal. Those who responded to the Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey were asked in the survey if they would be willing to take part in the participant journals. Fifteen of the survey respondents said that they would participate in the participant journals. Each journal participant was sent a link to that week's participant journal prompt via email (Figure 4.4). Three of the fifteen invited did not respond to any of the four participant journals. Five of the fifteen responded once, and three of the fifteen invited responded twice to the participant journals. One of the fifteen responded three times and three of the fifteen invited responded to all four of the participant journal questions or prompts. Two of the respondents had a bachelor's degree as their highest degree (Figure 4.5). Ten of them had a master's degree as their highest degree, with seven of them being a Master of Divinity and one of these seven was working on his Ph.D. Two of the pastors that responded preach on average three times a month, with the other ten preaching four weeks a month on average. Two of the twelve pastors that responded to the participant journals pastor a church with an average weekly attendance of fifty or less (Figure 4.6). Three of the respondents pastor a church that averages between 51-100 a week. Five of the respondents have a church that averages 101-200 attendees weekly. One pastor who responded leads a church with an average weekly attendance between 201-500, and one pastor did not share the average attendance of his church.

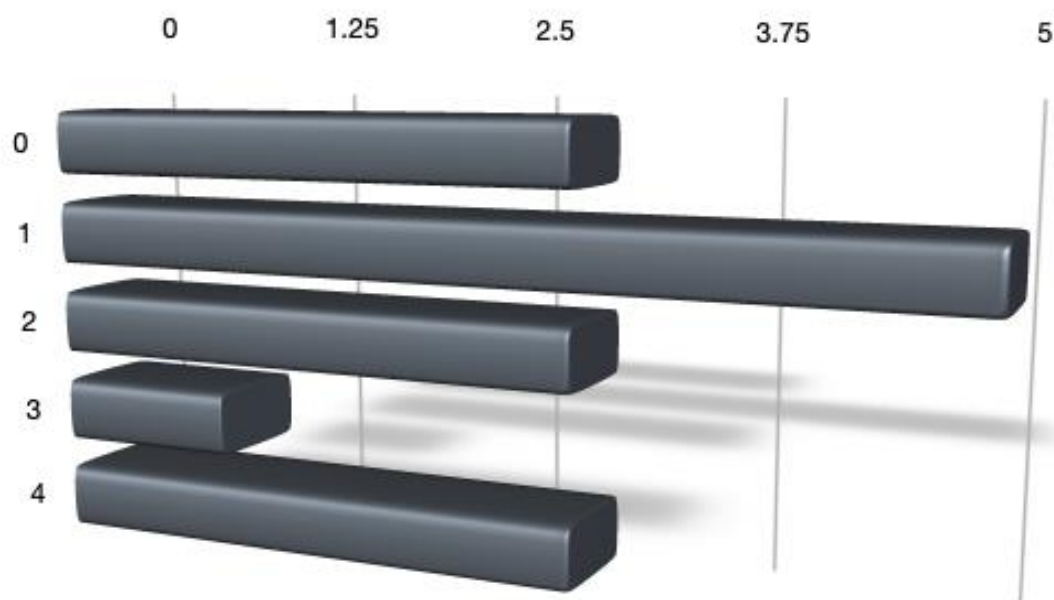


Fig. 4.4. Responses to the participant journals.

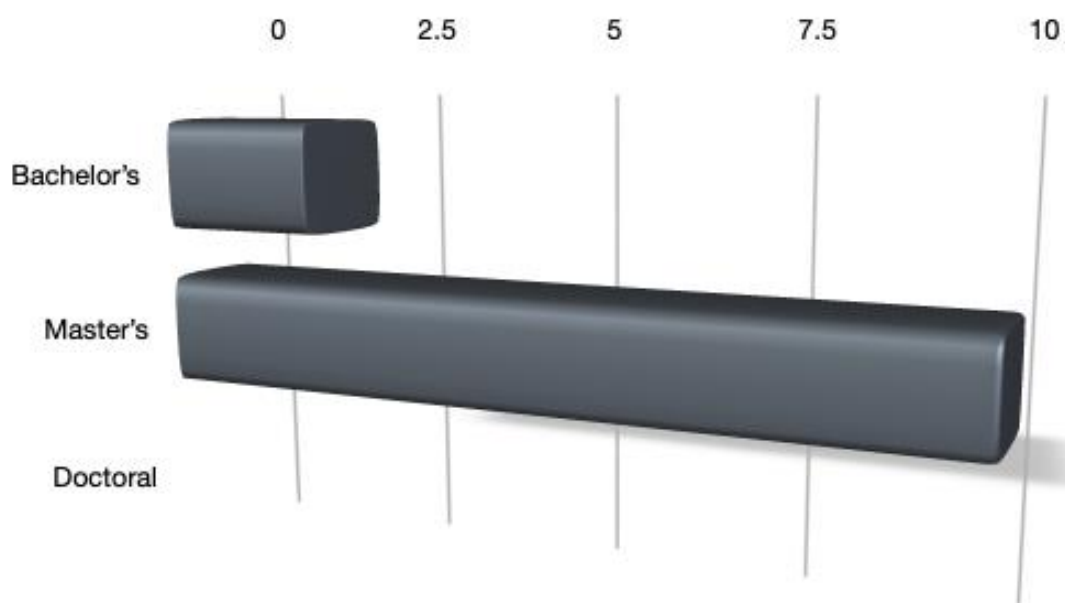


Fig. 4.5. Highest degree for participant journal respondents.

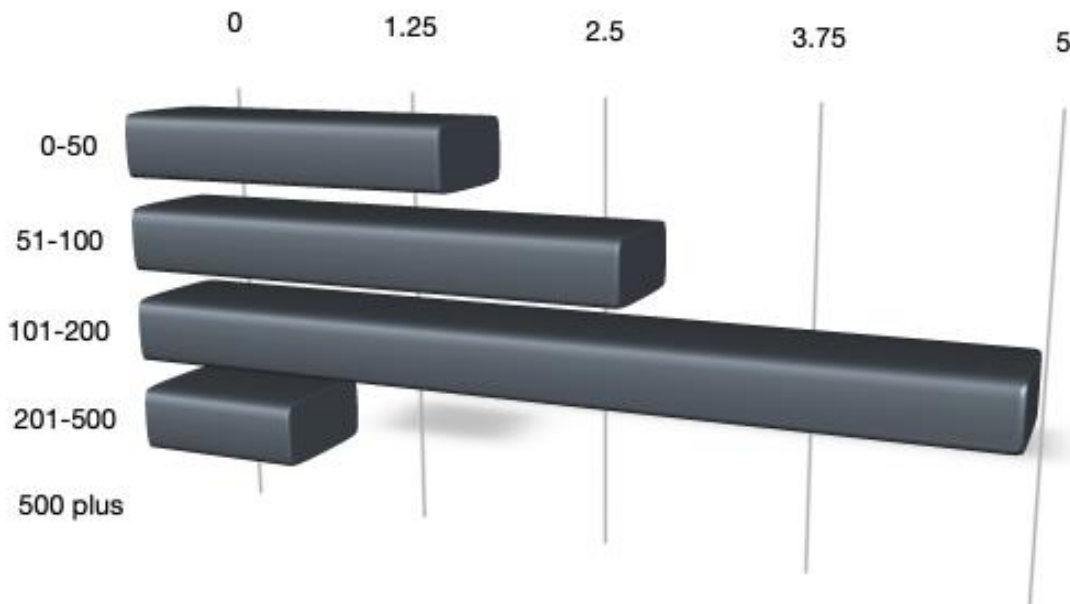


Fig. 4.6. Average weekly worship attendance for participant journal respondents.

