

INCORPORATING LAY LEADERSHIP INTO THE EXPOSITORY
PREACHING MINISTRY AT BETHANY COMMUNITY
CHURCH, WASHINGTON, ILLINOIS

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APPROVAL SHEET

INCORPORATING LAY LEADERSHIP INTO THE EXPOSITORY
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PREFACE

When Bethany Community Church began in August 2008, we were not a typical church plant. The planting church, Bethany Baptist Church, provided us with tremendous resources. Over and over again, the Lord provided through Bethany more than we could have hoped. But perhaps the most important resource Bethany Baptist provided us with was godly, qualified spiritual shepherds. The church provided us with men who had already served as servant leaders and were able to step immediately into leadership roles at Bethany Community Church.

These men provided crucial leadership to our church in its infancy. They helped decide what ministries we could do as a church and what we were unable to do. At every stage, they were involved in helping shape the ministry. They selflessly cared for the flock as we began worship services and worked at reaching out to the community.

I consider it a privilege to minister alongside such godly men and without their support and encouragement this project would not be possible. I am also grateful to the lay people at Bethany Community Church. Serving at this church is a joy. Their care and love for me and my family has often overwhelmed us. I am thankful for Bethany Baptist Church's support of my ministry and education. Southern Seminary's commitment to expository preaching is also a source of joy for me. I also appreciate Betsy Fredrick's last minute heroics and her assistance editing this project. I pray that my work on this project encourages and strengthens the ministry of the church for the greater proclamation of the glory of God. Lastly, and most importantly, I want to thank my family for their support during this project. You are a tremendous blessing and joy.

Daniel J. Bennett

Washington, Illinois

May 2011

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The task of preaching can be a very lonely endeavor. Each Sunday morning, as the pastor ascends to the pulpit, he seemingly does so alone. No one joins him to help him deliver his message. As he proclaims the Word of God, the missions committee remains seated in the audience. His wife—who has helped him prepare for this morning by listening to him talk through the passage all week, gave up her Saturday night date as he made last minute changes, and even picked out his clothes this morning—will remain seated, though she may make an appearance in a sermon illustration or two. The deacons, scattered throughout the congregation, listen from the pews, and a few nod off discreetly.

But what about the elders? They too have a responsibility to oversee the preaching ministry, but they are also seated and removed from the pastor as he stands on stage and preaches. As will be observed throughout this project, the image of the solitary pastor boldly proclaiming the Word does not fit the biblical ideal of a plurality of elders assuming leadership of the church.

Purpose

Therefore, the purpose of this project was to incorporate lay leaders in the preparation, evaluation, and application of expository messages at Bethany Community Church, Washington, Illinois.

Goals

The primary objective of this project was to glorify God as His Word was proclaimed in His church. Five goals in particular shaped this project. The first goal was

to teach a lay leadership team, our elder board, about its responsibility and potential contribution toward a healthy pulpit ministry. A leadership team that understands this has a greater propensity to shoulder the responsibilities God has placed on it to oversee the teaching ministry.

The second goal was to train this lay leadership team to recognize and evaluate expository preaching. While many of the men on the elder board would acknowledge that expository preaching is the optimal preaching style, this project sought to determine how well they were able to define it and what they believed about its importance. Furthermore, it sought to equip the elders with the tools necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of expository preaching.

The third goal was to incorporate the lay leadership team into the sermon preparation process. This goal was at the heart of the project. It required the elders to provide direction and real, tangible input into the final sermon. It also required determining at what points and in what form that input and direction would come.

The fourth goal was to incorporate the lay leadership team into the sermon application process. The elders, as the spiritual shepherds of the church, have the responsibility to help the church apply the truths of Scripture. This goal sought to analyze how they could do so more effectively.

The final goal was to improve my expository preaching as a result of the laity input. My objective in pursuing the Doctorate of Ministry has been to do my job as the teaching pastor at Bethany Community Church more effectively. This final goal looked at how that was accomplished through the context of this project. The selection of these particular goals was not arbitrary. These goals were specifically designed to help the church plant's leadership grow and develop into the team God desires.

Context of the Ministry Project

To understand the context in which this ministry project took place, one must look at the community demographics, the church demographics, and the church's history.

The church demographics and history in particular demonstrate the newness of the church, which made the timing excellent for this ministry project.

Community Demographics

The church draws primarily from two counties: Tazewell County and Woodford County. Five categories have an impact on understanding the context of the project: the church plant's physical location, significant communities within each county, population, diversity, and faith-related issues.

Physical location. Bethany Community Church is located in Washington, Illinois, in Tazewell County, at the northern edge of the county. Woodford County is just one mile to the north of the church offices. Peoria County is seven miles to the west.

Significant communities. The church is located near several cities and townships of noteworthy size. Table 1 shows these in descending order of size.

Population. Woodford County has grown from 32,653 in 1990 to 38,125 today.¹ This represents a growth of 16.8 percent. During this same time, the average county in America grew 21 percent. The population is projected to continue to grow by almost 5 percent during the next five years, slightly higher than estimates for the average national growth of counties. Furthermore, the population is highly dispersed. Nationally, 75 percent of the population typically lives on less than 25 percent of the geographical area of a county on average. In Woodford County, 75 percent of the population lives in 100 percent of the geographical area. In other words, the population is not highly concentrated in one area of the county.

¹The data in these two paragraphs and in tables 2-9 are taken from Percept Group, "First View 2008" (Report for Woodford County, Illinois), p. 4 [on-line]; accessed 30 June 2008; available from <http://www.link2lead.com>; Internet.

Table 1. Communities within ten miles of Washington, Illinois

City	Population (2006 est.)	Dist. from Washington, IL
Peoria	113,107 ²	8 miles
East Peoria	22,549 ³	5.2 miles
Morton	33,368 ⁴	9.5 miles
Washington	13,365 ⁵	0 miles
Eureka	5,161 ⁶	8.2 miles
Metamora	3,195 ⁷	5.8 miles
Germantown Hills	2,956 ⁸	5.2 miles

Tazewell County has seen lower growth—5.9 percent since 1990—and has lower projected growth—1.3 percent for the next five years. It too has a widely dispersed population.

Diversity. There are several measures of diversity by which to examine Tazewell and Woodford Counties. Table 2 shows the diversity of lifestyle that exists within those counties compared with the national average. An examination of this table shows that the area primarily consists of middle-American families. Bethany Community

²CityData.Com, “Peoria, Illinois” [on-line]; accessed 30 July 2008; available from <http://www.city-data.com/city/Peoria-Illinois.html>; Internet.

³CityData.Com, “East Peoria, Illinois” [on-line]; accessed 30 July 2008; available from <http://www.city-data.com/city/East-Peoria-Illinois.html>; Internet.

⁴CityData.Com, “Pekin, Illinois” [on-line]; accessed 30 July 2008; available from <http://www.city-data.com/city/Pekin-Illinois.html>; Internet.

⁵CityData.Com, “Washington, Illinois” [on-line]; accessed 30 July 2008; available from <http://www.city-data.com/city/Washington-Illinois.html>; Internet.

⁶CityData.Com, “Eureka, Illinois” [on-line]; accessed 30 July 2008; available from <http://www.city-data.com/city/Eureka-Illinois.html>; Internet.

⁷CityData.Com, “Metamora, Illinois” [on-line]; accessed 30 July 2008; available from <http://www.city-data.com/city/Metamora-Illinois.html>; Internet.

⁸CityData.com, “Germantown Hills, Illinois” [on-line]; accessed 30 July 2008; available from <http://www.city-data.com/city/Germantown-Hills-Illinois.html>; Internet.

draws from counties with more rural families than the national average and far fewer ethnic and urban families.

Table 2. Diversity of lifestyle in church counties.

Diversity of Lifestyle	Affluent Families	Middle American Families	Young and Coming	Rural Families	Senior Life	Ethnic and Urban Diversity
Tazewell	3%	52%	5%	17%	15%	7%
Woodford	12%	53%	2%	23%	10%	<1%
National	15%	31%	15%	13%	7%	18%

Table 3 shows that there is very little ethnic diversity in the communities in which the church ministers. Less than 5 percent are of an ethnicity that is not “Anglo.” Nationally, a third of the population is from an ethnic group that is non-Anglo.

Table 3. Ethnic diversity

Diversity of Ethnicity	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Native American & Other
Tazewell	96%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Woodford	96%	1%	1%	1%	1%
National	66%	12%	15%	4%	3%

Table 4 shows that the diversity among age groups in the two counties is somewhat consistent with national averages. The largest age group in Tazewell is the “Millenials.” The largest age group in Woodford is the “Survivors.”

Table 4. Diversity by generation

Diversity By Generation	Gen Z (0-6)	Millenials (7-26)	Survivors (27-47)	Boomers (48-65)	Silents (66-83)	Builders (84 & up)
Tazewell	8%	29%	26%	23%	11%	3%
Woodford	8%	26%	28%	23%	12%	3%
National	9%	28%	29%	21%	10%	2%

Table 5 shows that the communities in which the church ministers have a slightly higher percentage of the population that is married than the national average. Conversely, these counties have a slightly lower percentage of their population that is single and has never been married.

Table 6 indicates that there are fewer single mothers and fathers in these communities than the national average. On average, 79 percent of the households with children in the counties Bethany ministers to have married parents compared with 69 percent on average nationally.

Table 5. Diversity of marital status

Diversity of Marital Status	Single (Never Married)	Divorced or Widowed	Married
Tazewell	20%	17%	63%
Woodford	21%	14%	66%
National	27%	16%	57%

Table 6. Diversity of households with children

Diversity of Households with Children	Single Mothers	Single Fathers	Married Couples
Tazewell	18%	6%	75%
Woodford	12%	4%	83%
National	23%	7%	69%

In Table 7, we see that the population is both more and less educated than the rest of the nation on average. They are more likely to have completed high school and graduated college, but less likely to have completed post-graduate work.

Table 7. Diversity of Education

Diversity of Education	Less than High School	High School	Some College	College Graduate	Post Graduate
Tazewell	15%	34%	32%	13%	6%
Woodford	12%	35%	31%	15%	6%
National	20%	29%	27%	7%	9%

Faith-related issues. Table 8 indicates that about two-thirds of the populations of Tazewell and Woodland Counties are somewhat or strongly involved in a faith-based organization. This is in keeping with national averages.

Table 8. Household faith involvement

Household Faith Involvement	Not Involved	Somewhat Involved	Strongly Involved
Tazewell	34%	33%	34%
Woodford	32%	32%	36%
National	35%	30%	35%

Table 9 indicates that these communities are slightly more traditional than contemporary in their worship preferences. These numbers are in line with national averages.

Table 9. Church style preferences

Church Style Preferences	Worship: Traditional	Music: Traditional	Architecture: Traditional	Worship: Contemporary	Music: Contemporary	Architecture: Contemporary
Tazewell	21%	24%	27%	26%	21%	15%
Woodford	21%	24%	27%	27%	21%	15%
National	20%	24%	27%	26%	20%	16%

Church Demographics

The demographics of Bethany Community Church roughly mirror those of the counties from which she draws. The majority of the families are middle-class Caucasians. The only demographic area where BCC may be slightly skewed is in the age of its congregants. The congregation tends to consist of younger families.

Church History and Growth

Bethany Baptist Church planted Bethany Community Church in September

2008. Understanding its history and growth require an examination of Bethany Baptist Church, the Bethany Fellowship of Churches, and Bethany Community Church.

Bethany Baptist Church. Bethany Community Church is a church plant of Bethany Baptist Church. Bethany Baptist Church began in 1877 as a Sunday School class in a school. In 1891, it officially became a church and is a member of the North Central Conservative Baptist Association. The church experienced some growth during parts of the 1960s and then again in the 1970s. Ritch Boerckel became the senior pastor in 1993. At that point, the church began to see exponential growth. The building was expanded and parking added during the late 1990s. When space problems increased, the church began the process of building a new church building in a growth corridor on the west side of town.

Bethany Fellowship of Churches. In addition to beginning work on building a larger church building, Bethany Baptist has also been involved in the church planting ministry. On Easter Sunday 2003, Bethany Baptist planted its first church in Bartonville, Illinois. Living Hope Community Church took about one hundred people from Bethany Baptist to their community. Currently, it has grown to over two hundred people.

When plans to plant a second church were forming, Bethany Baptist and Living Hope Community began to meet to discuss how the churches should partner together. Bethany Fellowship of Churches was established to help member churches partner together in areas such as evangelism, missions, administrative support, Christian education, campus ministries, and orphan care.

Bethany Community Church. In June of 2005, Ritch Boerckel shared with Bethany Baptist the leadership's desire to plant a church on the east side of the Illinois River. In October of 2005, Bethany Baptist purchased a farmhouse and outbuilding on three acres in Washington, Illinois, with an option to purchase an additional seventy acres

by 2010. In the fall of 2007, Bethany Baptist moved forward with its church plant plans. I took an eight-week sabbatical in order to transition from my responsibilities as family pastor to church plant pastor.

Bethany Community Church began, as its mother church had, as a Sunday School class. On its first Sunday, May 18, 2008, 125 adults attended the first of a fifteen-week series entitled, “Preparing to Proclaim: Planting a Church in Fifteen Easy Steps.” On August 17, the church plant had its “soft launch” as the Sunday School class moved to the community center where it would be holding its services. On September 7, 2008, the church had its community launch. Currently, the church has an average attendance of around 475 and, like Bethany Baptist Church, is a member of the North Central Conservative Baptist Association.

I am the senior pastor of Bethany Community Church. Prior to serving as the senior pastor of the church plant, I served for eight years at Bethany Baptist as the family pastor.

Rationale for the Project

In the New Testament, the community of faith was led by a plurality of elders.⁹ This statement will be developed further in chapter 2, but for now it is important to highlight some of the responsibilities that elders had within the early church. Elders were shepherds of the church and as such they were to gently rule over the flock (1 Tim 5:17). This leading was not to be done through compulsion or with heavy-handedness but rather

⁹For a discussion on the biblical evidence for the authority of elders within the local church, see Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995); Benjamin Merkle, *Why Elders? A Biblical and Practical Guide for Church Members* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009); James R. White, “The Plural-Elder-Led Church: Sufficient as Established—The Plurality of Elders as Christ’s Ordained Means of Church Governance,” in *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views on Church Polity*, ed. Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004).

from pure motives (1 Pet 5:2-5). As overseers of the church, they also had administrative duties like providing oversight over the finances of the church (Acts 11:29-30).

But there were two functions that stand out as paramount in the life of the leaders of the church in the New Testament: prayer and the teaching of the Word. In fact, the apostles in the early church understood the importance of delegating other church responsibilities so that they could concentrate on these crucial ministries (Acts 6:4).

Many of the tasks of the elders flow out of these responsibilities to pray and administer the Word. For example, the responsibility to pray includes the charge to pray for the sick (Jas 5:14) and the charge to protect from false teachers (Acts 20:28) is part of the task of a teacher. Similarly, the qualifications for an elder are not only related to his character but also to his ability to fulfill his responsibilities as a teacher of the flock (e.g. Titus 1:9).

If the above is true, what implications does this understanding of the responsibility of elders have for the pulpit ministry of the church? The pulpit ministry is the primary vehicle for instruction of the flock and, therefore, is also one of the areas that must be most vigorously defended by the leadership. Statements made *en masse* to the congregation carry more weight in the life of the church than an announcement in a Sunday School class. Here, then, is one of the central questions of this project: How can the senior pastor ensure that the lay leaders are fulfilling their responsibility to the pulpit ministry?

The benefits to this project were substantial. First, it caused my church to be more obedient to its Savior and Lord Jesus Christ by fulfilling His design for the church. As elders shouldered their responsibilities, Christ received greater glory from His obedient church.

Second, it created a more equipped lay leadership. Not only are our elders better prepared to defend the faith delivered to the saints, but they are also better prepared to shepherd the flock by helping them apply the truths of Scripture (Titus 1:9; Jude 3).

They will be more familiar with how to study God's Word and apply its truth as they see it modeled for them in a more personal way week after week.

Third, in the long-term, the project will result in a stronger church body. She will be better protected as leaders collectively consider what the needs of the church are. They are thinking more carefully about what is taught in the church. The church will also be strengthened in the long-term as lay leaders take personally the truths of the sermon and are intentional to apply them in their lives and the life of the body.

Finally, it has resulted in improving my preaching ability. It accomplished this in several ways. The accountability I have toward the elders has increased. Sermon preparation has improved based upon the feedback I received on my exegetical and homiletical outlines. It also provided an avenue for constructive feedback on the sermon itself. It humbled me to learn about deficiencies in my ministry and rely upon the gracious provision of the Holy Spirit.

The project occurred at the perfect time in the life of the church. A new church has no "normal way" of doing things. It has freedom and flexibility to establish ministries, including the pulpit ministry. As a young preacher, this project was helpful to me since it occurred at the beginning of my ministerial life. By God's grace, it will help me form good habits and keep me from becoming entrenched in bad ones.