Sermon Preparation Focus Group

The third and final research tool in this project was the Sermon Preparation Focus Group. The focus group had six participants. The pastors possessed a wide variety of overall ministry experience in the group (Figure 4.7). One pastor maintains less than ten years ministry experience, three pastors show between eleven and twenty years of experience, and two pastors state twenty-one years or more of experience. The time the pastors have spent in their current congregation was varied as well (Figure 4.9). One pastor was seeking a new ministry, two pastors declare less than six years in their current position, two pastors affirm between seven to twelve years in their current situations, and one confirms over twelve years in his current church. In regard to the education of the focus group participants, one pastor had some college experience, though he had the most ministerial work experience, and the other five pastors had earned a Master of Divinity degree.

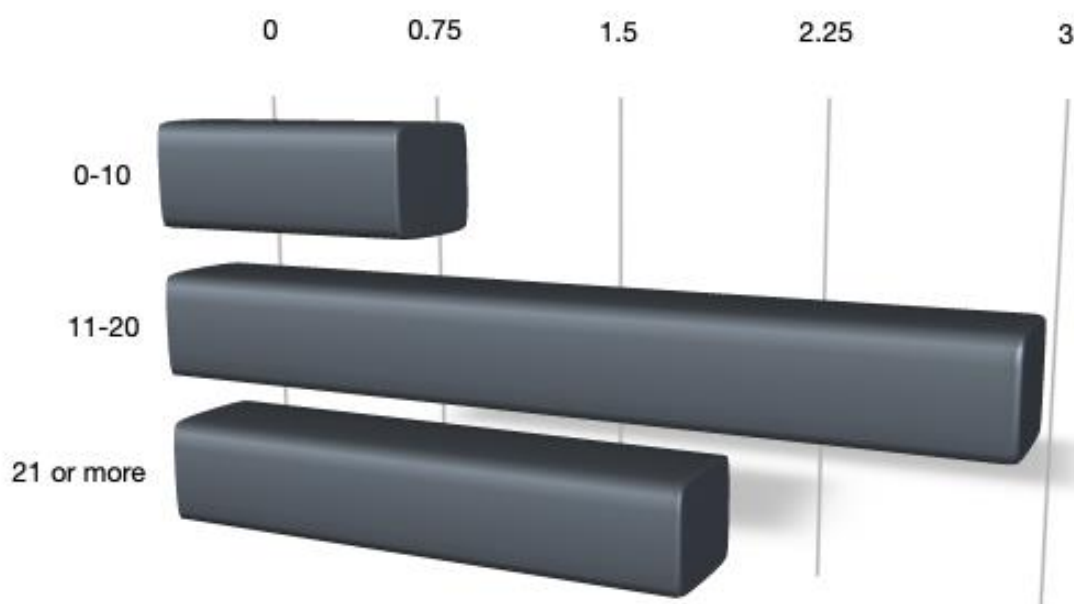


Fig. 4.7. Years in ministry for focus group.

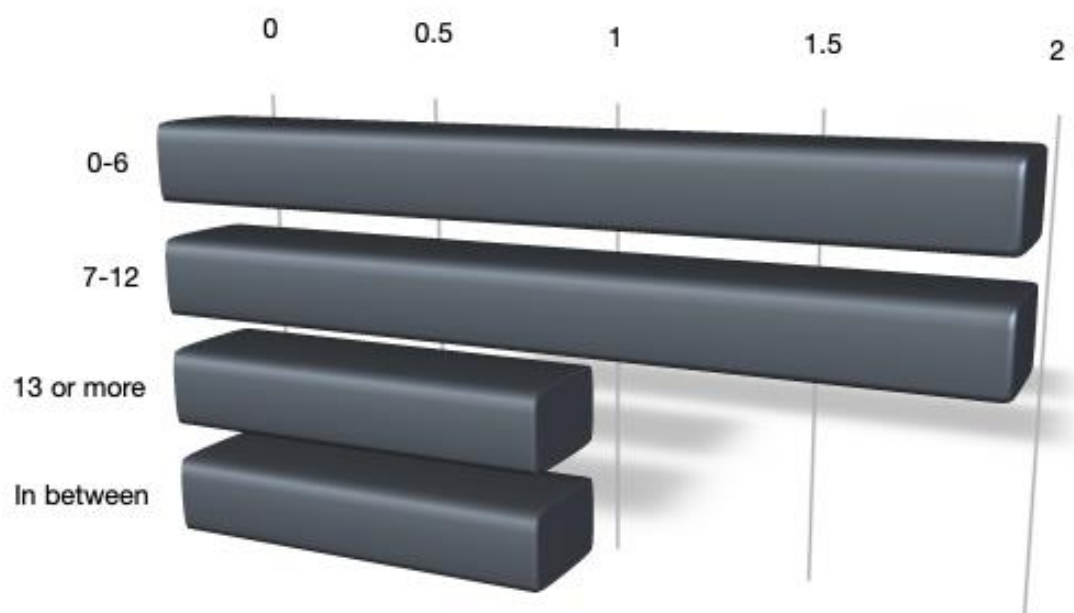


Fig. 4.8. Years in current church for focus group.

Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

RQ #1: What outside disciplines do pastors consider when preparing for a sermon?

All three of the research tools addressed Research Question #1. The Outside Discipline and Barrier survey showed that the respondents, for the most part, used tools and resources that would be expected in sermon preparation. However, they used a wide variety of sources. Eight pastors noted their use of Bible software, such as Accordance, Logos, or Olive Tree. Three noted use of online Bible websites like biblegateway.com, biblehub.com, stepbible.org, and studylight.org. Several respondents mentioned using original language tools including:

- *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* by Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich
- *Greek-English Lexicon the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* by Louw and Nida
- *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* edited by Bromiley and Kittel,
- *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* edited by Waltke, Archer, and Harris
- *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by Thayer
- *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* by Brown, Driver, and Briggs

Two specific cross reference tools were mentioned more than once:

- *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* by Morton

- *Commentary on New Testament Use of the Old Testament* by Beale and Carson.

Several commentaries were mentioned repeatedly including:

- *Mathew Henry's Commentary, Christ-centered Exposition Commentary*
- *Be Series Commentary* by Wiersbe
- *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*
- *New American Commentary*
- *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*
- *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*
- *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*
- *The NIV Application Commentary*
- *Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament*
- *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.*

One pastor used *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary* which offered a unique perspective compared to the other resources. One pastor used, “Mesopotamian, Ugaritic, and Egyptian” sources in addition to the “Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and Second Temple writings” to help him understand the context of the text he is using for his sermon. This pastor appears to be a rarity among Mennonite Brethren circles. When looking for illustrative material for sermons the pastors gave numerous responses. These included illustration books, quote collections, websites, and videos. Another common answer was the Bible itself, using stories from the Bible to illustrate points of a sermon. Several pastors mentioned podcasts as well as personal anecdotes. Numerous respondents referred to relationship stories especially

among the congregation and community. A different source mentioned a few times was commentaries and other sermons, either past sermons by the respondent or sermons by other pastors on the same text, especially renown pastors from church history. One pastor mentioned a group of pastors that meets to talk through sermons, and another pastor mentioned a mentor. One pastor collaborates with a friend who serves as a missionary.

The Sermon Preparation Participant Journal and Sermon Preparation Focus Group elicited incredibly similar results to the Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey. The same commentaries, biblical study tools, Greek and Hebrew tools, and illustration materials were mentioned in the participant guide. One week, two outliers included imbd.com. Another pastor mentioned using YouTube and a videographer to edit a video he used in his sermon. A third pastor mentioned using Harvard Medical School's website for a sermon.

In the focus group the questions dealing with RQ #1 emphasized sermon delivery more than tools used in sermon preparation. It took some time for the focus group participants to remember how they were taught to preach. FG1 and the others did discuss how they were taught to connect to their congregation through typical public speaking skills such as: having a hook to draw people in; keeping the introduction and conclusion in sync; having a well thought out introduction, body, and conclusion; staying with the message the text has; relying on the pastor's relationship with the congregants; and relying on God to help with and provide the connection. FG3 also mentioned that God sometimes calls preachers to preach a message that does not connect and is not heard, like he told Isaiah. In response to being asked how they connect to their congregation

when they preach, the focus group participants mentioned reading body language, eye contact, and pregnant pauses. They all agreed on the importance humor plays. None of the pastors reported anything being used either in preparation for preaching or delivery of the sermon that connected with adult learning theory.

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

RQ #2 What are the Barriers to pastors integrating principles from adult learning theories in preaching?

Two of the research tools address research question #2: The Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey and the Sermon Preparation Focus Group. The Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey revealed a lack of familiarity with adult learning theory in the respondents. The participants' bachelor's degrees included majors such as social science, Spanish, business, ministry, health sciences, or psychology. Two respondents had a major that would have possibly brought them in contact with adult learning theory: elementary/middle school education.

Every respondent was asked if they were familiar with the field of adult learning or adult learning theory. Eighteen of the respondents, just under seventy percent, answered "no" to the question; this percentage does not include the eleven pastors that skipped the question. When asked to share what they know about adult learning theory, only the bare basics were mentioned. Eight of the pastors said they knew about adult learning theory, but three declined to share what they knew about it. Five gave answers that mentioned differences between how children and adults learn, how adults are motivated to learn, and different learning styles. One pastor mentioned andragogical

theory and conversations he has had with adult educators he knows. One participant mentioned Malcolm Knowles and self-directed learning.

The same eight pastors were then asked how they are using adult learning theory in their preaching. As with the previous question, only five respondents answered. Two of the five pastors admitted that they do not think of adult learning theory when they are preparing their sermons. The three that did answer mentioned relevance, varying applications, learning styles, and one church has small groups that discuss the sermon text for an opportunity for more self-directed study. Every survey participant was asked about what learning styles his preaching was geared toward. The pastors were given the option of choosing as many answers as they wanted from the following list and answered accordingly:

- Audio (18)
- Visual (13)
- kinetic (3)
- practical (13)
- none of the above. (0)

While the majority of respondents had slight to no knowledge of adult learning theory.

When asked if they were open to making changes, the pastors were overwhelmingly open to considering adult learning theories. The pastors were given a range of options to choose from to answer the question that included: “not open”, “a little open”, “moderately open”, “a lot open”, and “a great deal open”. A scant twenty percent selected being “a little open” to change while forty-four percent choose that they are “moderately open” to making changes in their preaching. Twenty-eight percent of pastors said they

would be “a lot open” to changing their preaching with eight percent admitting to being “a great deal open” to making changes in their preaching. None of the pastors chose the option of “not open” (Figure 4.9). This openness to changing how a pastor preaches was confirmed in the next question when twenty-four respondents said yes, they were open to using the insights from adult learning theory in improve the impact of their preaching. Only one of the pastors answered this question by selecting “no”.