Definitions and Limitations for the Project

When dealing with a project-addressing subjects as broad as expository preaching and church leadership, clarity is essential. Depending upon one's background, these terms can mean radically different things. For example, some have had a positive experience with expository preaching and view it as a dynamic form of communicating God's Word. Others have been exposed to a form of expository preaching that was stale and lacked any relevance to daily life. Defining terms more precisely can help overcome potential hurdles in understanding the goals and scope of the project.

Definitions

Three terms are defined below: elders, expository preaching, and consensus.

Elders. Originally, Bethany Baptist Church appointed seven men to serve as shepherds of our congregation. Bethany Community Church installed its first elders on May 2, 2010. There are six lay elders and two staff elders.

Several terms can be used to describe the official shepherding role within a church. Elders are also called “pastors,” “bishops,” or “overseers” in Scripture. That these terms are interchangeable is seen passages such as Acts 20 where Paul refers to the elders (v. 17) as “overseers” (or “bishops”) (cf. Titus 1:5, 7).

The biblical and theological assumptions that shaped this project assumed a church polity that has a plurality of elders. At the same time, it acknowledged the “first among equals” reality that Alexander Strauch advocates.¹⁰ While the purpose of this paper was not to serve as a defense of a certain type of church government, chapter 2 will briefly address the biblical justification for a plurality of elders.

Expository preaching. Almost all definitions of expository preaching, despite their various unique emphases, agree that at its broadest sense, the expository sermon’s task is to bring out the meaning of Scripture. Richard Mayhue identifies the following essential elements of the expository sermon:

1. The message finds its sole source in Scripture
2. The message is extracted from Scripture through careful exegesis.
3. The message preparation correctly interprets Scripture in its normal sense and its context.
4. The message clearly explains the original God-intended meaning of Scripture.
5. The message applies the Scriptural meaning for today.¹¹

¹⁰Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*. See especially chap. 2, “Shared Leadership.”

¹¹Richard L. Mayhue, “Rediscovering Expository Preaching,” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, ed. John MacArthur (Dallas: Word, 1992), 45-50.

These are excellent starting qualifications. The only needed modification regards the first characteristic. An expository message generally finds its sole source in a single, primary text. These are the *sine qua non* of expository preaching.

There are certain convictions I have about the ministry of expository preaching. The first conviction is that the most effective expository pulpit ministry is one in which the preacher is committed to working through longer sections of Scripture systematically over time. This seems to be the logical outworking of the preceding characteristics. The second conviction is that the sermon should usually focus on communicating a complete unit of thought, usually a paragraph. The third conviction is that expository preaching should be the primary means of teaching within the church.

Consensus. Consensus refers to a decision reached through agreement of a group. This agreement is reached in such a way that all members feel as though their voices have been heard. Based upon the input of all involved, the group agrees on a course of action that is best, given the current group dynamics.

Limitations and Delimitations

This is an exciting project of which to be a part. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind some of the necessary limitations on the project.

Limited time of project. The project is, by necessity, a short-term project. It covered a fifteen-week span. The goals of the project were ambitious but did not include gauging long-term results.

Limited assimilation into the preaching ministry. A few important caveats are needed. First, the project did not assume total assimilation by all the lay leaders into the pulpit ministry. There is still an assumption that the preaching-teaching pastor will have primary responsibility. Furthermore, this project does not suggest that every elder should be able to preach from the pulpit. Finally, this project does not advocate a

“committee-authored” sermon. The sermons were the product of the pastor-teacher, but were dependent upon the input and feedback from the lay leadership. The theological and practical rationales for this are discussed in the following two chapters.

Research Methodology

The project had four phases, each of which will be discussed in more detail later: Phase 1, Preparing the Project; Phase 2, Training the Lay Leaders; Phase 3, Preaching the Sermons; and Phase 4, Evaluating the Series. Data was collected at each phase of the project.

Phase 1: Preparing the Project

In Phase 1, a survey of the church leadership was taken. The survey contained three parts. The first part helped determine the series preached. This section asked each individual leadership team member to identify strengths and weaknesses in the church. He was asked what needs exist among the church body and what passages of Scripture might be relevant to address those needs. The individual surveys were compiled and the results shared with other team leaders. These results were discussed and prayed over. Based upon that discussion, I presented a proposal to the leadership team for a seven-week expositional preaching series. The leadership team came to a consensus regarding that proposal.

The second part of the survey assessed the leadership’s understanding of expository preaching. The results of this second part of the survey helped me teach the four-week class on expository preaching to the leadership team. While the broad content of the class leadership’s class on expositional preaching was already been prepared, the survey helped gauge areas of special concern. Did the leadership know how to ascertain a main idea from a passage? Could they see the timeless theological truths? Could they discern the difference between legitimate and illegitimate applications?

The third part of the leadership survey sought to assess how well members of the team are concentrating on personal and corporate application. The project sought to

impress on the leaders their responsibility to help the congregation model and apply biblical truths. In addition, chapter 3 considered the importance of individual team members for implementing the vision of the entire team and helped determine if giving the leadership the ability to speak into the ministry aids them in their implementation of the ministry.

Phase 2: Training the Lay Leaders

The main goal of this phase was to equip the lay leaders with an understanding of expository preaching and the tools necessary to evaluate its preparation, delivery, and application. The leadership team met for four consecutive Saturday mornings.

The title of Session 1 was “The Benefits of Teamwork.” In this session, I shared the contents of chapters 2 and 3 of the research project, which covered the biblical and practical benefits of teamwork. The session encouraged them to apply these principles to the pulpit ministry of Bethany Community. It showed them how they, as spiritual shepherds, have a responsibility to oversee the teaching and application of biblical truth.

Session 2 dealt with “Philosophical Assumptions of Expository Preaching.” This session introduced expository preaching. It explored biblical and theological principles of preaching. First, we discussed foundational assumptions of expository preaching. Second, various definitions of expository preaching were evaluated biblically. Third, a special emphasis was placed on what the purpose of preaching is and how expositional preaching best fulfills that mandate.

Session 3 covered “Principles of Hermeneutics.” It provided an overview of hermeneutical principles for determining the meaning of a text. The goal of this session was to give the selected lay leaders an understanding of the principles involved in getting at the author’s intended meaning in a biblical text.

The last session, “Principles of Sermon Preparation, Delivery, and Application,” considered the process of crafting a sermon. We evaluated as a team a variety of ways to

communicate the biblical truth of a passage. The session placed special emphasis on the leadership's responsibility to help the congregation apply the biblical truths in the sermon. The leadership team was shown the results of the surveys that indicated how they were currently working to help others implement principles from the sermon.

Phase 3: Preaching the Sermons

In the third phase, Preaching the Sermons, there were three types of data collection. First, leadership team members received sermon outlines the week before a sermon was given. They reviewed the outlines and returned them to me prior to the Sunday the sermon was preached. Their feedback was considered as the final draft of the sermon was written.

Second, the post-sermon evaluation consisted of a short, one-page form that each leader emailed back to me giving an assessment of the effectiveness of the sermon in communicating biblical truth and helping the listeners apply it in their daily lives. This helped me gauge how well they were shaping the pulpit ministry and how they were helping others apply biblical truth. It also helped me improve my preaching ability in future weeks.

Finally, during the middle of the preaching series, I had regular meetings with the leadership team to receive verbal feedback. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss messages that had already been preached, to clarify and expound on feedback they had already given, and to brainstorm for future messages.

Phase 4: Evaluating the Series

In the final phase, Evaluating the Series, there was a final leadership team four-part survey. This survey evaluated the change in the leadership's understanding of expository preaching, their perception of their involvement, their perception of the effectiveness of this method of sermon preparation, and the change in their application of sermon content. This last series of questions sought to gauge how well the leaders

practically worked at applying the text and encouraging others to do the same. Also in this phase was a compilation of the surveys turned in during the third phase.

Table 10. Summary of research methodology

Phase	Time Frame	Instruments	Respondents	Data Collected	Goals Measured (see key below)
Preparing the Project	Pre-Week 2	Three-part survey	Lay leaders	Determine sermon series	1, 5
				Leaders' pre-study understanding of exp. preaching.	1, 4
				Leaders' pre-study application of Sermon Content	3
Training of Lay Leaders	Week 3 thru Week 7	Homework assignments	Lay leaders	Assignments gauged to assess understanding of principles learned	1, 2, 4
Preaching the Sermons	Week 8 thru Week 13	Two Surveys	Lay leaders & Senior Pastor	Pre-Sermon Evaluation Survey	1, 3, 4, 5
				Post-Sermon Evaluation Survey	1, 3, 4, 5
				Sermon Interviews with Lay Leadership Team	1, 3, 4, 5
Evaluating the Series	Weeks 14 and 15	Four-part survey	Lay leaders	Change in the leadership's understanding of expository preaching	1, 2, 4
				Perception of their involvement	1, 2, 3, 4
				Perception of the effectiveness of this method of sermon preparation	1, 3, 4
				Change in their application of sermon content.	3
Key: Goals of Project. 1. Elders shouldering their biblical responsibilities. 2. Elders equipped to evaluate expository preaching. 3. Elders incorporated into expository preaching process. 4/2. Elders more equipped to help church apply truths of Scripture. 3. Church strengthened as elders help the flock apply biblical truths. 5. Improve my expository preaching ability.					

Table 10 summarizes the research methodology. After compiling the data, I met with the leadership team one final time to discuss the data and their evaluation of the project.

Conclusion

The preacher bears an enormous responsibility as he ascends to the pulpit on a Sunday morning. He alone stands before the people while the text is expounded. The responsibility for the content and application of the sermon, however, is not a responsibility that is to be borne alone. In our ministry context, God has provided elders to help shoulder this burden. This project sought to ensure that the group of men God has entrusted to help shepherd the flock at Bethany Community Church are prepared and equipped to assist me as I seek to proclaim the Word of God.

CHAPTER 2

A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PULPIT, THE PASTOR, AND THE PLURALITY OF ELDERS

The first email came about two hours after I delivered the sermon. Though pleasantly worded, the message clearly communicated that the person who sent it disagreed with a portion of what I had said that morning. I had been speaking about lying—I was against it—and briefly commented that there were several examples of deception in Scripture that I was unsure what to do with. The man who sent me the email felt like I was opening the door to lying. I responded to the email, a little concerned because it was the first negative feedback I had received on a sermon. Then I received another email. Then a man stopped by my office to talk to me about what I had said.

That was really when I became concerned. I began to wish I had just left that one little statement out of my sermon. Or, at the very least, worded it more clearly. I also wondered what the men in leadership positions felt about what I had said. They had certainly not known what I was going to say beforehand. Were they upset? Until speaking with them and receiving their backing, I felt very much alone.

The previous chapter noted that our church practices a plural-elder polity. This chapter considers the implications of that form of church government for the pulpit ministry, particularly as it regards the relationship between the preaching pastor and the other elders. This relationship will be explored in three ways. First, the chapter will note the primacy of the preacher. This section will observe the prominent preaching role that God sometimes calls a single leader to within the community of faith. This leader is

entrusted with the task of regularly preaching and serves as the spokesperson for God to the people.

Second, the chapter will consider the protection of the plurality. This section argues that all the elders have a responsibility for the pulpit ministry since God calls a plurality of leaders to bear the burden for the doctrinal integrity of the church.

Finally, the chapter will look at principles for the pastor. The purpose of this final section is to observe ways in which communities of faith have had strong leaders while simultaneously being blessed with strong shepherds who shoulder certain aspects of the pulpit ministry.

The Primacy of the Preacher

There are several examples of prominent men in the community of faith exercising special leadership. These men take on a role that Alexander Strauch calls the “first among equals.”¹ In a church “those among the elders who are particularly gifted leaders and/or teachers will naturally stand out among the other elders as leaders and teachers within the leadership body.”² Often this is a single individual, but not always. These men who have special gifting in the area of teaching are tasked by God to focus on the ministry of teaching. They demonstrate their leadership of Christ’s body through their authoritative preaching ministry.

The Ministry of Ezra in Nehemiah 8:1-8

Nehemiah 8:1-8 offers an example of the leadership that one individual in a community of faith takes for the proclamation of the Word. As we explore the story of

¹Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 45.

²Ibid.

Ezra we see that God worked in some special ways that prepared him for the ministry that was uniquely his in the community of faith.

Background to the story. The Israelites began returning to Jerusalem in 538 B.C. under the leadership of Zerubabel. It is this first group that works at the task of rebuilding the temple. When their devotion to this endeavor wavers, God raises up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to exhort the people to complete their work, which they do in 516 B.C. Though Ezra was not a part of this work, he chronicles it in the first six chapters of the book that bears his name.

Eighty years after the first wave of exiles return, in 458 B.C., Ezra led a second wave of exiles to Jerusalem. His task was to restore the people to proper worship and reverence of Yahweh. The reforms undertaken during his ministry are related in chapters 7-10 of Ezra.

In 445 B.C., Nehemiah led a third and final wave from Babylon. Under the leadership of Nehemiah, the people worked to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. The events within the book took place between 446 B.C. and about 424 B.C. The events in Nehemiah 8 take place thirteen years after Ezra's arrival.

The traditional viewpoint, however, still has the most to support it. For Nehemiah 8 to have originally been a part of Ezra, verse 9, which mentions Nehemiah and Ezra as contemporaries, would need to be a gloss, and there is no compelling evidence to suggest that it is. The question, then, remains as to why there was such a delay between Ezra's arrival and the proclamation of the law?

A. Philip Brown suggests that even though there was a delay between Ezra's arrival and the public proclamation in Nehemiah 8, that does not mean he was failing to engage in teaching. He noted that the priests report of mixed marriages in Ezra 9:1-2

reveals an understanding of the Mosaic law.³ It is relevant that there is apparent unanimity among the people as they look for a person to turn to for the teaching of the law. Ezra is viewed as someone well-versed in the law. The people are not ignorant of the law or of Ezra's understanding of it. This indicates some law-based teaching ministry had already begun at least in part. Whatever the case, it is just after completing the walls that the people approach Ezra.

The text. The contention of this portion of the chapter is that God often calls a single individual to proclaim His Word to a community of faith. In Nehemiah 8, we see that Ezra bears the primary responsibility for the teaching of the law in the post-exilic community. There are several ways that the text demonstrates this as Ezra prepares to read the law in the presence of all the people. The passage reveals Ezra as both the bringer of the law and the central character in the narrative.

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. (Neh 8:1-8)

³A. Philip Brown, "Temporal Ordering in Ezra: Part II," in *A Literary and Theological Analysis of the Book of Ezra* [on-line]; accessed July 26, 2009; available from <http://bible.org/seriespage/chapter-2-temporal-ordering-ezra-part-ii>; Internet.

Ezra as the bringer of the law. It is helpful to first consider Ezra as the bringer of the law. In 445 B.C., following the completion of the walls, the people gather at the Water Gate. The Water Gate was a place of public assembly. It faced southeast, overlooking the Kidron valley and had been part of the original wall. It is mentioned in Nehemiah 3:26 as the different sections of the wall are discussed.

As the people gather at the gate, there is a single demand upon their lips: they want Ezra to bring the law. They desire that he would proclaim God's teachings to them, presumably referring to the collection of writings now known to us as the Pentateuch.

But why Ezra? Why are they so united in their demand for him to bring the law? Why did no one cry out for Jeshua to bring the law? Why did Bani's mom not suggest that he bring the law? There are several reasons we will consider for Ezra's prominence among the fledgling community. First, Ezra was a bringer of the law because he was a priest (Neh 8:2). As such, it is natural that the people would come to Ezra for the proclamation of the teaching of the law. As a priest, it was his duty to proclaim the laws. The Levites had been entrusted with the law and they were to "teach Jacob your [God's] rules and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar" (Deut 31:10). Furthermore, there was an understanding that it was to be the priests that instructed the monarchs in the observance of God's law. Deuteronomy 17:18 says that when the king "sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests."

Second, Ezra was a bringer of the law due to his role as a scribe. He is referred to not only as a priest but also as a scribe. Ezra 7 tells us that he was a "skilled scribe" (7:6) and refers to him as "Ezra the priest, the scribe." Nehemiah 8 alternates between calling him scribe and priest. As a priest, he had the God-given mandate to handle the law and as a scribe he had the technical proficiencies to handle and communicate the text accurately. This was an essential skill set to possess since much of the law was unknown to the Israelites during the exile.

Third, Ezra was a bringer of the law not only due to his ministry as a priest and skills as a scribe. He was also uniquely qualified to proclaim the Law due to his spiritual preparation. Ezra 7:10 says, “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.” The study of God’s law was not merely academic for Ezra. His heart was prepared to study the Law, obey the law, and teach God’s Law. His ministry stands in contrast to the ministry of the priests a short time later who Malachi brings to task. In Malachi, the priests are going through the motions of leading the people in worship of God, but their hearts are far from Him. As a result, God wishes that the doors of the newly constructed temple would be shut up rather than such detestable sacrifices being offered (1:10). Ezra brings the law to the people not only as one having the “trappings” of the priestly office down and the abilities of a scribe, but also as one whose heart loves the Lord and desires to lead others in worship of Him.