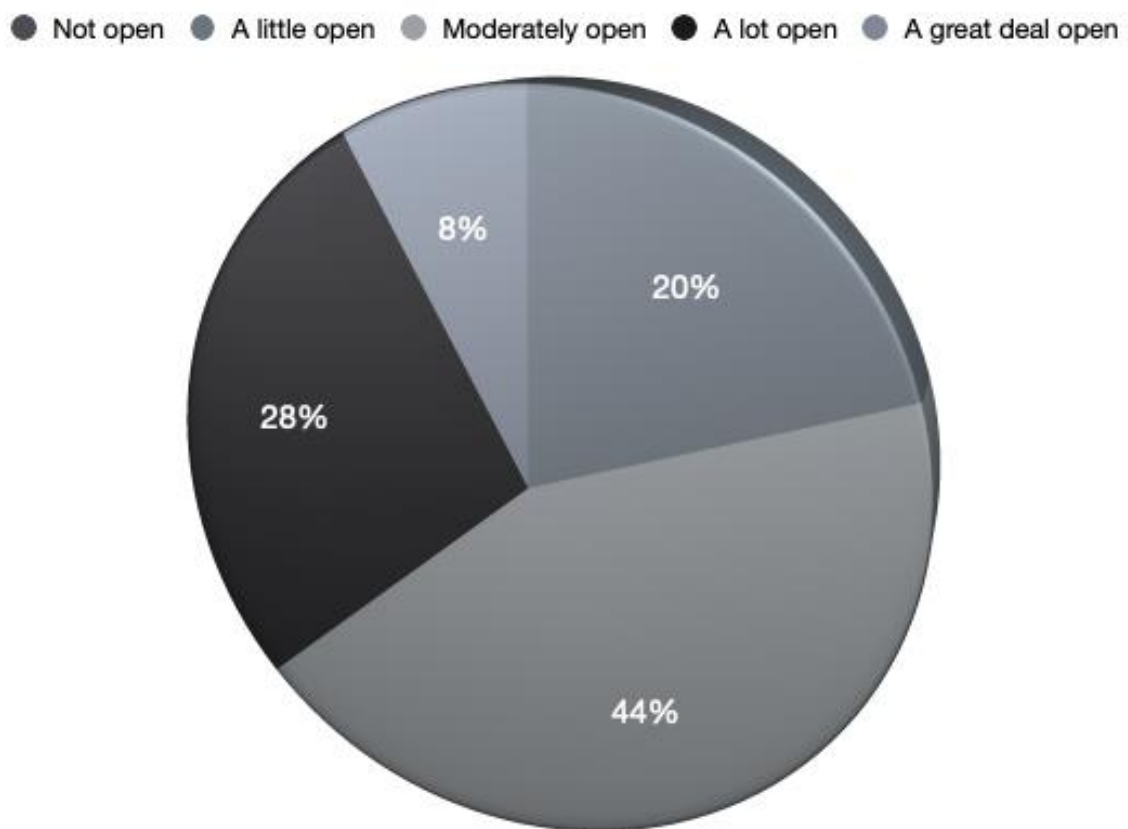


Fig 4.9. Openness to change.

The Sermon Preparation Focus Group showed a lack of familiarity with adult learning theory as well. When asked what exposure they have had to adult learning theory the responses ranged agreeing when they said, “none,” “hardly any,” or “none

explicitly.” FG3 had read some things about adult learning theory. The pastors in the focus group were then asked about how their congregations would react if they were to change how they preached. FG3 mentioned how the reaction would depend on the change with “short term or one-off changes being easier but long-term changes would not go so well.” FG3 then mentioned how “some changes might not even be noticed.” FG2 said it would not have much of an impact. FG1 then mentioned that his congregation would speak their mind as to what they liked and did not like. FG5 agreed that a small change would not be an issue but a major change, such as switching from “mostly expository to mostly topical,” would not go well. FG4 and FG6 rounded out the discussion on this question by talking about how they specifically change up their preaching on a regular basis so their congregations would probably not notice.

When asked if they would be willing to make changes to their preaching style, all the pastors of the focus group responded affirmatively. FG5 did add that some changes only add stress to the preacher and so care needs to be taken. However, almost all said they would be agreeable to attend an educational opportunity to learn more about adult learning theory and how to implement it in their preaching. It was mentioned by almost all the pastors that having an idea of the expected impact would increase this desire. They also agreed with each other that something on the shorter side, an hour webinar or a podcast, would make it easier to be involved in.

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

RQ #3 What ideas, circumstances, or convictions are preventing preachers from applying adult learning theory in preaching?

The Sermon Preparation Focus Group addresses research question three. When asked about their willingness to change, the pastors all agreed that while they are disposed to make changes, especially to help them connect to their congregations better, but it would not be easy to do. FG1 said, “I want to say yes I would change, but it is hard to make changes.” FG6 mentioned that when he moved from the West Coast to South Dakota, he had had to make some changes in his preaching method because his new congregation communicated differently than his previous one. FG4 mentioned the “arrogance factor,” where leaders regularly refuse to listen to suggestions as they feel they know best, or as FG4 said, “dig in [their] heels when criticism is offered.” FG3 added the wisdom that a preacher should do his best to connect with his congregation, but needs to also, “stay true to yourself.” He is prepared to change but there should, “be a limit to how much change,” because, “not all changes are helpful.” FG2 picked up this theme and added that pastors need to be careful, “not to make changes for the wrong reason, especially to just follow the latest trend.” FG4 also thought that the suggested changes need be about increasing effectiveness of the preaching.

When asked about any theological challenges to allowing adult learning theory the pastors answered positively. FG6 stated that the most important thing is to take care and, “ensure the message isn’t changed.” FG1 echoed the sentiment by stating the “primary discipline is the Word of God.” FG5 said that it is possible to learn from secular sources but, “it needs to be sorted through.” FG4 declared, “truth can be found in other disciplines, but the Word of God is the end all.” FG3 said that he was incredibly open to the idea adding how, “we can learn from secular fields of study, though there are limits.”

FG2 pointed out how, “all truth is God’s truth and when a secular field finds truth that can be reinforced with scripture it is good.

Summary of Major Findings

This project has yielded three major findings.

1. Regarding preaching, pastors do not often consider using resources beyond the traditional fields of biblical scholarship, history, and theology.
2. One of the biggest challenges to applying adult learning theory to preaching is the pastors’ lack of knowledge about adult learning and its relevance to preaching.
3. Pastors are willing to make changes to connect better with their congregations in their preaching.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter Five first delves into the three major findings of the project. It discusses the ministry implications of those findings, notes the limitations of the study and a review of unexpected observations. The Chapter moves from findings to recommendations, concluding with a personal postscript.

Major Findings

This section considers the three major findings of this research project.

Major Finding #1— Few Resources

Regarding preaching, pastors do not often consider using resources beyond the traditional fields of biblical scholarship, history, and theology.

I have thought for numerous years that a dearth of knowledge about adult learning theory exists amongst preachers in general. When I would bring up thoughts or ideas from or about adult learning theory with other pastors whether in meetings, conferences, or classes, I would normally be met with blank stares or enough questions to make any progress in the conversation untenable. Given this experience, the researcher did not have high expectations of adult learning theory being put to use in preaching. The research bore out this expectation. The Outside Discipline and Barrier survey respondents overwhelmingly said they were not familiar with the field of adult learning theory. Only eight of the respondents said they were familiar with adult learning theory. The Sermon Preparation Participants Journals displayed that none of the pastors mentioned any type

of resource connected to adult learning theory. In the Sermon Preparation focus group, only two of the pastors voiced any exposure to adult learning.

In Nehemiah 8.7-8, the Levites present at the reading of the Law helped those present bridge the divide between the Scripture and the people's understanding of it, by interpreting and applying the Law (Breneman 226). The preachers who participated in the research, the Outside Discipline and Barrier survey, the Sermon Preparation Participant Journal, and the focus group, are doing the same thing using tools from original language tools, cross reference tools, and commentaries. In other words, the preachers who participated are using traditional exegetical and preaching tools. The Sermon Preparation focus group participants agreed with D. Allen's insight that faithfully preaching the gospel without allowing culture to affect it (81) is important. Four of the six focus group members made statements to the effect that while it is good to use and recognize truth and insights from other sources, it is the Scripture that has the final authority and say for Christians. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral supports this in that that while tradition, reason, and experience are valid and good sources, Scripture is the most important thing (Crawford 13; Bevins 232; Outler 1985 9; Warren et al. 327). The pastors who participated appear to take seriously the duty to improve the use of the gift of preaching (Packer 229) and are using a wide variety of resources to do so. However, as they are unaware of the tools and resources offered by adult learning theory, they are not using them.

Major Finding #2—Biggest Challenge

The biggest challenge to applying adult learning theory to preaching is the pastors' lack of knowledge about adult learning and its relevance to preaching.

While there was a distinct lack of knowledge of and exposure to adult learning theory revealed by all three of the research instruments, the preachers did show utilization of the scant knowledge they had. This is revealed in the responses given when asked about what learning styles their preaching reflected. Twenty-five out of twenty-nine respondents to the Outside Discipline and Barrier survey acknowledged they gear their sermons toward one of the learning styles given as an option: audio, visual, kinetic, or practical. Twelve of the twenty-nine respondents identified multiple learning styles they have in mind when preparing their sermons; this is more than two-fifths, forty-one percent, or a little under half of the respondents. These results show pastors use the modest amount of information they have from adult learning theory. However, the knowledge that these pastors do not have in the field of adult learning theory is immense. This lack of knowledge presents the biggest barrier to applying adult learning theory to preaching. If preachers are not aware of and do not know what adult learning theory offers, they cannot apply it to their preaching.

Acts 18.24-28, speaks to the situation of pastors simply not knowing how adults learn. Apollos was involved in the church in Ephesus and was doing good work preaching the gospel of Jesus, but he did not know some aspects of the message, until Priscilla and Aquilla took him aside and explained or expounded (Thayer) the knowledge Apollos was missing. When Priscilla and Aquilla augment Apollos' knowledge his ministry was improved, and he was able to better preach and defend Christ and his gospel (Kent 11; Johnson and Harrington 255). This made his ministry stronger (Gaventa 146) and gave him an even better understanding of salvation and the Holy Spirit (Arnold 405).

Preachers do not know a great deal of information about how adults learn. Andragogy shows how congregations need to listen actively during the sermons as opposed to sitting passively and being unengaged (Stuart 126). While preparing their sermons, if preachers remember that everyone in the congregation is a unique learner (Stuart 126) it helps the congregation learn the sermon's lesson better. Kolb learning styles, perhaps the best-known approach to learning styles, offers information on how a learner's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and perceptions play into the learning process (Kolb and Kolb 43; Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience* 43). Other factors that affect learning are culture, abilities, temperament, and interests (Dyrud 124; Tabrizi et al. 35). Preachers also need to learn that their preferred learning style is not the right way for everyone to learn (Sugarman 265). Transformative learning reminds preachers that transformation comes about when people are confronted by an experience that challenges a person's preconceptions (Parson et al. 1336). The most confrontational experience is coming to grips with the resurrection and gospel of Jesus (Backfish 288). Another lesson that transformative learning offers is how it can refresh the memories of church members and remind them of aspects of the faith that they may have forgotten and are not practicing (Day et al. 990). The discoveries that preachers can acquire from adult learning theory can help them focus on how they connect with their congregations whether in person or virtually (O'Lynn 9).

Major Finding #3—Willingness to Change

Pastors are willing to make changes in their preaching to connect better with their congregations.

The last major finding reveals preachers' desire to improve at the task of preaching. This was revealed in the Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey. All of the respondents to the survey answered that they were at least "a little open" to making changes in their preaching, with over one-third (thirty-six percent) answering that they were "a lot open" or "a great deal open" to making changes in their preaching. The willingness to change shows again when the preachers were asked in the survey if they would be open to using insights from adult learning theory to improve preaching. Twenty-four out of twenty-nine respondents said "yes" they were open to it. Only one pastor out of twenty-nine said "no" to the question with four not answering the question. This openness was evident in the Sermon Preparation Participant Journals. The answers to what resources were used for sermon preparation including illustrative material were incredibly varied. The respondents used: quotation collections, books by various authors, websites, podcasts, their own personal experiences, the experiences of their congregation members, writings from the historical church, YouTube, groups of pastors, and even hymns. This desire to improve their preaching also showed up in the Sermon Preparation Focus Group. FG3 said, "I'm willing to change stylistically if it will help." After that, FG2 jumped in by saying, "we all want to connect with our audience," and that all preachers should be open to change. FG6 added to the conversation when he mentioned that he would be inclined to change, especially if it helped him understand people better and helped him connect to his congregation. When asked over half (four out of six) pastors in the focus group said they would take advantage if an opportunity was presented for them to learn about adult learning theory. It was evident to me that the pastors

involved in the research were invested in preaching the best they can and are enthusiastic about exploring new ways to connect to their congregations.

The desire to connect to a preacher's audience is seen in Scripture too. In Acts 17. 22-31, Paul used a different technique because he was open to trying ways to help the people listening to him connect with the message, the gospel. The people in his audience at the Areopagus included Stoics, Epicureans, and the Athenian elites (Keener *Acts* 2614). Due to Paul's openness, he was able to refer to the altar in Athens that was dedicated "To an Unknown God" (Gempf). Paul changes his tactics because of the different audience he finds himself in front of (Keener *Background* 377; Bruce 334). This openness to connect to his audience that Paul showed is the same openness and desire that the pastors who participated in the research have. This desire to connect people with the gospel lines up with the church's ministry to the world, or the *Missio Dei*. This mission is to, "become the good news for all" (WCC "The Church" 107). The openness that the preachers have shown helps attain this goal. The idea of using insight from secular sources can be traced all the way back to Origen (Outler, "Plundering" 77). The insight provided by adult learning theory is good as it comes from rational thinking which is a gift from God (Hlatshwayo and Zondi 3). Rational thinking includes scientific exploration (K. Lawson 57) and is a gift from God as the source of all truth (K. Lawson 56).

Ministry Implications of the Findings

The major findings from this research have four important implications for ministry.

The first ministry implication is that preachers desire to preach well and connect to their congregation and this needs to be leveraged or encouraged. Preachers are taking advantage of a wide range of tools they have at their disposal. These tools range from original language tools like lexicons and theological dictionaries and wordbooks to Biblical study tools such as *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* and the *Commentary on New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. The pastors are using a wide variety of commentaries as well as illustration collections, websites, and podcasts. The pastors have embraced non-traditional tools like mentoring relationships, a small group of pastors that help each other work through their sermons, and friends in other ministry contexts. The desire to preach as well as possible is seen in how the pastors work to connect to their congregations. FG5 mentioned a couple of changes that he had made to help connect with his congregation such as using PowerPoint during his sermon. FG3 stated that he was willing to change stylistically to better connect to his congregation, while FG2 pointed out that all preachers want to connect with their congregations. Preachers desire to preach well the gospel they are called to preach. This desire needs to be developed to encourage them to take advantage of the mostly unused resources adult learning theory has to offer.