Fourth, Ezra had a unique role as a bringer of the law due to his authority given by King Artaxerxes. In Ezra 7:25, the king decrees that Ezra is to appoint magistrates and judges who “know the laws of our God. And those who do not know them, you shall teach.” Ezra rightly recognizes God at work in this decree and exclaims, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king” (Ezra 7:27).

As one considers each of these reasons for Ezra being called on to bring the law, it is important to note that his authority is a derived authority and not intrinsic. Even as a priest, he does not rely upon the authority of his title to make a proclamation to the people. His proclamation of the truth is from the Scripture and he uses his position as a priest as a means through which to proclaim that authoritative word.

In summary, due to his divine calling by God as a priest, his unique skill set as a Scribe, his spiritual preparation, and the providential hand of God at work in the heart of a king, Ezra was in a unique position to bring the law of God to the people. The

people's response to the reading of the law is not directed at the person of Ezra. Instead, they exalt in and worship the Lord (Neh 8:6).

Ezra at the center of the narrative. The prominence of Ezra is also seen in the structure of the passage. Everything revolves around the character of Ezra. Verses 1-3 of Nehemiah 8 contain an overview and summarize the process of reading the law to the people. Ezra is asked to bring the law in verse 1. Ezra brings the Law before the assembly in verse 2. Ezra reads from the Law in verse 3.

In verses 4-8, we see a more detailed account of the actual reading of the law and again Ezra is prominent. He is raised in the narrative—literally—as he stands upon a wooden platform (v. 4). In verse 5, the other leaders are with him, but Ezra stands in the center. It is Ezra who opens the book and it is Ezra who blesses the Lord.

As the people listen to Ezra read from the law, other leaders participate in the teaching ministry. The nature of their involvement is discussed in the next section, but what is important to note here is the subservient role they play to Ezra. They are not setting up alternative readings of other texts, but instead, in cooperation with Ezra, they are giving the people the sense of the meaning of the texts that Ezra is teaching. The picture here is a vivid one. Ezra reads, the people listen, the other leaders expound on what Ezra is teaching.

Each section in the narrative of Nehemiah points to the prominence of Ezra's ministry. His unique gifting, calling, abilities, and spiritual commitment have prepared him for this leadership role. The details in the narrative confirm that others recognize his leadership role.

The Calling of Timothy in 2 Timothy

E. Earle Ellis contends that the pastoral epistles share a common theme:

In the face of defections and of the depredations of false teachers they emphasize instructions on ministry, church order, and related themes in order to protect the apostle's congregation in Asia Minor and Greece during the final years of his life.⁴

In the second canonical pastoral letter to his friend Timothy, Paul is writing from Rome around A.D. 66 during his second imprisonment. He is cognizant that his earthly ministry is drawing to a close. But, notes D. A. Carson, there "is no fanaticism here, nor any attempt at grandstanding. The apostle writes from a lowly posture and sets the example of the way Christians should die for their faith."⁵

As Paul's life draws to a close, his thoughts are with his protégée. Donald Guthrie makes an excellent observation for those who would be tempted to use 2 Timothy as prescriptive for all elements of ecclesiastical life:

The epistle is little concerned with ecclesiastical arrangements but concentrates on Timothy and the task which is being committed to him. The apostle is in a reminiscent mood, and for this reason his concluding epistle is the most revealing of the three pastorals. He seems rather uncertain that he will ever see Timothy again although he has summoned him to come as quickly as possible. During the course of the writing he takes the opportunity of warning Timothy again about the false teachers as he had previously done in the first epistle.⁶

Timothy serves as another example of an individual who takes prominence in the proclamation of God's Word. Paul's words at the beginning and conclusion of his epistle demonstrate the unique nature of Timothy's ministry. Timothy was charged by the apostle Paul to remain in Ephesus in order to counteract the false teachings that were threatening the church (1 Tim 1:3). This was evidently not an easy ministry. At the beginning of 2 Timothy, Paul, who is approaching the end of his life, exhorts Timothy to remain steadfast in the execution of the duties he has been given.

⁴E. Earle Ellis, "Pastoral Letters," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 659.

⁵D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 380.

⁶Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 649.

Special primacy at the church (2 Tim 1:3-7). As we examine Paul's words we gain insight into what these duties Timothy had were. Paul begins this pastoral epistle by reminding Timothy of a special charge.

I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. (2 Tim 1:3-7)

Several features of this paragraph stand out. First, note that Paul exhorts Timothy to "fan into flame the gift of God." It seems that this "gift of God" refers to the special ministry of teaching that Timothy was given. The bestowal of this gift is also referred to in 1 Timothy 4. Here, Paul reminds Timothy:

Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. (1 Tim 4:11-14)

Paul recognizes that the ministry Timothy has been appointed to is a difficult one, made especially so due to his young age. Regardless, says Paul, continue to "command" and to "teach." While Paul is away, Timothy is to publically read the Scripture and focus on the ministries of exhortation and teaching. The other elders of the church recognize the unique ministry Timothy has been called to and demonstrate their recognition of his calling by laying their hands on him. In 2 Timothy 1, Timothy is first being encouraged to continue to grow in his ability to exercise this God-given gift.

Second, 2 Timothy 1 reveals that this special gift of teaching was given by God through the laying on of Paul's hands. The support by Paul demonstrates apostolic blessing upon Timothy's preaching ministry.

Special instruction to Timothy (2 Tim 4:1-5). Paul's charge to Timothy toward the end of the epistle also confirms that the gift of God is referring to Timothy's teach ministry. At the beginning of chapter 4, we read these words of Paul:

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Tim 4:1-5)

This exhortation follows a section of the epistle where Paul has contrasted his ministry with the ministry of false teachers. First, he warns him about the conduct of false teachers. In 3:1-9, Timothy is warned that times of difficulty are imminent, as men will proceed in a downward spiral of depravity. Second, he contrasts his own behavior with that of false teacher in verses 10-13. Whereas the false teachers were self-focused and used the ministry to indulge the flesh, Paul's ministry was very costly in human terms. He affirms, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (3:12), but the wicked teachers will "go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived" (3:13). Finally in chapter 3, Paul sets the choice before Timothy, giving his young friend insight into how to follow his conduct. The answer in how to pursue godliness is to stay faithful to the Word of God, which leads to salvation.

Chapter 4 teaches that the preacher must have passion to proclaim the Word. The text contains five imperatives: preach, be ready, reprove, rebuke, and exhort. Four truths emerge from considering these imperatives. First, the primary command is to preach. Several words translate as "preach." Paul uses the word κηρύσσω, which means "to make public declarations" and is used particularly to refer to "proclamation that is divine in origin or relates to divinity."⁷

Second, the command is to preach God's message. It is tied with chapter 3 in that the content of that preaching is the sacred Word of God that is able to make

⁷Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, ed. and trans. Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilber Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. "Κηρύσσω."

Timothy—and by extension, his audience—wise for salvation. His preaching is to consist of reproof, rebuke, and exhortation.

Third, the command to preach is not negated by external circumstances. The second imperative given is to be ready, and Paul qualifies this instruction by explaining that this refers to both “in season” and “out of season” (v. 2). A preacher cannot legitimately claim that opposition to his message renders his responsibility to proclaim it void. The “out of season” refers to those times when biblical preaching is not en vogue.

This truth is further illustrated in the succession of imperatives that follow: “reprove, rebuke, exhort.” The reason for such exhortations is that there will be a time when sound teaching will simply not be endured (v. 3). Instead, because of their itching ears, they will get for themselves what could be translated literally as a “heaping” of teachers according to their desires. These teachers are clearly not faithful proclaimers of the truth. The phrase used here that describes the heaping of something in accordance to desires is similar to Paul’s phrasing earlier in 3:6 where he writes about women who are led astray by their desires through the influence of these false teachers.

The point is that these false teachers present a real danger, according to Paul. They have a lack of concern for the well-being of the church and are antithetically opposed to true gospel ministry. Even though there is a plurality of elders, Timothy is especially charged with engaging in a ministry that stands in contrast to the ministry of these false teachers. He is to be faithfully proclaiming the truth instead of the counterfeit these men parade.

Fourth, Paul directs his imperatives toward a single pastor. Other elders possess the mandate to guard the flock but Timothy bears a special burden in the church at Ephesus. He must ensure that these false teachers are held at bay and exposed as frauds. Paul directs, therefore, the exhortation to preach primarily to Timothy. Paul reminds Timothy that some will fall away from this clear teaching of the Scriptures, but his path is clear: Preach the Word!

In summary, in numerous places in Scripture one leader is the primary teacher. In the Old Testament, Ezra serves as an example of this ministry. In the New Testament, Timothy has this responsibility. These men have been given the spiritual, intellectual, and moral competencies to do this special ministry.

The Protection of the Plurality

Despite the prominence of some who proclaim the Word, there is also a burden that all spiritual leaders have over the teaching ministry of the community of faith. This “protection of the plurality” ensures that no one elder—no matter how gifted or talented—is solely responsible for the proclamation of God’s Word. A team of leaders protects the teaching pastor from burnout and helps keep him accountable to fulfill his task as a faithful pastor.

Moses’ Burnout in Exodus 18:13-27

The Mosaic Law was not merely a civil code of conduct but was theological in nature. In Deuteronomy 4, God commands Israel to know “the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you” (v. 1). Knowledge of the law was to result in practical application. Keeping the law would indicate to those around them that God was near (v. 7).

The law revealed not just rules but God Himself. In fact, obedience to the law began with understanding God. The greatest commandment in Deuteronomy 6 proclaims that the people were to know that the Lord is one and to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (v. 5). Then, based upon that theological knowledge, the Israelites were to live out that theology in the land.

In Exodus 18, Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, comes to visit and he observes the ministry in which Moses is engaged. Jethro sees Moses, who knows the character of God

and the nature of the law, attempting to help the people apply the law in their everyday lives. The task is overwhelming.

The character of Jethro. Scripture gives only a few insights into the somewhat enigmatic character of Jethro. First, he was a priest—most likely a pagan priest—in Midian. To this point, Scripture does not indicate that he has had access to special revelation or responded to it. Second, he is a consistently positive character. When Moses asks his father-in-law for permission to return to Egypt, Jethro tells him to “go in peace” (Exod 4:18), indicating support for a journey that surely could have appeared reckless. Third, his response to the works of the Lord betrays a special degree of wisdom. Following Moses’ recounting of their deliverance from the Egyptians, Jethro responds with praise and worship, recognizing that Yahweh is the Supreme God.

Jethro said, ‘Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people.’ And Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses’ father-in-law before God. (Exod 18:10-12)

While not going so far as to become a part of the community of faith, Jethro is more than just casually interested in the affairs of his son-in-law and the people. He goes so far as to offer sacrifices to Yahweh and to eat with the leaders of Israel “before God.” The day after his arrival, Jethro observes Moses’ ministry as judge over the people of Israel.

The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. When Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, ‘What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?’ And Moses said to his father-in-law, ‘Because the people come to me to inquire of God; when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws.’ Moses’ father-in-law said to him, ‘What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. Moreover, look for able men from all the

people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.'

So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went away to his own country. (Exod 18:13-27)

The people's dependence upon Moses. Jethro instantly recognizes a problem while observing Moses at work. The people's dependence upon Moses as a teacher of God's law and statutes has become unhealthy. Even though the ministry was God-given, Moses' implementation of it had created an over-dependence upon one man. He alone sits in judgment from morning until evening.

Jethro's issue is not with the judgments that Moses is making. His problem is with the amount of work that Moses is placing upon himself. He identifies the problem in three ways. First, he asks Moses what it is he is doing. In his question, he acknowledges that Moses' intentions are good since he is doing it "for the people" (v. 14). Nevertheless, the picture he paints with his question illustrates the absurdity of what is happening. Moses is sitting in judgment, surrounded by people "from morning till evening" (v. 14).

Second, he listens carefully to Moses' explanation of how the situation has evolved to this point. Moses has the revelation of God and the people need it. As they come to him, they are inquiring of God (v. 15). This is particularly true when disputed issues arise (v. 16a). In these circumstances, Moses listens to each party, makes a decision, and informs them of the statutes and laws of God which informed that decision (v. 16b).

Third, after ascertaining the situation more fully, Jethro renders a judgment. His judgment is that the course upon which Moses has set himself "is not good" (v. 17). His reasoning is that Moses is placing too far a burden upon himself and those who are around him. Moses cannot do it alone" (v. 18).

The solution Jethro suggests. Jethro's answer to Moses' dilemma consists of several elements. First, Moses will continue to be engaged in the primary teaching ministry, representing the people before God, and will "warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do" (v. 20). Next, he will look for able men and set up a hierarchical structure, with chiefs overseeing groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens (v. 21). These men should meet certain qualifications. They must fear God, be trustworthy, and love justice (v. 21). They will decide the small matters and Moses will handle the larger matters.

Jethro closely ties the teaching of the law with the rendering of judicial decisions. He sees Moses' role as not merely rendering decisions and then teaching the law. Moses is to teach the law generally, then instruct others in it so that they can use it in rendering their judgments in the arenas to which they are called. The knowledge of God's law is a knowledge that is to be applied in everyday matters and is founded upon the great theological truth that God must be loved above all else.

Capable men come alongside Moses. Moses heeds his father-in-law's advice and capable men are chosen. They judge the people and then bring the hard cases to Moses. Jethro, upon seeing the project through to its completion, returns to his own country. What we see is men being raised up who assist not only in administrative duties but also in the task of spiritual shepherding, including the teaching. Moses remains the primary "preacher," but is dependent upon the assistance of these other men.

The Role of the Plurality of Elders in Acts 20:28-38

In Acts 20, Paul arrives in Miletus and sends for the elders in Ephesus. These elders were dear to Paul, as he had perhaps spent nearly three years with some of them. His words to them are rich with instructions for the shepherds of Christ's church. Paul's purpose is to defend his own ministry and prepare the elders for the difficult days ahead.

He is saddened by the fact that he will never see them again (v. 25), but his conscience is clear because he knows that he has done his due diligence in declaring to them the whole counsel of God (v. 27). Note again how the protection of the flock is directly tied with the proclamation of the word.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. (Acts 20:28-31)

This shepherding ministry consists of several instructions to guard things. Paul wants the Ephesian elders to be aware of some precious items that must be protected.

Guard yourselves (v. 28a). First, they are instructed to guard themselves. “Pay careful attention to yourselves,” he warns the elders (v. 28). This warning is consistent with similar warnings Paul gives regarding teachers. Elders are to be above reproach, he tells both Titus and Timothy (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:2). Paul admonishes Timothy to watch his life and his doctrine closely (1 Tim 4:16). The elder who is unable to watch his own moral conduct and his own doctrine will similarly be unable to guard that which has been entrusted to him by God in the church. Thus, Paul begins with a personal warning to the elder to watch themselves.

Guard the flock (v. 28b). The second part of his instruction is an injunction to guard the flock. It is important to note that this direction is given to the entire group of elders. The verb that is used in verse 28 is προσέχετε, the second person plural imperative form of προσέχω, which means “to be in a state of alert” or “be concerned for.”⁸ Paul’s warning to the elders is to pay attention. Paul is not singling out a teaching

⁸Ibid., s.v. “προσέχω.”

elder and warning him to teach well and guard against false teaching. Collectively the group is being charged with the task of “paying attention.”

Guard what is precious (v. 28c). The church is of immense value to God and should be to His shepherds as well. These guards of the church are described in such a way that highlights both their authority and responsibility to provide care. Their authority is not authority as the world would understand it. Paul’s charge is given to these men because they are overseers. This forms the basis of his exhortation to shepherd the church. The value of the church is demonstrated by the fact that Christ purchased the church with his own blood.

Guard from dangers without (v. 29). Paul is confident first that “savage wolves” will come from the outside and will not spare the flock. They will insidiously work to become a part of the church then destroy her.

This begs a significant question: what is the nature of the danger that Paul perceives? Is he worried about literal persecution? Though this was certainly a danger faced by the early church, it does not seem to be what is on the forefront of Paul’s mind. He has been talking about his public and private proclamation of the Word of God (20:18-27). In the verses immediately preceding he declares his innocence before God on the basis of his faithfulness in declaring the whole counsel of God. The danger to the church, therefore, is doctrinal. There is a possibility that men from outside the church will slip in unnoticed and begin to teach things that are contrary to sound doctrine. As they do so, the very souls of the people in the church are imperiled.