The second ministry implication is that preachers do not understand how adults learn. While a few pastors who had some exposure to adult learning theories most of them are unaware of it and what it offers. Eighteen of twenty-nine respondents of the Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey said they were not familiar with adult learning theory, and none of the six Sermon Preparation Focus Group were familiar with the theories. In addition to this, none of the Sermon Preparation Participant Journals mentioned any source or resource that was connected to adult learning theory. Pastors

generally lack knowledge about adult learning theory and how adults learn. This lack of knowledge needs to be addressed.

The third implication of the study is that pastors are open to learning how adult learning theory can help them preach more effectively. This was most evident when the Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey asked how open they were to making changes in their preaching and none of the twenty-five respondents who responded to the question chose, “None at all.” A plurality of forty-four percent of respondents said they were “Moderately open” to changing their preaching. Another twenty-eight percent of respondents answered that they were “A lot open” to changing with eight percent agreeing that they were “A great deal open.” These three categories combine for the vast majority of respondents. In addition, there was a great openness to learning about improving preaching from a secular field, such as adult learning theory. When asked if they are open to using insights from adult learning theory in preaching only one of the twenty-five respondents that answered the question with “No.” A stunning twenty-four out of twenty-five said, “Yes” they were open to using insight from adult learning theory. This is a monumental ninety-six percent who are disposed to use insights from adult learning theory to improve their preaching. This willingness showed up in the Sermon Preparation focus group too, though with caveats. FG6 said he would be happy to change his preaching and gave an example of how he changed his preaching when he moved from the west coast to South Dakota. FG1 said he would be open to change even though it might not be easy. FG3 agreed that he would be prepared to change his preaching style. FG4 talked about some of the changes he has made in the past and how changing how he preaches has become a habit for him. FG2 agreed that he would be willing to change and

that all preachers should be inclined to change to connect with their congregations. Each one of them did say though that the change needed to not affect the message that was preached as that was the most important thing. However, it was evident that they were all enthusiastic and open to changing their preaching style.

The fourth implication of the study is that while pastors are open to learning new things about how to preach, that openness is cautious in nature. In the Sermon Preparation focus group the preachers who participated expressed a desire to preach well and were open to learning new ways to do so, but it was with a cautious openness. FG5 mentioned that before changes are made there are questions to answer such as, “Why are we changing?” He went on to emphasize that preachers are not “just entertainers.” FG6 added that he constantly changes things in his preaching as he listens to the people and to the seasons that he and his church go through. FG3 agreed with FG2 that stylistic changes should be embraced if they help the sermon connect with the congregation, but there “is a limit.” FG2 reminded the group that it is vital to not make changes for the wrong reason and remaining true to oneself while making changes is important as well. FG4 made the statement that while truth can be found in other disciplines, the “Word of God is the end all” of truth and all the other participants readily agreed.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations surfaced during the research. The first limitation was the number of participants. While it was expected that not everyone invited to the research to participate, an invitation to complete the Outside Discipline and Barrier survey went out to 117 pastors, but only twenty-nine responded. The participation in the Sermon Preparation participant journals was better, but not one hundred percent. Sixteen pastors

agreed to complete the participants' journal for four weeks. The first two weeks, half of the pastors responded, the third week only four responded, the fourth week only six responded. The Sermon Preparation focus group had the least participation. Six preachers agreed to participate, one of whom was in-between pastorates. The information that was gleaned from the focus group participants was reliable, but having more would have been good.

A second limitation of research was timing. The research took place during the extended holiday season of November through the beginning of January, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's typically mean a very full calendar for pastors. The timing of the research hampered the participation of many pastors who were invited to the research project.

A third limitation is that all the participants were men. The USMB, believes that women can and should be involved in every aspect of the church's ministry and leadership including preaching, except for the position of lead, senior, or solo pastor. Since the research involved the people who have the most responsibility for preaching in USMB churches, there were no female participants.

Unexpected Observations

The unexpected observation from this research project was the openness that preachers have to adapting their preaching style. The preachers' lack of knowledge about adult learning theory and their desire to preach to the best of their ability were expected findings. The surprise came in the preachers' openness to using adult learning theory to improve their preaching. The Outside Discipline and Barrier survey asked if the respondents were willing to use insights from adult learning theory to improve their

preaching. Twenty-four of the twenty-nine preachers who answered the question responded “yes,” they are open to using insights from adult learning theory to improve the impact of their preaching. Another way of saying this is that over eighty percent of the respondents are ready to adapt their preaching based on the insights of adult learning theory. The results from the Sermon Preparation focus group were similar. Every one of the focus group participants agreed that they would apply adult learning theory to their preaching.

Recommendations

The first recommendation regarding the use of adult learning theory in sermon preparation is to engage in new areas of research. One area of future research that needs to be addressed is how adult learning theory can be applied to the act of preaching. There is a desire on the part of preachers to improve their preaching. They need to be shown how to take insights from adult learning theory about adults’ learning and apply it to preaching. Another area of future research would be to see where Scripture can be interpreted to bless the use of adult learning theory. A specific sub-set of this would be to see where and how in Jesus’ ministry he used what could be seen as the principles and theories of adult learning theory.

A second recommendation is for institutions that train preachers, seminaries and Bible colleges, to take a hard look at their curriculum for preachers and add to it exposure and teaching on adult learning theory. Ideally, a class would be added and required that delves into adult learning theory. A minimal step would be to add the topic to an already existing preaching class, and perhaps have someone come in and guest lecture about the topic. Denominations typically provide continuing education for their pastors and can

address adult learning theory and its application to preaching. Ideas that were shared by the Sermon Preparation focus group members included: podcasts, seminars, webinars, blog posts, and articles. When addressing this recommendation, one needs to keep in mind that for some pastors the lack of participation can be surmised as a lack of interest and for other pastors a lack of time. The tools and learning opportunities developed to address this need should be succinct to allow for the broadest use. When advertising the tools it is important to be clear about the benefits adult learning theory can offer to preaching.

A third recommendation is for pastors to be self-directed learners and learn about adult learning theory on their own. They can then think through what aspects and ideas translate well and help with the preaching act. A good place for a preacher to begin is *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice* by Sharan B. Merriam and Laura L. Bierema. This book provides, “an overview of the major theories and research in adult learning in language that those new to adult education can understand, and at the same time points out applications of these ideas to practice” (Merriam and Bierema xii). It is a great place to start and a great resource. Another place for the self-learning pastor to begin would be a journal dedicated to adult learning. There are a few options for journals: *Adult Education Quarterly*, *Adult Learning*, and *Adults Learning*. These journals give preachers access to the latest research and application in the area of adult learning.

Postscript

This has been a long and challenging journey. It has been harder than expected yet revealing. I have had to face numerous personal challenges with my wife’s health, and it has been a struggle to make progress at times with my project. However, I have

experienced God's grace and mercy at numerous times during the process and it has shown me that I am capable of accomplishing work at this level. I was able to persevere and accomplish this great thing. The fact that I was able to complete this research project encourages me to start and finish other projects that I want to do.

Working on this project has vastly increased my grasp of adult learning theory. Through my previous work as a trainer and training manager in the inside sales industry and as an instructor and lead instructor for the University of Phoenix, I had a decent grasp of how adults learn. The reading and process I did for the literature review for this project widened and deepened my understanding of how adults learn. Before this project I had, what I would call, a 10,000-foot view and understanding of adult learning theory. Now, having completed this project I would say I have gained a 1000-foot view that is more detailed in its knowledge and understanding. I am by no means an expert, but my understanding and knowledge is much better than before.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A—RESEARCH TOOLS

Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey

1. Applying Adult Learning Theory to Preaching

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Timothy Hall, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are a lead, senior, or solo pastor in the USMB. The purpose of the research is to present ways that adult learning theory can be applied to preaching to help preachers communicate more effectively with the adults who hear their sermons. If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to complete a survey and fill out a participant journal for four (4) weeks. The survey link was sent to you via email, and you clicked on the link in the email and will complete the survey. The link to the participant journal will be emailed to you each week on Friday and you will click on the link and fill out the journal each of the four (4) weeks. The survey results and the participant journals will be downloaded from SurveyMonkey and will be saved in an encrypted disk image that is password protected on Timothy Hall's computer. Timothy Hall is the only one that will have the password for the encrypted disk image. The survey is anonymous, and no information is collected that identifies you, unless you choose to provide your name and email address. The participant journal is not anonymous, and your name and email address will be recorded but not shared. The privacy statement is available here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/legal/privacy/>. The researcher asks that each participant maintains confidentiality about their responses so that there is no

undue influence on other participants' responses. There are no risks to this study. The benefit of this research will be preaching that better communicates with its adult hearers. If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell Timothy Hall who can be reached at timothy.hall@asburyseminary.edu. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Timothy Hall at timothy.hall@asburyseminary.edu. Agreeing with this means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

The purpose of this survey is to gauge what disciplines outside of hermeneutics (how to study the Bible) and homiletics (how to preach) are used among the preachers of the USMB. This research is being conducted by Timothy Hall, the pastor of Butterfield Community Bible Church in Butterfield, MN, a fellow USMB congregation. This research is for his Doctor of Ministry dissertation. Based on the responses, some of you may be invited to take part in further research. The research collected will be shared with the USMB National Director along with suggestions and recommendations for how the USMB can help its pastors apply the findings. Tim will also share this research by eventually turning it into a book on how to improve preaching to adults. If your responses are

going to be quoted, you will not be identified by name. Thank you for taking the time to answer the following questions.

Blessings!

Yes

No

2. What is the highest degree you have received?

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree (MDiv or other)

Doctoral degree (PhD or DMin)

Other (please specify)

3. What year did you receive that degree?

4. What school did you receive that degree from?

5. Was your master's degree an MDiv?

Yes

No

6. What school did you receive your MDiv degree from?

7. What year did you receive your MDiv degree?

8. What is your church's average Sunday attendance?

1-50

51-100

101-200

201-500

501+

9. How many weeks out of the month do you typically preach?

1

2

3

4

10. What translations of the Bible do you preach from?

NIV

ESV

CSB

NRSV

KJV

Other (please specify)

11. What translations of the Bible do you regularly consult during your sermon prep process?

12. Do you regularly work with your text in Hebrew or Aramaic during sermon preparation for an Old Testament text?

Yes

No

13. Do you regularly work with your text in Greek during sermon preparation for a New Testament text?

Yes

No

14. What biblical study resources do you typically use during sermon preparation (dictionaries, cross-references, etc.)?
15. What commentaries do you regularly consult during your sermon preparation?
16. What resources do you use for sermon illustrations during sermon preparation?
17. What resources do you use when thinking through preaching the sermon (sermon delivery)?
18. What other resources do you typically use during sermon preparation?
19. What was your major for your bachelor's degree?
20. Are you familiar with the field of adult learning or adult learning theory?
 - Yes
 - No
21. What do you know about adult learning theory?
22. How are you using adult learning theory in your preaching?
23. Which learning style is your preaching usually geared to?
 - Audio (hearing word and music)
 - Visual (pictures & videos)
 - Kinetic (movement)
 - Practical (concrete application)
 - None of the above
24. How open are you to making changes in your preaching?
 - A great deal
 - A lot
 - A moderate amount

A little

None at all

25. Are you open to using insights from adult learning theories to improve the impact of your preaching?

Yes

No

26. The next phase of this research project consists of participants writing out a short journal entry each week about the resources they consult and the resources they think about consulting during their sermon preparation over a four-week period. The journal should take 15 minutes or less to fill out each week. This will give the researcher an in-depth look at sermon preparation habits and will help fill a crucial need for the research project. Are you willing to partake in this next stage of this research project?

Yes

No

27. What is your name and the email address Tim should send the participant journal links to?

Sermon Preparation Participants' Journal

1. The purpose of this participant journal is to gain in-depth insight to what tools and fields of study you, the participant, are using in your sermon preparation process. Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to complete this each week for four weeks.
What is your name and email address?
2. What translations of the Bible did you consult this week in your sermon preparation?
3. Did you work with your text in its original language (Hebrew/Aramaic or Greek) this week in your sermon preparation?
4. What biblical study resources like dictionaries, cross-references, etc., did you consult this week in your sermon preparation?
5. What commentaries did you consult this week in your sermon preparation?
6. What resources (including media, podcasts, websites, personal experience, etc.) did you consult for sermon illustrations this week in your sermon preparation?
7. What resources did you consult when thinking through preaching your sermon (sermon delivery) this week?
8. What other resources did you think of using this week in your sermon preparation?
9. What other resources did you consult this week in your sermon preparation?

Sermon Preparation Focus Group Guide

Introduction

- Thanks & welcome.
 - My name is X & I will be the facilitator today.
- We are conducting research today for Tim Hall, pastor of sister USMB church Butterfield Community Bible, in MN
- Tim Hall is here, and he will be taking notes from our discussion.
- We are looking at the integration of adult learning theory into preaching.
- No right or wrong answers
- We are anticipating the conversation to last between an hour and 1.5 hours.
- We are planning on recording the video call today.
 - Is everyone OK with us recording our conversation today?
- We want to encourage everyone to share their thoughts.
- It would be best to speak one at a time for a good recording.
- It is alright to disagree with one another, we would simply ask that you do so respectfully.
- We would ask that our discussion remain confidential to protect each other's privacy.
 - The recording of the discussion will only be available to the researcher.
- Any questions?