There is a steady warning from the New Testament writers regarding the danger of false teachers. In Ephesians, Paul is concerned that his readers know that the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (2:20). In Galatians 1, he warns that the abandonment of the right teaching is actually a desertion of “him who called you in the grace of Christ” (v. 6). The

message they are embracing is not a true gospel but one that has been distorted (v. 7).

Therefore, his rebuke is strong: “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed” (v. 8).

Other New Testament writers are equally concerned about the dangers presented by false teachers. The characteristics of these men demonstrate their danger. First, the false teachers work to build the church upon a teaching other than the apostolic teaching and have a different cornerstone (Eph 2:20). Second, they distort the person and work of Christ. As Peter puts it, they deny “the master who bought them.” Or, as Jude writes, they are those who turn his grace into lawlessness (Jude 4). Third, they distort the responsibility of man before God. They do this by promoting one of two extremes. Sometimes, they argue for legalistic righteousness. In Galatians, Paul admonishes his readers: “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Gal 3:3). On the other extreme, sometimes they pursue immorality with unrestrained vigor, perverting the doctrine of grace (Jude 4). Fourth, they are self-exalters (Jude 12). Finally, they lack meat or sustenance in their teaching (2 Peter 2:17, Jude 12).

Guard from dangers within (v. 30). These false teachers will not only be from the outside. Men will arise from within the church as well, teaching doctrines that are twisted. Their perverted doctrine is dangerous as they draw disciples after them. The danger of following these men and adhering to their teaching is that their future has been foreordained. Judgment has been reserved for them (e.g., 2 Pet 2:4ff.) and those who follow after these teachers stand in line of God’s wrath as well.

Guard with diligence (v. 31). The labor the shepherds are called to is intense. Paul again exhorts them to alertness (v. 31) and reminds them of his efforts at guarding the flock. He reveals at least three things about his ministry while he was in Ephesus. First, it was constant. Night and day he was engaged in the ministry God called him to (v. 31). Second, the ministry involved admonishment (v. 31b). There was

communication of truth—in contrast to the error perpetuated by the false teachers—that was necessary for the edification of the saints. Finally, the ministry was a passionate one (v. 31c). As he literally battled for the minds and souls of the church at Ephesus, it was not with detached disinterest. He was moved to tears as he considered the danger to and eternal state of his audience.

Summary. There are several relevant things to note about Paul’s exhortation to the elders at Ephesus. First, the flock is in danger. This danger is doctrinal in nature. The concern is that people in the church will follow teaching that is contrary to the apostolic faith, upon which the true church is built. Second, Paul commends others to the task of the defense of the doctrine of the church. Third, right teaching is the Pauline antidote to false teaching. The need that Paul identifies for the church is a need to rightly understand and continue to apply the whole counsel of God. Fourth, it is important to note that these “others” are a team of men. All the elders are charged to protect against the church. Fifth, the solution Paul envisions is more extensive than just the proclamation of the Word in a large public gathering. It includes the faithful ministry of shepherds engaging in sound teaching. The pulpit ministry is a subset of this overarching ministry.

The Principles for the Pastor

Two things should be clear from the study thus far. First, God often calls and equips a particular leader to serve as a point person for the proclamation of His Word. Second, the burden of the ministry of teaching God’s Word is not borne by a single individual. The task now is to see how these two truths converge to promote the health of the body.

2 Timothy Redux

Paul, as seen above, gave a charge to Timothy regarding his special, primary teaching role in the church. Simultaneously, Paul calls Timothy to interact with and

develop other leaders in the church.

Other teachers. In chapter 2, Paul communicates his expectation regarding the teaching he has given Timothy:

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Tim 2:1-2)

The teaching given to Timothy was done so in the presence of “many witnesses.” It was not some secretive knowledge that others were forbidden to be aware of. It was a true knowledge of who the person of Jesus Christ was. Now, says Paul, just as he entrusted these teachings to Timothy, he must communicate these truths to others.

Paul expects that Timothy will be on the lookout for similarly capable men. He will take these teachings and pass them on with the expectation that they too will continue in the teaching ministry. The community of faith needs other teachers who will help the primary teacher communicate the truths of God’s Word.

Good and bad teachers. Throughout the epistle, other members or former members of the community of faith are referred to, sometimes favorably and sometimes unfavorably. In fact, there is a constant juxtaposition of faithful co-laborers with faithless workers. At the end of chapter 1, Paul writes, “All who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermongenes” (v. 15). But they are contrasted with Onesiphorus who searched earnestly for Paul and was not ashamed of his imprisonment (vv. 16-18).

Similarly, chapter 2 contrasts approved workers (vv. 14-15) with Hymenaeus and Philetus (v. 17). Approved workers rightly handle false teachers and wrong doctrine. They refuse to be drawn into foolish controversies (v. 23) and quarrel (v. 24). Instead they teach; enduring evil and correcting those who are in opposition to the truth with gentleness (v. 25). They do this because they have a spiritually informed comprehension of the struggle in which they are engaged. Their objective is not merely to win an

intellectual argument, but to leave open the possibility that those who oppose them may “escape from the snare of the devil” (v. 26).

In chapter 3, Paul draws numerous contrasts between the conduct of false teachers and Paul’s ministry. In the first nine verses, the ministry of the false teachers is described. In the last days, these men will selfishly seek their own advancement, having an appearance of godliness, but in reality denying its power. Paul exhorts Timothy instead to follow his ministry, which has been marked by persecution and suffering (vv. 10-12).

In chapter 4, Paul closes with a laundry list of co-laborers, again with several contrasts drawn. Demas has deserted him. Crescens, Titus, Mark, and Tychicus are all faithful, but elsewhere. Alexander the coppersmith harmed him and opposed Paul’s teaching. At one point, no one defended Paul, but the Lord was faithful.

There is a certain melancholy air in the Apostle Paul’s final letter. He is alone and in need of other saints to encourage him in his ministry. There is a necessity of faithful workers who will come alongside the primary teaching elder and supplement his ministry.

Nehemiah 8:1-8

Nehemiah 8 proves to be a useful passage in which to return. It communicates the vital function the other Levites had in communicating the meaning of the law.

The leaders are engaged in the preaching ministry. Even though Ezra bears the primary responsibility for the preaching ministry, in Nehemiah 8 he is not standing alone declaring God’s Word to the people. Verse 4 says,

And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand.”

As these leaders stand next to him, they indicate their solidarity with what Ezra is proclaiming.

Some of the Levites assist in the preaching ministry. There are a variety of ways and degrees in which the Levites participate in the ministry of proclaiming the law. In verse 7 a group comprised of an almost entirely different group of names who help Ezra in the teaching of the law. The next verse gives a fuller picture of how they assisted in the teaching. They “read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.”

The word that is translated in the ESV as “gave the sense” is $\psi\text{-}\eta\text{-}\eta\eta$. The exact meaning of the word is unclear. The LXX translates the word using the Greek word $\delta\iota\alpha\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\omega$, which means “to define or express in no uncertain terms what one must do.”⁹ Based upon the context, it seems to imply that the Levites were involved in providing exposition for the people.

Conclusion

Five principles emerge from the biblical passages considered. First, there is often a man God sovereignly ordains to proclaim His word. There will most often be a person to whom the community of faith looks to and shouts, “Bring God’s Word to us!” Though it may sometimes be difficult to spot how God has equipped that person, the Spirit resides upon that person in a special way. There are various gifting of abilities, circumstances, and spiritual preparation that work to create a leader for the church.

Second, the faithful teaching and application of the Word of God is essential for the spiritual life of the individual and the church. There is a close connection in each of the accounts between right living and right doctrine. Knowledge of God’s Word is essential to holiness. There is a consistent call in Scripture for preaching and teaching the people of God. The biblical authors never call for less teaching!

Third, a plurality of leaders is necessary to proclaim God’s Word faithfully.

⁹Ibid., s.v. “ $\delta\iota\alpha\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\omega$.”

The task of proclaiming the Word is an essential part of the shepherding duties of the elders. All elders bear the responsibility of making sure the teaching of the church is sound. It is vitally important that other elders know what is being taught and express solidarity with it.

Finally, the pulpit ministry is therefore a part of the overarching teaching ministry of the church. The pulpit ministry is elevated—figuratively and literally—by churches that value God’s Word. Unfortunately, churches sometimes fail to understand that it should be part of a broader ministry of proclaiming God’s Word. The challenge is not to make the pulpit ministry less important, but to see the other teaching aspects of the church as similarly important. Therefore, the teaching pastor is not above the other spiritual leaders of the church. Rather, he works in conjunction with them to ensure that the Word of God is being faithfully proclaimed. The other shepherds of the church should be an essential part of protecting and guiding his pulpit ministry.

CHAPTER 3

A TEAM IN THE PULPIT

Every Thursday morning at 7:30, Kirk Bode arrives at New Life Christian Church in Morton, Illinois for a morning of sermon preparation. There are several remarkable things about his preparation process. First, he is not working alone this morning. He is leading a team that has collective responsibility for the preaching ministry at New Life. Second, he and his team work on multiple sermons. They evaluate the sermon from the previous week, make some final changes on the sermon for the upcoming Sunday, and brainstorm for a sermon scheduled to be preached in five weeks. Finally, Bode's involvement is unusual in that he is not a staff member at the church. He is a lay elder charged by the Lead Pastor and other pastoral staff to lead the sermon preparation process. "Thursdays are my favorite day of the week," he says. "I love them. I can't believe the leadership lets me do what I do."¹ Bode's work at New Life represents one way to incorporate some of the theological principles that have been discussed in the previous chapter.

This chapter will first explore the dynamics of teams and how they accomplish tasks. Second, it will examine several examples of how churches like New Life incorporate teams into sermon preparation.

How Teams Accomplish Tasks

The elders are the "team" at Bethany Community Church that has been given

¹Kirk Bode, interview by author, Morton, IL, 27 May 2010.

the task of overseeing the teaching ministry. It is the assumption of this chapter that looking at principles of teamwork may help them accomplish the task of working together to assist with the pulpit ministry.

The Definition of a Team

J. Richard Hackman notes three qualities that define an organizational work group. First, that “they are *real* groups.” That is, there are real “boundaries, interdependence among members, and differentiated member roles.” This also means that it is possible to “distinguish members . . . from nonmembers.” Second, a group must “have one or more *tasks* to perform.” The group should “produce an outcome that can be identified as its product.” Finally, “they operate in an *organizational context*,” meaning that they function within a larger social system.²

Ilgen et al. have a similar understanding of team, emphasizing especially the fact that “teams exist for some task-oriented purpose.”³ Though it may be true that a team exists to accomplish a task, a team is more than the collection of individuals into a group. Robert Maddux attempts to differentiate between a “group” and a “team.” A group consists of individuals who have not coalesced around a common purpose. The members “focus on themselves,” “are told what to do,” and “distrust the motives of colleagues because they do not understand the role of other members.”⁴ By contrast, teams consist of members who “recognize their interdependence,” “participate in

²J. Richard Hackman, “Work Teams in Organizations: An Orienting Framework, in *Groups that Work (And Those That Don't)*, ed. J. Richard Hackman (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass: 1990), 4, emphasis original.

³Daniel Ilgen et al., “Raising an Individual Decision-Making Model to the Team Level: A New Research Model and Paradigm,” in *Team Effectiveness and Decision Making in Organizations*, ed. Richard A. Guzzo (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 114.

⁴Robert Maddux, *Team Building: An Exercise in Leadership* (Oakville, ON: Crisp, 1988), 5.

decisions affecting the team,” and “work in a climate of trust and are encouraged to openly express ideas, opinions, disagreements, and feelings.”⁵

This understanding of a team is helpful and, if it is accurate, reveals a significant challenge that faces a group. Peter Senge uses Bill Russell’s Boston Celtics as an example of a group that functioned as a team. Quoting Russell, he writes,

Every so often a Celtic game would heat up so that it became more than a physical or even mental game. . . . It was almost as if we were playing in slow motion. During those spells, I could almost sense how the next play would develop and where the next shot would be taken.⁶

According to Senge, this cohesiveness among the players demonstrates “a phenomenon we have come to call ‘alignment,’” which he defines as “a group of people function[ing] as a whole.” The problem is that most often “the energies of individual members [within a team] work at cross purposes.”⁷ An unaligned team is one in which there is much wasted energy as members “may work extraordinarily hard, but their efforts do not efficiently translate to team effort.”⁸

A biblical example of alignment can be seen in Ezra’s ministry in Nehemiah 8. The collaboration between Ezra and the others who are helping explain the text allows the ministry to happen more effectively. Apart from the oneness of purpose that existed between Ezra and the priests, they would not have been able to work together. It is not the personal preferences of the leaders that create the oneness of purpose. It is their mutual commitment to the authority of the Word of God that creates the alignment.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 233-34.

⁷Ibid., 234.

⁸Ibid.

Relevance for the project. The first principle to be gleaned for this project is incorporating the lay leadership into the expository preaching ministry requires unity regarding the purpose of preaching. The elders at Bethany Community Church meet the definition of a team as described above. They are part of a larger organizational unit that has been given a task—not only by the members of the church but by God Himself as was seen in the previous chapter. However, it is not enough for a team simply to exist. A team that is just working on tasks is merely a group. It is important for the group to have alignment.

There are many areas in which an elder board needs to experience alignment. This project focuses on just one of those areas: preaching. Part of the training before the sermon series began focused on making sure there was unity and alignment regarding the purpose of a sermon.

The Benefits of a Team

When the basic elements of a team are in place, the results can be quite impressive. The secular world's fascination with the concept of team stems from the fact that teams have the potential to accomplish more than the same number of individuals working alone.

Secular interest in teams. Peter Block observed a “quiet revolution taking place in many organizations” in the 1980s and believed it was due to

the growing realization that tighter controls, greater pressure, more clearly defined jobs, and tighter supervision have, in the last fifty years, run their course in their ability to give us the productivity gains we require to compete effectively in the world marketplace.⁹

⁹Peter Block, *The Empowered Manager: Positive Political Skills at Work* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), xii.

William Dyer traces much of the contemporary fascination with teamwork to the groundbreaking Hawthorne studies begun in the late 1920s. The original purpose of the studies was to determine the correlation between lighting in the workplace and the productivity of the worker. Six operators were chosen and over a five-year period were asked to perform their tasks—as a group—in various working conditions.

What the researchers found shocked them. The operators' work output seemed ultimately to be a function of something more than rest periods, incentives or refreshments. After much analysis, the researchers generally agreed that the most significant factor was the building of a sense of group identity, a feeling of social support and cohesion that came with increased worker interaction.¹⁰

In the mid-1990s, Susan Mohrman also noted the increase of teams in the last decade and attributed the increase to the “belief that teams are an appropriate structure for implementing strategies formulated to deal with performance demands and opportunities presented by the changing business environment.”¹¹ The secular workplace's fascination is obviously pragmatic. If the conclusions reached in the Hawthorne study are correct, teams offer the potential to increase productivity dramatically.

Distributing the workload. One reason that teams are beneficial is that they offer an opportunity to distribute the workload. As Jethro rightly surmised, when a group works on problems simultaneously, they complete projects more quickly. Concurrent engineering, for example, streamlines tasks as they are done simultaneously instead of sequentially.¹² Ideally, within a team the members are motivated as they realize that they

¹⁰William Dyer, *Team Building* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1987), 8.

¹¹Susan Albers Mohrman, *Designing Team-Based Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 6-7.

¹²*Ibid.*, 8.

are integral to a project's success because they are "applying their unique talents and knowledge to team objectives."¹³

Motivating the members. As was seen at the beginning of the chapter, Kirk Bode is exhilarated by the role he plays at New Life Christian Church. He willingly gives up one-tenth of his workweek to help in the preaching ministry. His excitement mirrors that Tom Marshall, one of the individuals profiled in *Empowered Teams*. As Marshall discusses the impact work teams have made on his job, he notes,

It used to be . . . that nothing we said or did would change anything around here. I'd be working and thinking about all the things I could be doing at home, or about how bored I was. Now my mind is with me, my co-workers are with me, and we're actually having a good time. And the numbers prove our company's healthier for it, too."¹⁴

Learning and developing creative solutions. Teams are also beneficial because of their ability to handle difficult situations and arrive at solutions that might not be intuitive to one person working on their own. One of the difficulties organizations often struggle with is problem solving. As Barbara Gray observes,

The pace at which new problems are generated is rapid, and individual organizations are hard pressed to make effective or timely responses. As a result, problems are piling up; new problems are cropping up daily, while yesterday's problems often go unsolved.¹⁵

Teamwork fosters collaboration, argues Gray, which "is a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is

¹³Maddux, *Team Building*, 6.

¹⁴Richard Wellins, William Byham and Jeanne Wilson, *Empowered Teams: Creating Self-Directed Work Groups that Improve Quality, Productivity, and Participation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 3.

¹⁵Barbara Gray, *Collaboration: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989), 1.

possible.”¹⁶ As team members get excited about using their various talents and abilities to approach a task, new possibilities emerge for dealing with problems.

The Jerusalem council in Acts 15 in which the church gathers to discuss the question of what to ask of Gentile believers is a Scriptural example of this type of collaboration. After there had been discussion regarding what burdens to place on Gentile believers and what Luke seems to politely refer to as “much debate” (v. 7). The words of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul seem to prove effective in reaching the consensus articulated by James. The participation of each of these members enables the council to reach a decision that encouraged the Gentile churches.

Mutual learning and development create an environment in which solutions to difficult problems are reached. Senge identifies three critical elements of team learning. First is “the need to think insightfully about complex issues.”¹⁷ The group that desires to find solutions to difficult problems must commit as individuals to developing their critical thinking ability. The goal is not a pooling of ignorance but a pooling of honed intelligence.

Second is “the need for innovative, coordinated action.”¹⁸ The organization in which the team operates must be structured in such a way that innovation is encouraged, yet managed in such a way that other members are aware of one another’s actions.

Third is “the role of team members on other teams.”¹⁹ This means that members of the team benefit by the work of other teams. Senge concludes, “Thus, a

¹⁶Ibid., 5.

¹⁷Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 236.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

learning team continually fosters other learning teams through inculcating the practices and skills of team learning more broadly.”²⁰

Deeper relationships. Teams are also beneficial for developing deeper relationships. As members learn from one another and accomplish tasks, bonds form.

A unique relationship develops among members who enter into dialogue regularly. They develop a deep trust that cannot help but carry over to discussions. They develop a richer understanding of the uniqueness of each person’s point of view. Moreover, they experience how larger understandings emerge by holding one’s own point of view ‘gently.’ They learn to master the art of holding a position, rather than being ‘held by their positions.’ When it is appropriate to defend a point of view, they do it more gracefully and with less rigidity, that is without putting ‘winning’ as a first priority.²¹

Relevance for the project. The second principle for the research project is this: incorporating the lay leadership in the preaching ministry requires focusing on the elements of preaching that the team can do most effectively. In reality, the church should not need to be convinced of the benefits of teamwork. The biblical injunctions are clear—the elders in a church must function as a team. The research explored considered many elements of teamwork that are beneficial. Some of these will be experienced by elder boards in other settings than this project, such as deepening relationships and sharing the workload.

It is crucial that the elders experience the motivation and sense of ownership that Marshall and Bode expressed. Because the team must focus on those elements that it can do best, therefore the project must use the lay leaders judiciously and not incorporate them into every aspect of the preaching ministry. Areas such as the initial exegesis and developing the homiletical outline will remain the purview of the Senior Pastor.

Instead, the elder board—the team—will be incorporated into the process at the points in time at which their involvement will be most helpful. Perhaps the most

²⁰Ibid., 237.

²¹Ibid., 247-48.

beneficial aspect of teamwork for sermon preparation will be the way in which it can facilitate learning and the developing of creative solutions to tough problems. The group will be able to assist in thinking through concepts and illustrations more critically so that the teaching will achieve maximum clarity, accuracy, and effectiveness.

The Maintenance of a Team

In the scenario presented in this project, the church has already established a team of elders. Therefore, the project focuses not on how a team is formed or individual members selected but instead how a team, once established, can be maintained.

Shared vision. Absolutely critical to the long-term success of a team is a shared vision. Harvey Robbins and Michael Finley put it bluntly: “team talent, efficiency, intelligence, and clout are pretty doggone useless unless the team has some clue where it’s going and how it’s to contribute to the organization’s overall strategies for success.”²²

While many organizations recognize the need to develop and put forth a vision, Robbins and Finley realize that vision must be more than ideas put forth by disinterested parties. Instead, vision “is a burning thought, and it exists only in the heads (and hearts) of the team. The vision is the thing the team exists to do, defined in ambitious form. . . . Without team vision, there is no point to a team.”²³

Block maintains that “creating a vision forces us to take a stand for a preferred future.”²⁴ The team should not passively allow others to dictate their future but instead collectively determine what they want the future to look like. In order to get buy-in among the entire team, they utilize consensus to develop the vision. Robbins writes,

²²Harvey Robbins and Michael Finley, *Why Teams Don’t Work: What Went Wrong and How to Make it Right* (Princeton, NJ: Pacesetter Books, 1995), 103.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Block, *The Empowered Manager*, 102.

The proper way to spread a vision is to work with people as individuals to bring their wants and needs into alignment with the team vision. Treat everyone equally. No arm-twisting, wheedling, or cajolery. Show people the respect they deserve as adults and as members of your team, and they will treat your idea with the same respect. You cannot own it for them; they must come to own the idea [sic] . . . on their own.²⁵

A team can be maintained as they remain passionately committed to the vision they have arrived at collectively.

Giving ownership. The long-term maintenance of a team depends on members owning their areas of responsibility. Wellins, advocating “empowered teams,” observes that one of the characteristics of a self-directed team is that the work given to it is “usually designed to give the team ‘ownership’ of a product or service.”²⁶

Wellins notes several distinguishing characteristics of self-directed teams: (1) They are empowered to share various management and leadership functions. (2) They plan, control, and improve their own work processes. (3) They set their own goals and inspect their own work. (4) They often create their own schedules and review their performance as a group. (5) They may prepare their own budgets and coordinate their work with other departments. (6) They usually order materials, keep inventories, and deal with suppliers. (7) They frequently are responsible for acquiring any new training they might need.²⁷

Developing a team that has ownership is important because the normal trajectory of members of a team is to become passive. But, “by assuming authority over their work, self-directed work team members become actively involved in the process of continuous improvement.”²⁸

²⁵Robbins, *Why Teams Don't Work*, 106.

²⁶Wellins, *Empowered Teams*, 4.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., 5.

Commitment to further growth. A team that refuses to grow and learn is a team that has become stagnant and is in danger of withering and dying. For example, it was mentioned earlier that one of the benefits of a team was that it provides an avenue in which group learning could take place. But if team members are not committed to growing in their ability to learn together, they will not experience this benefit. As Senge observes: “A group of talented individual learners will not necessarily produce a learning team, any more than a group of talented athletes will produce a great sports team. Learning teams learn how to learn together.”²⁹

Communication. One of the paradoxes of communication is that “often we all know the right answer to a question, but for a variety of reasons we decide to keep our mouths shut about it.”³⁰ A team needs to have processes in place that facilitate communication among members. Robbins and Finley list four elements of good communication: talking, listening, listening to ourselves talking (e.g., asking: are we talking too long, are we saying things that are relevant), and listening to ourselves listening (e.g., asking: are we over-analyzing their words, trying to formulate responses instead of allowing them to develop their ideas).³¹

When a team is communicating effectively, Dyer says:

Criticism is frequent, frank, and relatively comfortable. There is little evidence of personal attack, either openly or in a hidden fashion. The criticism has a constructive flavor in that it is oriented toward removing an obstacle that faces the group and prevents it from getting the job done.³²

This type of communication will prove extremely helpful to allowing a team to achieve

²⁹Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 257.

³⁰Robbins, *Why Teams Don't Work*, 120.

³¹Ibid., 123-24.

³²Dyer, *Team Building*, 13.

its goals. Apart from this communication, there exists no mechanism for discussing what needs to be improved or accomplished. For elders, this type of communication is not only wise from a pragmatic sense but a biblical injunction. Elders are not to be quarrelsome (2 Tim 3:3). In Ephesians 4, shepherds are given to the church to equip its members for ministry. As the elders do this, the church matures and members are to be “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15).

Decision making. For a team to function smoothly, it is crucial that it make decisions well. In a church, says Lawrence Richards, consensus is a “safeguard” as a team of responsible persons, honestly exploring a decision to be made, using all the capacities God has given them, and prayerfully seeking His will, *come to one accord*. When that accord has been achieved, when there is consensus, then the responsible group can move ahead with confidence that the direction in which they go does reflect the will of the Lord.³³

Senge contends that consensus building is an attribute of successful groups.

I have spoken to many managers who have been members of teams that performed at . . . extraordinary levels. They will describe meetings that lasted for hours yet ‘flew by,’ not remembering ‘who said what, but knowing when we had really come to a shared understanding,’ of ‘never having to vote—we just got to the point of knowing what we needed to do.’³⁴

Relevance for the project. The third principle for the research project is: Incorporating the lay leadership in the preaching ministry required maintaining a healthy team. Admittedly, it was difficult to assess the maintenance of the team over as short a time period as this project covers.

However, this project was designed to begin implementing some strategies that over the long-term will help maintain a strong team. First, the lay leadership needed to have a shared vision as to what the preaching ministry should look like. Second, this

³³Lawrence Richards, *A Theology of Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 307.

³⁴Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 235.

project was an important first step in giving ownership to the elders over aspects of the pulpit ministry. The team will become more self-directing. Wellins' criteria of what makes a team self-directing is good and many of those qualities—such as sharing leadership functions, improving their own work processes, and setting their own goals—will be tested during this research project. Third, the project put a process in place that helps ensure that effective communication will take place.

The Leader of a Team

A central tenant of this project is that even though the teaching ministry is a shared responsibility of the elders in a church, there is generally one individual among the elders who is given the primary responsibility for the preaching ministry. This elder need not be the most influential elder—although sometimes he will be—nor must he be the elder who serves as the primary leader of the staff—although usually he is.

The importance of leadership. “Leadership is one of the most enduring, universal human responsibilities,” writes Rosabeth Moss Kanter. “The practice of leadership is sufficiently similar across historical eras and civilizations that lessons are drawn from such disparate figures as Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi, Attila the Hun, and Niccolo Machiavelli.”³⁵

Even in an organization that is committed to teamwork and work groups, there is a necessity for leaders and an assumption that certain members of a group will rise to the top. In fact, Robbins and Finley argue that “when a team is in trouble, its leadership is very often the problem. One of the best ways to understand leadership is by seeing

³⁵Rosabeth Moss Kanter, “World-Class Leaders: The Power of Partnering,” in *The Leader of the Future: New Visions, Strategies, and Practices for the Next Era*, ed. Frances Hesselbein, Marshal Goldsmith, and Richard Beckhard (New York: The Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management, 1996), 89-90.

what happens when it isn't there. It isn't pretty."³⁶ A strong leader who honestly assesses the difficulties in his team will realize that "the odds of leadership being at the root of the difficulties is very high."³⁷ When there is vacuum of leadership, "things aren't happening . . . People are upset, disillusioned, hostile to their own enterprise. If work does get done it has a predictable character."³⁸

The difference between a leader and a manager. Warren Bennis observes that "most organizations are underled and overmanaged."³⁹ Effective leadership understands the difference between managing members of a team and leading them. Miller draws several distinctions between the leaders and managers. "Leadership has to do with direction and management with organizing and mobilizing an organization to go in that direction . . . Leadership says . . . there is your destiny . . . Management says . . . here is your roadmap."⁴⁰ This distinction is especially important in a church setting where a leader is working with fellow elders and not employees.

A good leader is not impersonal but involved in the lives of those he or she is leading. Dyer notes the following three observations about leaders of effective teams based upon the Hawthorne study. First, the "boss . . . had a personal interest in each person's achievement." Second, he "took pride in the record of the group." Finally, he "helped the group work together to set its own conditions of work."⁴¹

³⁶Robbins, *Why Teams Don't Work*, 75.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 101.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 75.

³⁹Calvin Miller, *The Empowered Leader: 10 Keys to Servant Leadership* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995), 158.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 158-59.

⁴¹Dyer, *Team Building*, 9.

Leadership misconceptions. In both the church and the secular business world, there are many misconceptions regarding the task and purpose of a leader. Unfortunately, leadership is often understood by looking at how those in positions of power are operating. Sometimes observed leadership takes the form of a “good old-fashioned, hierarchical, top-down, leader-led team. The leader is the boss; everyone else does what the boss says.”⁴² Conversely, some teams appear to have no leader whatsoever. In this model, “no individual is set above any other, but everyone pitches in to keep the team focused and one track.”⁴³ Robbins and Finley rightly recognize that there is a wide-spectrum of what can be called “leadership” and the various models have both their faults and strengths.

There are several myths regarding team leadership that Robbins and Finley identify: (1) “Teams require a single individual to lead them.” (2) “Strong leadership ensures success.” (3) How a leader is selected is not important. (4) Team success is all that matters. (5) Team structure is a secondary consideration. (6) A good leader and a good team can solve any task.⁴⁴

Selecting a leader. In the project with which this paper is concerned, the leader of the team in terms of the pulpit ministry is the Senior Pastor. This is consistent with Robbins and Finley’s conclusions regarding the selection of the leader of a group:

Leaders must be selected in a way that is consonant with the task a team is assigned and the kind of team he or she is assigned to. A free-wheeling, autonomous team will not welcome a leader assigned from outside the group. A new leader may have trouble adjusting to an established team. A team never previously allowed to make decisions for itself may be unable to choose its own leaders.⁴⁵

⁴²Robbins, *Why Teams Don’t Work*, 79.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., 78-79.

⁴⁵Ibid., 78.

Problems with leaders. Robbins and Finley list twenty-four problems that can exist with the leadership of an organization. These problems are stupid leaders, leaders who are ignorant, overstrained leaders, leaders who are too talented, leaders who are too kind, leaders who are closed to new ideas, leaders with inappropriate styles, leaders who put themselves ahead of the team, leaders who do not really know the team, inconsistent leaders, leaders who cannot be followers, leaders who refuse to acknowledge team members, leadership that plays favorites, leaders who do not allow failure, leaders who protect and blame., unethical leaders, leaders who are remote, leaders who fail to model team behavior, leaders who are oblivious to team members' career needs, leaders who are unwilling to fight for the team, leaders who are unwilling to take risks, leaders who cannot permit conflict, leaders who do not value diversity, and leaders who are passive.⁴⁶

The point of this rather lengthy list is that there are a myriad of ways in which leaders can fail.⁴⁷ In fact, it is easy to see why it is often the leader's fault when there is a failure on the team. Much comes under his responsibility and he must be a Goldilocks leader—not too much of this and yet not too much of that either! For example, leaders “can no longer afford to maintain insularity,”⁴⁸ yet they must simultaneously avoid the perception that they play favorites.⁴⁹

The responsibilities of a leader. Robbins and Finley devote some attention to considering how a leader leads a team. A team leader should strive to help others use their abilities to achieve tasks that have been entrusted to the team. “Team leaders add

⁴⁶Ibid., 80-92.

⁴⁷Robbins writes, “It’s a long list, but a complete list of the ways leaders disappoint would be much longer” (*Why Teams Don’t Work*, 80).

⁴⁸Kanter, “World-Class Leaders,” 90.

⁴⁹Robbins, *Why Teams Don’t Work*, 86.

value by leveraging their organizations' assets and outcomes beyond expectations."⁵⁰ Leadership is necessary even in teams where the participants are considered equals. It may be that the team is simply participating in a discussion, but there still "must be a 'facilitator' who 'holds the context' of dialogue."⁵¹

In order to maximize the potential of the members of the group, there are several things leaders should do, Robbins and Finley argue. First, leaders should leverage themselves and others by projecting energy. Leaders are to "provide task excitement, motivation, spirit." This does not mean that leaders must be extroverted but they should use their individual personality traits to get others excited about the task. Second, leaders should be involved, involving, and empowering of others. Third, they should assist the group as change occurs. Fourth, they should persuade and persevere as they help the team pursue its goals.⁵²

Team leaders not only leverage the personnel assets of a team, they also "leverage *awareness* and *choice*. Organizations succeed when people within those organizations are aware of the problems and/or opportunities."⁵³ Leaders do this by looking beyond the obvious, maintaining perspective, and facilitating pyramid learning so that they can be replaced when necessary.⁵⁴

The third area of assets that leaders leverage involves focus and integration. Focus is "a team's ability to fix its attention on a goal or task" and integration refers to an "individual team member's ability to 'get with the program.'"⁵⁵ Team leaders leverage

⁵⁰Ibid., 93.

⁵¹Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 243.

⁵²Robbins, *Why Teams Don't Work*, 94-95.

⁵³Ibid., 96, emphasis original.

⁵⁴Ibid., 97.

⁵⁵Ibid.

focus and integration by targeting energy on opportunities for success, creating linkage between group members, and influencing cooperative action.⁵⁶

The final area of assets that leaders leverage involves innovation and performance. Leaders do this by supporting creativity, taking initiative, eschewing the negative, and by refusing to be satisfied.⁵⁷ “A good leader can never be convinced that existing structures, processes, and outcomes are as good as they could or should be.”⁵⁸

Relevancy for the project. The fourth principle for the research project is this: Incorporating the lay leadership in the preaching ministry requires engaged servant-leadership. In the previous chapter, the concept of a “first among equals” was considered. Within the confines of this project and in the area of the pulpit ministry, I function as the “first among equals.” Therefore, it is incumbent upon me to work to on my leadership skills so that the group can maximize its ability. The project must define the roles clearly. The responsibilities I place upon the team should not be burdensome. The men who are going to be assisting are busy with other church, family, and work responsibilities. I tried to help them by managing the project efficiently, giving them my notes and evaluation papers in a timely manner, and giving them specific ways to be involved.