Opening Questions (to get everyone talking)

1. Please share your name & your church and location
2. What is your favorite book of the Bible to preach from?

Introductory Questions (to warm up the discussion)

3. How were you taught to connect with your listeners when you preach?
4. What do you do while preaching to connect to your listeners?
5. What has been your exposure, if any, to adult learning theory?

Key Questions (the heart of the matter)

6. How would your listeners react if you were to somewhat change your sermon delivery?
7. How would your listeners react if you were to significantly change your sermon delivery?
8. If you knew certain changes would increase your ability to connect with men and women in worship, how willing are you to making changes to your preaching style (not content)?
 - For example: the researcher has started putting the sermon outline in the bulletin to help the congregation follow along better.
9. What is your reaction to the idea of allowing a secular field of study influence how you preach?
10. What are the challenges you would face making changes in your preaching style?
11. What are the theological challenges to allowing adult learning theory to impact your preaching style?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to share related to this topic?

Closing Questions

13. What could be done to help you become more familiar with adult learning theory?

14. If the USMB or your district were to do something like those suggestions, would you realistically participate?

15. Last thoughts on the topic?

Closing words

- Thank you again for your time and insights you have provided.
- Blessings

APENDIX B—EXPERT REVIEW INSTRUMENT AND EMAIL**Expert Review Instrument****Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey**

Question	Needed	Not Needed	Clear	Unclear	Suggestions for improvement
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					

18					
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					

Expert Review Instrument
Sermon Preparation Participant Journal

Question	Needed	Not Needed	Clear	Unclear	Suggestions for improvement
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

Expert Review Instrument
Sermon Preparation Focus Group Guide

Question	Needed	Not Needed	Clear	Unclear	Suggestions for improvement
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					

Email to the Experts

Dear Expert,

Thank you so much for being willing to look over my research tools and provide feedback on them. As all three of my research tools are researcher-designed, I need an expert review, and I appreciate your willingness to help out with this.

I have attached a PDF that contains the project's purpose statement and research questions for my dissertation.

I have attached three MS Word documents. One is the Outside Discipline and Barrier Survey that addresses RQ 1 & 2. The second is the Sermon Preparation Participant Journal which addresses RQ 1 & 2 as well. The Sermon Preparation Focus Group Guide addresses RQ 3.

The last attachment is the Expert Review Instrument and is a MS Word document. Please use it to record your feedback on the research tools. The protocol to work through for each research tool is below:

- Does this tool align with the purpose of the Research Questions?
 - If so, how?
- Which questions are good?
- Which questions are needed, but unclear?
- Which questions should be eliminated?
- Are there any questions that should be added?
- Are the instructions clear?

Again, thank you for your willingness to be an expert reviewer. I look forward to receiving your feedback by August, 2023.

In Christ,

Tim Hall

507.621.1546

timothy.hall@asburyseminary.edu

Solo Deo Gloria

APPENDIX C—INFORMED CONSENT LETTERS**SURVEY and PARTICIPANT JOURNAL****INFORMED CONSENT LETTER*****Applying Adult Learning Theory to Preaching***

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Timothy Hall, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are a lead, senior, or solo pastor in the USMB. The purpose of the research is to present ways that adult learning theory can be applied to preaching to help preachers communicate more effectively with the adults who hear their sermons.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to complete a survey and fill out a participant journal for four (4) weeks. The survey link was sent to you via email, and you clicked on the link in the email and will complete the survey. The link to the participant journal will be emailed to you each week on Friday and you will click on the link and fill out the journal each of the four (4) weeks.

The survey results and the participant journals will be downloaded from SurveyMonkey and will be saved in an encrypted disk image that is password protected on Timothy Hall's computer. Timothy Hall is the only one that will have the password for the encrypted disk image. The survey is anonymous, and no information is collected that identifies you, unless you choose to provide your name and email address. The participant journal is not anonymous, and your name and email address will be recorded but not shared. The privacy statement is available here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/legal/privacy/>. The researcher asks that each

participant maintains confidentiality about their responses so that there is no undue influence on other participants' responses. There are no risks to this study.

The benefit of this research will be preaching that better communicates with its adult hearers.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell Timothy Hall who can be reached at timothy.hall@asburyseminary.edu. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Timothy Hall at timothy.hall@asburyseminary.edu.

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

The purpose of this survey is to gauge what disciplines outside of hermeneutics (how to study the Bible) and homiletics (how to preach) are used among the preachers of the USMB. This research is being conducted by Timothy Hall, the pastor of Butterfield Community Bible Church in Butterfield, MN, a fellow USMB congregation. This research is for his Doctor of Ministry dissertation. Based on the responses, some of you may be invited to take part in further research. The research collected will be shared with the USMB National Director along with suggestions and recommendations for how the USMB can help its pastors apply the findings. Tim will also share this research by

eventually turning it into a book on how to improve preaching to adults. If your responses are going to be quoted, you will not be identified by name. Thank you for taking the time to answer the following questions. Blessings!

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

FOCUS GROUP
INFORMED CONSENT LETTER
AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT
Applying Adult Learning Theory to Preaching

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Timothy Hall, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are a lead, senior, or solo pastor in the USMB. The purpose of the research is to present ways that adult learning theory can be applied to preaching to help preachers communicate more effectively with the adults who hear their sermons.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to join a Zoom call and answer the questions posed by the focus group facilitator, Alex Janzen. Notes will be taken by the researcher, Timothy Hall.

Due to the sensitivity of the questions being asked, it is asked that you maintain strict confidentiality regarding the questions, answers, and reactions of the participants in the focus group. You are asked to not share information that other group members discuss in this group. Although all group members are asked to do likewise, we cannot guarantee that what you discuss in the focus group will not be shared by another group member. The focus group Zoom call will be recorded both audio and video. The recording will be downloaded to Timothy Hall's computer and stored in an encrypted disk image that is password protected. Timothy is the only one that will have the password for the encrypted disk image.

The benefit of this research will be preaching that better communicates with its adult hearers.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell Timothy Hall who can be reached at timothy.hall@asburyseminary.edu. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. There is no risk to this study.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Timothy Hall at timothy.hall@asburyseminary.edu.

The purpose of this focus group is to gather an in-depth view of what disciplines outside of hermeneutics (how to study the Bible) and homiletics (how to preach) are used among the preachers of the USMB, as well as the openness to change how pastors preach. This research is being conducted by Timothy Hall, the pastor of Butterfield Community Bible Church in Butterfield, MN, a fellow USMB congregation. This research is for his Doctor of Ministry dissertation. The research collected will be shared with the USMB National Director along with suggestions and recommendations for how the USMB can help its pastors apply the findings. Tim will also share this research by eventually turning it into a book on how to improve preaching to adults. If your responses are going to be quoted, you will not be identified by name.

Signing this paper means that you have read this, or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study, and are willing to maintain confidentiality. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

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