The Evaluation of a Team

How one evaluates the effectiveness of a team is a crucial issue. Evaluation is more than just seeing how things are going. If the benefits of a team are those that have been enumerated above, it is important to ensure that the team is experiencing those benefits and doing so in the most efficient way possible.

⁵⁶Ibid., 98-99.

⁵⁷Ibid., 99-100.

⁵⁸Ibid., 100-01.

Evaluation defined. In every project that a team is assigned, “data” is generated. John Boulmetis notes that all evaluations involve “the systematic process of collecting data that help identify the strengths and weaknesses of a program or project.”⁵⁹ The purpose of evaluation is either to “determine whether and to what degree objectives have been or are being achieved” or to help “make a decision.”⁶⁰ In the former case, evaluations are used to gain knowledge as to whether or not something worked. In the latter, evaluations are used to determine ways to improve a project. Boulmetis suggests that this second type of evaluation is more beneficial. It can result in improvements being made even when a team has achieved its stated objectives.

Moving from this general understanding of evaluations, Boulmetis considers three ways in which evaluation can be defined. The first way it can be defined is as a process.

The process is guided by the reason for doing the evaluation in the first place. An evaluation might be a process of examining a training program in light of values or standards for the purpose of making certain decisions about the efficiency, effectiveness, or impact of the program.⁶¹

The second way that evaluations can be defined is as “the process of delineating, obtaining, and providing useful information for the purpose of selecting among alternatives.”⁶² In other words, evaluation helps one choose between existing alternatives. The goal here is not to see if the team simply achieved the stated objectives but also whether it did so in the best way compared to other options.

Finally, evaluation can be defined as “the identification of discrepancies

⁵⁹John Boulmetis, *The ABCs of Evaluation: Timeless Techniques for Program and Project Managers* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 3.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 4.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 5.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 7.

between where a program is currently and where it would like to be.” An example of this type of evaluation might be personnel evaluations. Goals are set for employees and the evaluations help discern how effectively they met or failed to meet those standards.

Why evaluate. If there is a program, argues Buelmetis, there should be an evaluation.⁶³ In order to know how to properly categorize the type of evaluation that is taking place, one needs to understand why evaluation is happening in the first place. Boulmetris gives several examples of situations in which evaluations are used. Perhaps the evaluation is for fiscal purposes, to help determine if a program continues. Or, perhaps it is needed to justify a new program. It could also be to change an existing program.⁶⁴

When to evaluate. Another key question related to evaluation is at what point in the life cycle of the program evaluation should take place. Evaluation that is focused “on examining and changing processes as they are happening” is called a formative evaluation.⁶⁵ One that focuses on “reporting what occurred at the end of the program cycle” is called a summative evaluation.⁶⁶

Relevancy for the project. The fifth principle for the research project is this: Incorporating the lay leadership in preaching requires providing opportunities for evaluation. In fact, the project identifies evaluation as one of the key ways for lay elders to involve themselves in the pulpit ministry. The training part of this project communicated the importance of evaluation.

The evaluative tools focused not just on determining whether or not the sermon

⁶³Ibid., 24.

⁶⁴Ibid., 11-12.

⁶⁵Ibid., 13.

⁶⁶Ibid., 14.

has achieved its goal but whether it is doing so optimally. In this sense, the type of evaluation in this project is closest to the third definition offered by Boulmetis. It considered not only where the ministry is but also where it could be. Regarding the “when” to evaluate, the project called for both formative and summative evaluations.

The Limitations of a Team

As helpful as teams are, it is important to observe that they are not the answer to every problem that an organization may encounter, nor are they appropriate for the handling of every task. As Mohrman observes, “The key question to ask is whether a particular task is best accomplished by establishing teams to allow members to integrate their activities.”⁶⁷ One does not establish a team simply because there is a need for efficiency but “because a team structure is the best way to achieve the integration required to accomplish . . . strategic goals.”⁶⁸ In the context of this project, this means that some of the tasks in sermon preparation need to be performed by the Senior Pastor while the group as a whole should do others.

It is also important to understand that a team does not operate in a vacuum. The effectiveness of a team is dependent upon exterior forces. A team may “have enthusiastic members and leaders, well-thought-out plans, and appropriate expertise” but “be derailed by events occurring elsewhere in the organization.”⁶⁹

Relevancy for the project. The sixth principle for the research project is this: Incorporating the lay leaders into the pulpit ministry requires acknowledging that there are limitations to how they can be brought into the process. As they give their input, the lay

⁶⁷Mohrman, *Designing Team-Based Organizations*, 10.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., 23.

leadership was dealt with graciously. Their feedback was sometimes limited. Other factors sometimes hindered their ability to give as much as would be desired on a weekly basis.

How Churches Incorporate Teams in Preaching Ministries

This section considers three examples of teamwork in the sermon-preparation process and compares them to this paper's project. There are a variety of ways some churches are working to incorporate teamwork principles in the sermon preparation process. They range from full collaborative efforts to occasional input.

Christ Church of Lake Forest Lake Forest, Illinois

Sometimes Mike Woodruff is compelled to preach on a difficult text.⁷⁰ For example, when he was going through a preaching series, he came to 1 Samuel 15:3 in which God instructs Saul to kill all the Amalekites. He writes, "Smart people avoid these passages—or assign them to the youth pastor. But I knew this passage was one that some college professors use to separate naïve students from their childhood faith."⁷¹

His solution was to call on a team to help him prepare the sermon. Six weeks in advance of the sermon, he contacted a seminary professor, a friend who wrote a doctoral dissertation on this passage, a former senior pastor of the church, two staff members, two elders, and two other friends who were pastors. He sent them copies of his detailed outline and asked for their input.

Their suggestions proved valuable. They gave him input on his outline,

⁷⁰Each of the three churches highlighted in this section are located in Illinois. This does not reflect a geographical bias, but the churches profiled in the literature reviewed for this section that most closely illustrated the collaborative efforts that this chapter desired to highlight happened to be located in Illinois.

⁷¹Mike Woodruff, "Difficult Sermon? Call in a Team," *Leadership* 29 (Spring 2008): 47.

understanding of the text, and illustrations he was planning on using. Woodruff admits that he does not utilize teams for every sermon and the members of this group change depending upon the message being preached. Sometimes, he seeks counsel from individuals from different cultures and countries. On two occasions, he has had friends counsel him not to preach a message he had prepared.

Woodruff mentions several things that must take place for this type of collaboration to work. The pastor needs to write the sermon with a sufficient amount of lead time for input. He must write an extensive outline or manuscript. He must be open to criticism. He must utilize people who can give good advice and be willing to have some of it go unheeded.⁷²

In this approach, there are several benefits that are relevant to the project being considered. Woodruff is enjoying the benefits of shared learning. He is serving as a good leader and providing opportunities for honest feedback. The type of evaluation he is receiving is formative, helping him shape the sermons he will preach. He is also enjoying the benefits of group learning.

There are several differences to the approach used by Woodruff and the one advocated in this project. Woodruff uses teams sporadically. They are not integral to his preparation. Furthermore, Woodruff utilizes the team concept for reasons other than the desire to incorporate lay elders. Finally, there is no consistent mechanism in place to receive input, especially summative evaluations. The work done at Christ Church demonstrates the benefit of having input from qualified people.

**New Life Community Church,
Chicago, Illinois**

Every Monday morning, sixteen members of the pastoral staff from New Life

⁷²Ibid.

Community Church gather for a not-so-routine staff meeting. Coming from New Life's nine different congregations, they meet to prepare for this week's upcoming sermon. Brian Lowery, observing one of New Life's sessions, writes, "I can't help but wonder if this task is impossible for a group. I rarely agree with myself when putting together a sermon—let alone 15 others!"⁷³ The product of the meeting—the sermon—will be preached by various pastors at nine locations on Sunday.

In order to facilitate discussion, one of New Life's five main pastors is chosen to be the "driver" of the sermon. As he leads the discussion, his responsibility is to lead the team as they prepare a sermon that every person can get behind. The week that Lowery observes the group at work, the facilitator, Pastor Francisco "Paco" Amador, walks the group through a passage in the book of Acts.

Various members of the group comment on Paco's outline and by the end of the discussion, they have changed a significant portion of it and added pertinent illustrations. Lowery notes that the discussion is exciting and high energy. As he leaves their time together, he makes the following observation:

Driving home, I reflect on what I have just experienced. The sermon prep team at New Life was full of energy, but the excitement never trumped their commitment to get the interpretation right. They didn't drive over the text, storming their way to a finished product that was all shine but no substance. They did not shape the text to their purposes; they allowed the text to shape them.

They shared a sacred energy that can only be generated when a group of preachers holds a text in their hands with the right combination of caution, care, and creativity.

Even after enjoying my morning with New Life, I can't help but think, *Group preparation is nice for them, but I don't think it's right for me. I like to pull things together myself, without backseat drivers.*

Or do I?

The next week, I was working on a difficult message. I was losing sleep, tearing up pages of notes, and driving my poor wife crazy. Finally, I reached out for help. I called my father to bat around ideas, I shared my notes with two trusted friends, and I cracked open books and commentaries to see who agreed with my conclusions and who didn't. I even consulted with one of my co-workers about the subject to make

⁷³Brian Lowery, "Sharing the Driver's Seat," *Leadership* 29 (Spring 2008): 45.

sure I wasn't crazy.

I may think I'm the only one driving my sermon preparation, but in truth there are many others taking the trip with me every week. I hadn't realized it before, but I do exactly what the teaching team at New Life does every Monday morning, although my journey is a bit less fun and fueled by considerably less coffee.⁷⁴

With New Life's approach, there is an intensive, intentional effort at teamwork. There is group learning taking place and close relationships are being formed. Their communication and motivation are both excellent. But unlike the focus of this paper, those involved in the team are all paid staff members at New Life. The drive is not to get lay elders involved in the pulpit ministry.

New Life Christian Church Morton, Illinois

At the beginning of the chapter, Kirk Bode was introduced. Bode is a lay elder at New Life Christian Church, the third and final church to be considered here as an example of a collaborative effort. He serves as part of a group that includes about five pastors, two female ministry leaders, and Bode.

There are four services at New Life on a Sunday morning. Two "traditional" services, though the term traditional refers not so much to the style of worship as to the elements that are present in the worship service and the order of the service. About 350 people total attend these services. There is a third service called "The Gathering" that has more of a conversational tone and has been modeled, according to Bode, on some of the stylistic choices of churches in the emergent movement. About 100 people attend this service. The fourth service is called "The Torch." It is geared toward a young audience and incorporates elements like texting the speaker during the service with questions. Participants sit on couches and have more freedom to interact. About 75 people attend this service. On a Sunday morning, several people must preach because some of these

⁷⁴Ibid., emphasis original.

services run concurrently. New Life has also begun to occasionally record a service and play the DVD in another service.

On May 27, 2010, I had the opportunity to attend New Life's sermon preparation meeting. They were currently going through a series on the Sermon on the Mount. The meeting began by reviewing the sermon from four days ago, which had been entitled, "Self Amputation" and dealt with sexual immorality. The group discussed how the sermon was impacting lives and some shepherding issues that had resulted. The teachers from "The Torch" worship service shared some of the challenging phone text questions they had received during the service and afterwards.

The next part of the meeting focused on the sermon that was to be preached in a week and a half, entitled "Stop Swearing." Those who would be delivering that sermon had submitted their final or almost final manuscripts and the rest of the group gave feedback. The two pastors who would be preaching the message discussed their manuscripts and several in the group offered suggestions. There was one member of the group, the creative arts pastor, who was tasked with finding some additional illustrations that would go well with a certain point.

The main part of the meeting was the brainstorming. Here the group considered collectively how to structure the message on the Lord's Prayer that would be preached in five weeks. Bode went through an outline of the text he had developed, based on his exegesis of the text. The discussion moved very quickly into the main idea of the text. Several of the members focused on the idea of prayer in general and how people could pray better. One member of the group continued to challenge the rest to try and determine what point this passage was making about prayer.

Several things fascinated me about their teamwork. They incorporated many of the elements that have already been discussed. They showed mutual respect for one another. There was open and honest communication, as Dyer advocated. People had the freedom to make strong statements without fearing hurting one another's feelings and

could also receive critical feedback. The lead pastor seemed to have ultimate veto power in many of the discussions, but he exercised his influence judiciously.

In terms of the goal of this project, there were some differences. Not all the members were equally engaged in or equipped to handle the text. Bode had obviously prepared extensively for the discussion, but others were less gifted in their ability to exegete the text. In fact, the actual process of exegeting the text was extremely truncated, a weakness Bode pointed out and one the church is considering how to improve. This might be a task that instead of being delegated to the group might be better done by individuals.

Also at odds with this project is a philosophical commitment on the part of New Life to not preach expositional sermons. During the sermon preparation process I observed, one member expressed a desire to spend two weeks on the Lord's prayer in order to be able to cover all the text. Another member replied: "Since when did we become an expositional preaching church? We are not committed to getting to every verse."

Once again, it should be noted that Kirk Bode is the only person on this team who is a lay elder, so their model does not achieve the objective this project has of involving all lay elders. But it does demonstrate the joy in ministry for lay leaders who engage in the pulpit ministry. "Nothing makes me feel more valuable than what they allow me to do here," says Bode.

Conclusion

As the literature was reviewed, some principles regarding teamwork are beyond the scope of being addressed in this project, but should remain goals of the elder board. However, six principles emerged that are especially relevant to incorporating the lay leadership into the expository preaching ministry. First, the project must address the need for unity regarding the purpose of preaching. Second, the project should focus on the elements of preaching that the team can do most effectively. Third, the project should help incorporate elements that will keep the team healthy. Fourth, the Senior Pastor must

be an engaged servant-leader during the project. Fifth, the project must provide opportunities for both formative and summative evaluations. Finally, the project must acknowledge there are limitations to the amount of involvement that a team can have in preparing the sermon.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROJECT

A year prior to beginning the project, I discussed the basic outline of the project with the leadership team at Bethany Community Church. I reminded them about the project at the beginning of the summer and we began in the fall of 2010. In this report, I refer to each elder by a numerical designation instead of their names.

Phase 1: Preparing the Project (Weeks 1-2)

The first phase of the project began slightly before the official start of the project, which was September 5, 2010, and continued through the second week of the project.

Pre-Project Elder Meeting

On August 24, 2010, I took half an hour during our regular monthly elder meeting to discuss the upcoming project. I explained again the nature of the project and what I would need from them over the next fifteen weeks. I gave them a handout outlining the project and what I would need from them over the next fifteen weeks.¹ At this meeting, I asked them to confirm that they were willing to attend the training, fill out the surveys, and offer feedback as available. They affirmed that was still their desire, but some acknowledged that over the next fifteen weeks, there would be weeks they were gone or unavailable.

¹See Appendix 1.

We also discussed the first survey that I needed them to complete. I had already emailed copies of the pre-project survey to them and some of them had already filled it out.² Two primary things came out of this meeting. First, they expressed their appreciation for our current series in the Gospel of Luke. They affirmed that the things that were coming up each week seemed relevant for them as individuals and for our church corporately. Second, they expressed their desire to continue in Luke during my project.

This surprised me. My belief had been that after almost a year in Luke, the elders would see a need to take a break and spend seven weeks covering another section of Scripture. Instead, they insisted that God was doing great things through the current preaching series and we should trust Him to continue meeting the needs of the church, as we stayed faithful to His Word.

This revealed something to me at the very beginning of my project—my elders were already highly committed to expository preaching. They saw the value of deep teaching and sustained treatment of a text. They believed in the sufficiency of Scripture and were confident that Scripture would address the real needs of people.

This was encouraging and affirming for me on a pastoral level. After examining Peter Senge's conception of alignment in chapter 3, we concluded that incorporating the lay leadership into the expository preaching ministry requires unity regarding the purpose of preaching. Clearly alignment exists among the leadership of Bethany Community Church regarding the purpose and content of the preaching ministry.

Leadership Team Pre-Project Survey

The pre-project surveys were emailed prior to the official start date of the project. Five of the six lay elders turned in their surveys. The sixth elder discussed his survey with me verbally, but told me he was probably not going to be very effective at

²See Appendix 2.

turning in surveys. Clearly, this concerned me somewhat, since he was an important part of the process. At the same time, I saw this as an opportunity to make the project more “life-like.” If this elder would turn in surveys for my research project but would not be responsive to requests for email input in the future, it was of limited benefit for our church’s long-term pulpit ministry. However, if I could think of creative ways to involve him in the process, perhaps I could hit upon some long-term tools that I could use after the project was completed.

Section 1: Evaluation of Teaching Needs. The first section of the survey was designed to help elders begin seeing their responsibility for the preaching ministry and to help ensure that the messages I was preaching were addressing real needs within the congregation.

The first three questions were short answer questions designed to allow the elders to give feedback on the perceived current health of the church. Their replies were in some ways very similar. They were excited that the church had grown as quickly as it had, both numerically and in terms of ministry and spiritual growth. They were thrilled at how God’s Word had impacted people. One question asked, “What do you believe are the greatest strengths of our church right now?” The most frequently given answer related to unity of leadership. The elders also felt that the church had been blessed with sound preaching and teaching and were excited about how people had stepped forward and were exercising their spiritual gifts.

When asked to identify weaknesses in the church, several answers came up frequently: the need to improve in evangelism, the need to proclaim the true gospel, the need to improve in prayer, the need to grow in sanctification and the need for sacrificial giving of time, money, and gifts.

The final two questions asked, based upon their assessment of the church’s current strengths and weaknesses, how the elders believed the pulpit ministry should

respond. As in the elder meeting, the surveys indicated that we should continue to stay in the book of Luke, trusting the Lord to grow our church in those areas through His Word. This encouraged me as I saw the elders shouldering their responsibilities as spiritual shepherds. They did not simply take my suggestion to try a different series, but exercised thoughtful oversight by encouraging me to stay in Luke.

Section 2: Expository Preaching. The second section of the survey was divided into two sub-sections. The respondents were asked to define expository preaching, determine the most important qualities of a sermon, and explain the relationship between hermeneutics and expository preaching. They were also to discuss what they believed their role in the preaching process was to be.

Their short answers were generally excellent.³ For example, when asked to define expository preaching, each elder gave a good definition. Each alluded to the idea of explaining Scripture, with some offering more nuances to that definition. The second subsection provided a means to evaluate their understanding of expository preaching more objectively and I was extremely pleased with their commitment to Biblical preaching.

Section 3: Application. The third section of the survey was designed to ascertain how elders were currently seeking to apply the messages in their personal life and in the lives of others in the church. Many gave specific examples of their personal struggles that prevented them from applying the sermons more effectively, such as a lack of prayer. One indicated that the struggle to apply was somewhat my failing, citing my lack of provision of practical suggestions for how to apply the sermon. The final survey was somewhat of a split decision—the elder responded that he struggled to apply the message when he failed to pay attention. That seems at least partly my fault for not

³See Appendix 7 for selected short answer comments.

making the text more interesting!

When asked if they could give specific examples of applying sermons in their personal lives, four of the five elders were able to do so. Most were able to give multiple examples. When asked if they could give specific examples of when they were able to help others apply the messages of sermons, once again, four of the five were able to do so. Some listed multiple examples.

This section surprised me in a good way. I was encouraged by the detailed stories of how God was using His Word in the lives of these men and in our church. I have a very limited knowledge of how God uses His Word after I have proclaimed it, so it was edifying to see how God was at work.

Meeting with Elder 3

Just a few days before the official start of the project, I met with Elder 3. We met for lunch and discussed what was going on in the areas of ministry he oversaw, especially the youth and children's ministry. He believed the preaching ministry was going well and that Luke was a great book to be going through not just for the church but also for his family. He encouraged me to think through more specific ways to apply my sermons. He mentioned that my tendency was to be too heavy on the theoretical instead of the practical. I had not intended this meeting to be part of the project, but I saw the benefit of it and wondered if I should meet with the other elders throughout the project in this manner.

Phase 2: Training the Lay Leaders

This phase consisted of four training sessions designed to help equip the lay leaders in those areas that had been identified as areas crucial to being able to fulfill their responsibility to help exercise oversight over the pulpit ministry.

Session 1: The Benefits of Teamwork

The third week of the project began the first week of training. On September 24 at 6:00 A.M., I met with four of the six elders. Notably, elder 1, who returned very few surveys, attended this and every training session. On the other hand, elder 2, who was able to turn in almost every evaluation form, was able to attend only one of the training sessions. This demonstrated the need to provide a variety of ways for elders to provide input.

At this first session, we covered three primary areas based upon the work already done during the project: The Rationale for the Project (chap. 1), A Biblical Understanding of the Relationship between the Pulpit, the Pastor and the Plurality of Shepherds (chap. 2), and A Team in the Pulpit (chap. 3). As we discussed the rationale for the project, one of the elders mentioned New Life Christian Church in Morton, not knowing that it was one of the churches highlighted in chapter 3. That topic led into a discussion of the various ways that the biblical principles could be implemented, how they would be implemented in the project, and which aspects of the project we believed might carry on past the project itself.

The elders seemed to enjoy the discussion of chapter 3. Many of them work for a large corporation and said that team building has been quite pervasive in their company. They agreed with the principles of teamwork laid out, seeing teams as both helpful and potentially harmful when relied on too heavily. One elder mentioned that teams at their company had created a culture in which no one had enough confidence to make a decision on their own. There was also no individual accountability because everyone could point to the team and not themselves as the agent of failure. We discussed that this was a failure in implementing teams and not the concept of teams itself. In fact, this type of implementation of teams violated several of the principles laid out in chapter 3, especially those related to what is required for the long-term maintenance of a team. A team that is successful long-term will give ownership to individual members and have

efficient decision-making capabilities. A successful team will also, as chapter 3 made clear, recognize the limitations of teamwork. The elders saw the over-application of teamwork as detrimental in their work lives.

Also, as we went through the content of chapter 3, I mentioned that Plummer had requested that some of my principles find parallel support in Scripture, so I asked the men if they saw biblical parallels. As we discussed aligning, one elder noted that this seemed very similar to Ezra's ministry in Nehemiah 8. As the teaching cascaded through the assembly, there was great alignment among the teachers. Another elder saw the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 as an illustration of collaboration.

Session 2: Philosophical Assumptions of Expository Preaching

At the earliest stages of the project, it was obvious to me that the biggest challenge was going to be to engage six very busy men in a meaningful way for this project. I decided to do our second training session, which was during week four of the project, during the first hour of our elder meeting on September 28, 2010.

This was the only training session that all six elders were in attendance. During the time together, we considered four foundational truths for expository preaching: Man has a fallen condition, God has a divine solution, Scripture contains God's word concerning that divine solution, and expository teaching is the best way to communicate that divine solution consistently.

The final principle occupied most of our discussion. One of the elders agreed with Mayhue's contention that expository preaching should not sound like a person reading a commentary. He remarked that "some of the most uninspiring messages" he had ever heard claimed to be expository messages. When asked why we were a church that preached expositionally, elder 5 replied that it was because of our belief in the sufficiency of Scripture. Elder 6 pointed to our desire to focus on what God says and remove our biases. The consensus of the group was that we as a church are passionate

about teaching the whole counsel of God and want protection from consumer-driven fads that are “waterless clouds”—providing the promise of nourishment but no real spiritual edification.

I also asked the men to consider how a commitment to expository preaching impacted the other ministries at our church. They noted that it is part of an underlying philosophy concerning our commitment to the Word of God. This commitment affects worship ministry because our focus in worship is to be Biblical and not just experiential. It also impacts our children’s curriculum as we seek to give kids a broad exposure to all of Scripture.

Meeting with Elder 6

On October 1, I met with elder 6. During this time, several events transpired that showed me just how busy the men who were serving as elders were. Some were traveling, and others were overwhelmed at work. I became convinced of the need to schedule meetings with each elder individually in order to gain more insight into their view of the preaching ministry. This was important for the project, but also because I was becoming more convinced of my need to invest in these men relationally outside of our meetings and church.

Elder 6 and I have been doing ministry together for about a decade. He worked with me when I was a youth pastor and then moved to help begin the church plant. He served on the leadership team and now is an elder. He is also the chairman of the elder board.

He had encouraging words to say about the preaching ministry and I was struck as we talked by our common philosophy of ministry. We talked about the preaching ministry and how it related to the overall teaching ministry of the church. He had no concrete suggestions regarding how to proceed with the preaching ministry.

Meeting with Elder 5

On October 6, I met with elder 5 for breakfast. This was during the fifth week of the project. We only talked briefly about the project. We spent more of our time talking about a philosophy of preaching and how to foster greater unity among the elder board. We agreed that we had come a long way in how God had grown us as individuals and collectively.

Session 3: Principles of Hermeneutics

We met on October 8 as elders for the training session during the fifth week of the project. At this session we covered chapters 10 and 11 from Plummer's book, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*. The chapters dealt with one overarching question: "What are some general principles for interpreting the Bible?" Having received permission from Plummer previously, I had handed out copies of these chapters at our last session and asked the men to read through them as they had time.

Last year, we had decided to teach some on hermeneutics during our Adult Sunday School hour. While I had been talking with the elders who were teaching the class, I had been impressed with what a good grasp of hermeneutics the elders had.

The elders enjoyed the sections of the book I had given them and I shared with them some additional aspects of hermeneutics from other chapters in the book, especially the additional resources one could use in studying the Bible.

In chapter 10, we talked mostly about the concept of meditation and the danger of superficial reading. We considered several ways to slow down our reading of Scripture and read more deeply. In chapter 11, we discussed the concept of genre and how it helps us rightly interpret the truth.

Session 4: Principles of Sermon Preparation, Delivery, and Application

Our last training session was Friday, October 15, 2010, at 6:00 A.M. This session looked at eight steps in preparing a message and how to evaluate the delivery and

application of the message. The eight steps of preparing a message that we covered were: choose the text, identify the fallen condition focus of the text, identify the divine solution offered in the text, determine the homiletical idea, develop structure, develop the body of sermon, develop applications, and then develop the introduction, conclusion, and illustrations.

As a test case, we used the upcoming sermon on Luke 7:24-28. We each considered steps 1-4 individually, then came together to discuss our answers and consider the remainder of the process together. As we discussed the fallen condition focus, it was obvious I had an advantage because I had spent so much time in the text, whereas they were coming at it cold. What we ended up doing was taking my material but modifying it based upon their questions and comments.

Whereas some enjoy the process of collective work in preparing a sermon, I do not. I enjoyed talking through a sermon with the elders, but I realized preparing a sermon as a team would be a very difficult endeavor for me. Elder 3 wrote me,

I appreciate the checklist you shared that helps you make sure the sermon has the needed elements. . . . I hadn't seen one and I have it in my Bible and will use it next opportunity. It is good that the teaching shepherd has studied well and appreciate you letting us in on that.

Phase 3: Preaching the Sermons

This phase consisted of seven sermons that were evaluated both before and after the sermon. During the project, as I noticed fewer elders were responding to my emails and filling out surveys, I also incorporated other means to receive feedback.

Sermon 1: Authentic Ministry, Luke 7:24-28

The first sermon was preached on October 17, the beginning of the seventh week of the project. It covered Luke 7:24-28, when Jesus commended the ministry of John the Baptist.

Pre-sermon evaluation. I emailed the pre-sermon survey on October 12th along with a rough outline of the sermon.⁴ Three of the elders returned their surveys during the week. Very few changes were suggested. One elder encouraged me to make sure the sermon provided application for all ministry workers and not just leaders. Another suggested that I make sure to note the connection between God's Word and ministry. There were also several questions one elder had about the text that he wanted to make sure I addressed in my exposition.

Although only three elders returned surveys, four elders were at the last training session for phase 3 of the project and discussed this sermon with me. My main question for them was a matter of tone. I was going to discuss authentic ministry and wanted their input as I mentioned inauthentic ministry. How much critique of models like the seeker-sensitive approach should I give? They offered several helpful suggestions to make sure I did not make the illustrations too personal or sound like I was attacking individuals.

Post-sermon evaluation. The Tuesday after the sermon, October 19, I emailed out a post-sermon evaluations. This week, four of the six elders returned their surveys.⁵ Most of the elders simply filled out the numbered boxes. I talked personally with two elders who told me their small-groups had discussed the sermon and found that it was an excellent topic of conversation for their groups.

Interestingly, elder 3, who had asked me to focus more on how the passage might apply to individuals, had this to say: "I felt like this passage required you to 'reach' further from the central passage for what we can learn from it or the application." He concluded that the applications were good, but beyond the immediate scope of the text.

⁴See Appendix 8 for a sample outline of a sermon that was sent to the elders.

⁵See Appendix 6 to view the numerical answers given in post-sermon surveys.

Meeting with Elder 2

On Monday, October 18, I met with elder 2. Elder 2 was without question the elder who was the most faithful in returning surveys. He even went so far as to listen online to sermons that he had missed so that he could still turn in post-sermon evaluations.

At our meeting, we talked about his teaching ministry leading a small group. He was very supportive of the pulpit ministry and had good thoughts about areas to focus applications. There are quite a few new families to our church coming from one particular church background and he mentioned some of the areas with which they have struggled. He strongly encouraged me to make sure the gospel was clearly presented each week. Throughout the project, his primary comments were related to how clearly I had—or had not—presented the gospel.

Meeting with Elder 1

On Friday, October 22, I met with elder 1 for breakfast. As we met, I asked for his feedback on a variety of issues. He mentioned that he would like to see more avenues to combine prayer with the sermons. He would also like us as elders to spend our time at elder meetings focusing on specific ministry issues, such as divorce and remarriage.

This elder did not turn in many of the surveys throughout the project. In fact, the only two surveys he returned were the ones I had him fill out while talking with me in person. We talked about the project and he admitted that he was really bad with emails and filling out survey forms. He appreciated the sermon outlines, but due to his schedule with work, family, and other ministry responsibilities he was unable to do anything more than look them over. We discussed that this is why there are elders who receive “double honor.” It was important to have one elder focused on the preaching ministry. He realized he could not give this ministry the oversight it needed as a lay person—not even for a fifteen week stretch. He believed, however, that it was important to continue to receive the weekly outlines when I was able to send them out.

**Sermon 2: The Heart of Unbelief,
Luke 7:29-35**

The second sermon was preached on Sunday, October 24, at the beginning of the eighth week of the project.

Pre-sermon evaluation. On Tuesday, October 19, I emailed out three documents: the post-sermon survey for the first sermon, the pre-sermon survey for this week, and my notes for the upcoming sermon. Though I had wished for greater participation among the leaders before now, this was the week I became really concerned. Only one elder, elder 2, turned in a pre-sermon study. There were several reasons for this. One elder was traveling and some were just busy and others simply forgot.

Elder 2's comments were helpful. He believed that I had arrived at the main point and appreciated the distinction I was drawing between doubt and committed unbelief. He mentioned several groups in the church that had come from other denominations and suggested ways that I could assist them with this sermon.

Post-sermon evaluation. In order to increase feedback, I asked the elders to fill out their surveys during an elder meeting on October 26. Four elders turned in surveys (one elder had been out of town over Sunday and one elder was not at the meeting). This was the only post-sermon survey I received from Elder 1. We discussed the sermon from Sunday and the upcoming sermon.

Elder 2 expressed concern that the gospel presentation was not expressed more clearly. I believe that it was, but there was not a formal gospel presentation during the message. This elder felt as though that should have been in the message.

**Sermon 3: Forgiveness and Worship,
Luke 7:36-50**

The third sermon was preached on October 31 at the beginning of the ninth week of the project. It covered Luke 7:36-50, when Jesus taught Simon about the connection between forgiveness and worship.

Pre-sermon evaluation. At the elder meeting mentioned on October 26, after having the elders fill in their post-sermon evaluations, we also spent time discussing the upcoming sermon. Four of the six elders filled out their surveys. We spent most of our time talking about the various themes within the text and which should be emphasized in our congregation. Should the focus be on our need to welcome sinners—unlike Simon—or should the focus be on the need to repent—like the sinful woman? We determined that the need was to call all of us to be like the woman and fall at Jesus' feet.

The elders also cautioned me to be careful in discussing why Simon might have viewed the actions of the woman inappropriate. They cautioned me to be careful when describing Simon's dismay and to not use language with sexual connotations. They felt that saying Simon was dismayed because of the perceived immorality of the scene created several problems. First, the text is purposefully ambiguous. We should maintain that ambiguity. Second, our audience might not understand why Simon could be so confused. It might create difficulty in understanding the main point of the text.

Post-sermon evaluation. I sent out the survey for elders to return on November 2. Only one elder filled out a post-sermon survey. This elder did not include any information beyond indicating his level of agreement with the five statements in the survey.

Phone Call from Elder 3

On October 29, elder 3 called me to say he had been thinking some more about the upcoming sermon. He wanted to pass on some additional thoughts. Primarily, he told me that he had been thinking about how we should see ourselves in both characters. We are Simon and the sinful woman. Our goal should be to have a culture that is not shocked by sin but rather see it as a privilege to welcome people with visible sins. As an illustration, he mentioned someone who had been transparent about a previous struggle with pornography. I found this conversation incredibly rewarding. Here was an elder proactively contacting me about the sermon and thinking through the message on his

own. Even though he had not turned in a survey this week, he had given input proactively through different means.

Meeting with Elder 4

On November 5, I met with elder 4 for lunch. Our conversation only touched upon my project briefly. We talked mainly about his ministry in the church and how I could encourage him in it.

Sermon 4: Hearing the Word, Luke 8:1-21

The fourth sermon was preached on November 7 at the beginning of the tenth week of the project. It was the first of five sermons that covered Luke 8:1-21. It focused on introducing the Parable of the Sower and considering the first soil, the hard path.

Pre-sermon evaluation. On Tuesday, November 2, I sent out the post-sermon evaluation from the previous week, an outline of the sermon based on my rough notes, and the pre-sermon evaluation survey. Two surveys were returned. Elder 2 expressed excitement that we were talking about the gospel so clearly. Elder 6 cautioned against overanalyzing the parables. Another suggested several ways the passage could be applied.

Post-sermon evaluation. The surveys were emailed out on November 9. Three of the six elders returned post-sermon evaluations, all of which were very helpful. Elder 2, who earlier had expressed concerns that the gospel was not presented more clearly, gave this sermon straight fives, which I think may have been because I did give a very thorough gospel presentation. By contrast, elder 3 felt that I did not spend enough time on the hard path, but got sidetracked by trying to juggle too many sermonic themes

Sermon 5: The Tragedy of Temporary Faith, Luke 8:1-21

The fifth sermon was preached on November 14, at the beginning of the eleventh week of the project. It covered the second soil described by Jesus in Luke 8:1-21.

Pre-sermon evaluation. On November 9, I emailed a post-sermon evaluation, a pre-sermon evaluation, and my sermon notes to each lay elder. Four of the six elders responded, three of the six filled out their surveys. The elders that responded had several suggestions, none of them substantial. Elder 2 wanted to make sure that I emphasized that believers cannot lose their salvation. They also gave some suggestions for additional Bible verses and application points for believers and unbelievers. Each felt that the discussion on true versus temporary faith was a good focus for our church and was derived from the text.

Post-sermon evaluation. Four elders returned post-sermon evaluation surveys, which were emailed out on November 16 with the pre-sermon surveys for sermon 6. I think elder 2 was confused by the nuances I was making regarding one falling away from the faith. He wanted to especially make sure I was not teaching that one could lose their salvation.

Elder4 thought the illustrations were good and appreciated some of the applications as well. He felt that I had not addressed some Scriptures that seem contradictory to the position I had laid out, namely that a person who did not persevere was not saved.

Sermon 6: Chocking on Riches, Luke 8:1-21

The sixth sermon was preached on November 21 at the beginning of the twelfth week of the project. It continued to look at the Parable of the Sower, focusing on the heart represented by the thorny soil.

Pre-sermon evaluation. Once again, I sent out an email on Tuesday, November 16. In the email, I included three attachments: the post-sermon survey from sermon 5, an outline of the upcoming week's sermon, and a pre-sermon survey. Then, I waited two days and sent out another email. In this email, I picked out a specific

application on giving that I thought might be particularly controversial. My application stated that I believed the healthiest way to give to missions was through the local church. I encouraged people to continue to give to missionaries and local churches, but to make sure that these missionaries were connected with local churches.

I laid out exactly what I planned to say for this application in my email sent on Thursday, November 18 and asked specific questions regarding the points I was making. Four elders responded and completed surveys. One conveyed his personal opinion on tithing and how to encourage the church on giving. Another elder, elder 4, before he returned the survey, wrote back a one-line email, “I’m picking up what you’re laying down, Bro!” When he returned his survey, he suggested that I include more of my notes in the bulletin. He had particularly liked the introductory illustration.

There were two especially helpful surveys. Elder 6 noted that in the text there were three things that conspired together to choke out the seed: cares, riches, and pleasures of life. This elder noted that I seemed to be focusing on riches to the exclusion of the first and last elements of the verse. I looked at my notes and tweaked some things to make sure all three elements were discussed.

Elder 3 felt that I was losing focus as I got into the practical steps of giving. Ironically, this was an elder who had felt in the pre-sermon study that I needed to go into more specifics when it came to application in order to help apply the sermons. I did not disagree with his comments. However, I think there is a natural tension one can observe in them. Any time one goes beyond simply explaining what the text said, one is “going beyond” the text. All application runs this risk. Some really liked what I was doing with this sermon, which also illustrates how wonderfully subjective the sermonic process is—even among those who agree on what it is supposed to do!

What was clear to me was that sending the second email generated more response and the responses that came back were of higher quality. The reason for this was that the “ask” from me was more specific.

Post-sermon evaluation. Post-Sermon evaluations were sent out on November 23, the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Only one survey came back, from elder 2, but it was encouraging. He wrote, “You’re doing a fine job, Daniel!”

Sermon 7: The Grounds of Biblical Assurance, Luke 8:1-21

The final sermon was preached on November 28, the Sunday following Thanksgiving. It completed our study of the Parable of the Sower and was part 4 of 5 sermons on Luke 8:1-21.

Pre-sermon evaluation. This was obviously a difficult week in which to contact the elders. Some elders were gone and very few were even checking their emails. I did send out the post-sermon evaluation forms, the pre-sermon notes and the pre-sermon surveys on Tuesday, November 23, but I did not receive any back by Saturday. So, I decided instead to contact each elder on the phone. I was able to reach four of the six elders and a fifth elder emailed his survey in late. Many of them were busy, but each took at least a few minutes to discuss the sermon with me. One mentioned some verses he had been memorizing and how they might apply. Elder 5 suggested that I tie the message in with the sufficiency of Scripture. Elder 6 pointed out that there were two groups that should be addressed in the application points of the message: those who do not have a point in time that they can point to as the moment they became believers yet are still Christians and those who can point to a moment in time they prayed a prayer but may not be believers.

Post-sermon evaluation. The post-sermon evaluations were mailed on November 30 and returned during the final two weeks of the project. Three surveys were returned. Elder 6 rightly noted that the first point of the sermon was not derived from the text but rather from the context. He did not believe the point should have been left out of the sermon, only that I should have done a better job tying it in to the text. Elder

4expressed the same sentiment in different terms as he noted the “introduction” seemed long. In other words, I was spending a lot of time setting things up without getting to the heart of the text. I would agree with this assessment, but perhaps disagree that I should have done it differently in this particular case.

Elder 5, who had written very little in the post-sermon surveys, wrote just this one line under “comments/critiques/suggestions”: “Your hand gestures are a little too repetitive.” I am not sure why, but that one comment really caught me off guard. Perhaps because I am already self-conscious of what I do with my hands when I preach. In fact, in the coming weeks, I found myself getting distracted by my own hand gestures while preaching! This comment will be discussed more in chapter 5.

Elder Meeting on November 30, 2010

At this meeting, we discussed the project and the elders concluded that they had enjoyed some aspects, but would not want to try to continue to do what they had done so far. They desired to continue to give input on a macro-level and for a limited number of specific situations, such as issues where there might be disagreement on a controversial issue.

Phase 4: Evaluating the Series

This phase consisted of weeks 14 and 15, which began on December 5 and 12 respectively. In this phase, I examined the data that was already compiled and conducted a final survey.

Breakfast with Elder 6

This breakfast took place on December 3, so it was officially still part of the thirteenth week. The sermons had been completed, so it allowed us to discuss the totality of the project. Elder 6 observed that he was not sure how helpful his comments had been.

He felt that most of the time I had a better grasp of the passage and he had spent little time in it.

Final Survey

Getting the final surveys back was an incredibly difficult process. On Tuesday, November 30, I emailed a copy of the post-project survey and handed it out at our elder meeting. On Sunday, I had not received any of the surveys back and so I hand delivered them to each of the elders Sunday morning. During week 14, I received four surveys back and during the final week received an additional survey. Elder 1, who did not return a survey, felt bad about it. His wife told me that he had been carrying the survey around with him everywhere he went on the Sunday I gave it to him. Elder 3 emailed me during the week to apologize that he had not filled it out yet and planned on bringing it to church Sunday.

The results from the survey were encouraging. There were several areas that I was particularly interested in looking at. I first wanted to see whether or not the elders felt as though they had impacted the sermons. I knew that each one of them had and I was pleased that each of them could point to ways that their comments had been influential. I also wanted to know which elements of the project they felt were burdensome and which could be sustained. Again, it was obvious that the elements in chapter 3 proved to be true regarding what teams can and cannot do. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This project demonstrates a tension. In Chapter 2 the tension was introduced: God often calls a particular leader to serve as the primary teacher of His Word for a community of faith but simultaneously entrusts a group of men with the burden of overseeing the ministries of the church, including the ministry of teaching. Chapter 3 explores the tension between individual and group responsibilities by considering how teams accomplish tasks. Teamwork, such as that exercised by an elder board, can be helpful when applied strategically but can be detrimental when used haphazardly. One challenging aspect of the project, therefore, was to determine which facets of the pulpit ministry would benefit from the participation of a team and which would not.

Evaluation of the project shows that the elder team gained invaluable insights into how best to maintain the tension described in this project. Despite setbacks and weaknesses in its implementation, the central contention of this chapter is that the research project proved to be effective in incorporating lay leadership into the expository preaching ministry at Bethany Community Church in Washington, Illinois.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The stated purpose of this project was to incorporate lay leaders in the preparation, evaluation, and application of expository messages at Bethany Community Church, Washington, Illinois. Prior to conducting the project, I developed various instruments in order to help incorporate lay leaders into each of these areas. Even though some of these instruments proved to be less helpful than others, in each of the areas enumerated, the elders were incorporated into the pulpit ministry.

Preparation of the Sermons

In the area of preparation, the elders demonstrated in numerous ways that they had thought about the messages. The depth of their thinking about the messages varied from elder to elder and from week to week, but each demonstrated throughout the project that he was giving careful consideration to the sermons' content.

Each elder also offered suggestions for upcoming sermons. Again, the amount of input differed, but each elder contributed suggestions that affected the final form of the sermon. Their feedback was thoughtful and timely and strengthened the sermons.

Evaluation of the Sermons

Each elder offered valuable critiques of the sermons that impacted other messages. For example, one elder's continued prodding to present the gospel clearly reminded me that many in the church each week have not placed their faith in Jesus Christ and may not even understand the gospel. Another elder's concern that the amount of time spent on each point in a sermon reflects the structure of the text helped remind me to allow the text to shape the message.

Application of the Sermons

In regard to application, throughout the project the elders were able to point to specific, tangible ways they were applying the truths of God's Word not only in their lives but also in the lives of others around them. During the project, they demonstrated that God's Word was being proclaimed not only through the pulpit ministry for 45 minutes (or so), but also in the lives of the spiritual shepherds. As in the case of Ezra, the elders in our community of faith continued to explain God's Word and help the body apply it. Each elder is proactively multiplying the impact of the pulpit ministry by his faithful ministry to the flock. Even though elders did not utilize each instrument every week, the primary purpose of the project was certainly achieved.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Chapter 1 enumerated five goals for the project: teaching the lay leadership about its responsibility and potential contribution toward a healthy pulpit ministry; training the lay leadership team to recognize and evaluate expository preaching; incorporating the lay leadership into the sermon preparation process; incorporating the lay leadership team into the sermon application process; and, finally, improving my expository preaching.

Elders Recognizing Responsibility for Pulpit Ministry

In keeping with the first goal, the elders recognized their God-given mandate to help oversee the pulpit ministry. Through the project, they gained a greater appreciation for the pulpit ministry and saw tangible ways in which they could be involved. Following the project, one elder pulled me aside one Wednesday evening and thanked me for communicating a vision for lay elder ministry. The elders' desire to be faithful in assisting in the preaching ministry of the church was especially noticeable during the elder meetings.

Elders Recognizing and Evaluating Expository Preaching

Though their surveys demonstrated that the elders had a good understanding of what expository preaching was and its importance, the project aided the elders in understanding how an expository sermon is developed. Most of the elders were only vaguely aware of what I did on a weekly basis to prepare a sermon. After the training sessions and the exposure to my weekly pre-sermon notes, the elders communicated that they had a greater understanding of the preparation process for a sermon. I have even had ongoing discussions with one elder in particular regarding what he can do to incorporate some of these things into his Sunday School teaching ministry. This, in turn, helped with their evaluation of sermons. As we had come to consensus regarding the

purpose of and nature of preaching, the other elders could ascertain how well I was achieving that purpose.

Elders Incorporated into the Sermon Preparation

During the project, the elders felt an obligation to communicate things that concerned them in the sermon outlines or in the sermons themselves. One elder mentioned how much he had enjoyed the opportunity to give input at regular intervals. The desire to give input has continued since the sermon. This increased interest in being a part of the pulpit ministry is consistent with some of the benefits of teamwork detailed in chapter 3; namely, that our elders are motivated because they have a sense that their contributions matter.

The dialogue during our elder meetings provided the men with an additional forum to discuss issues about which they were thinking. One elder mentioned how he enjoyed the opportunities to give input at regular intervals. Their input and evaluation heavily influenced my sermon preparation process.

At the same time, from their feedback, it was obvious that they felt the project asked them to do some things that were not necessary in order to fulfill God's mandate for them as shepherds. Some responsibilities, such as two weekly surveys, required them to give input to a greater degree than they believed helpful to me and seemed burdensome to them.

Elders Applying the Sermons

Elders were more conscious of their need to apply the sermons in the lives of the flock, in keeping with the third goal. What I discovered was that there was already a lot of application of the messages occurring through the ministry of our elders. The surveys and more intentional conversation simply helped me find out where that was taking place.

It may be that the project did not cause the elders to be significantly more engaged in applying the sermon, but it revealed where application was already taking place.

Personal Improvement in Preaching Ministry

My preaching improved as a result of the project, thus achieving the final goal, personal improvement in preaching. One plausible means of gauging improvement as a preacher would have been comparing the results of each week's evaluation surveys. However, the surveys lacked consistency. Each week they were filled out by a different combination of elders. The surveys were better instruments to evaluate the quality of a sermon in a given week, based upon the opinion(s) of the elder(s) completing the survey.

One non-scientific and incredibly biased data point would be an observation made by my parents when they came to visit during the project. Each of them download my sermons each week from the church website. They remarked that they had noticed that my preaching had improved over the last few weeks. Reflecting on their remarks later, I realized the period of time to which they were referring began at the start of my project.

Increased Teamwork

During the proposal stage of the project, I had wrestled with whether or not "creating a team" would be one of the goals of the project. The conclusion I came to with the help of the faculty was that such a goal went beyond the scope of the project. The project was already assuming that the group was a team. The question was rather what principles of teamwork would be beneficial to help this team operate.

However, as we implemented those principles, the result was not the creation of a team, but a renewed commitment to the concept of team. There were several things we determined in chapter 3 that are necessary for teams to function effectively and many of those were strengthened through this project. For example, we saw that Maddux

differentiates between a group, which lacks cohesion and a team, which recognizes interdependence, participates in decisions affecting the team and works in an environment where input is encouraged.¹ The elders already fit this conception of team, but I believe they grew in their capacity to work as a team in general and particularly grew in their ability to function as a team in regards to sermon preparation.

Strengths of the Project

There were several strengths of the project, some of which the paper has already alluded to. These strengths reveal that the project not only met its goals but that it yielded some unanticipated benefits.

Demonstrated Involvement

First, the elders were provided with tangible ways to become involved in the preaching ministry and took advantage of those opportunities. From the very beginning, as they offered input about what text to preach, they exercised their role as spiritual shepherds. Even though they did not utilize some of the avenues I had provided, they continued to demonstrate involvement in the project by taking initiative to give input through means I had not considered. For example, one elder stopped me at a church function to discuss some elements of a sermon. Sometimes an elder would call me on the phone to discuss a text. One morning, an elder stopped by my office with a comment or two.

Distribution of Workload

The project also revealed ways to distribute the workload effectively. For example, as chapter 2 demonstrated, Moses could not apply the law for each case, I lack

¹Robert Maddux, *Team Building: An Exercise in Leadership* (Oakville, ON: Canada: Crisp, 1988), 5.

the ability to help every person in the church personally apply each sermon. The elders are able to speak with people I would never have the opportunity to meet with and assist with the task of application. This is consistent with the contention in chapter 3, that teams streamline tasks so that tasks are being done “simultaneously instead of sequentially”² Elders reported back the varied ways that the sermon was being applied in the lives of the people in our church. They were teaching the same truths in small groups. Elders involved with counseling gave my sermons to counselees to listen to them as homework. There was magnified impact as the workload was distributed.

I was personally encouraged in my role as a teaching elder as I saw the distribution of ministry that was taking place. In his last email to me during the project, elder 3 apologized for not returning a survey for one of the sermons and concluded the email by telling me about how he and his daughter had found the message timely for something they were going through. This represents the true success of the project. While it would have been nice to have received his survey back, it was of far greater value that he was implementing God’s truth in the life of his family. Apart from this project, I am not sure if I would have had the opportunity to see so many examples of the application of God’s truth.

Unity of the Leadership

The project also revealed unity among our leadership. Unity is crucial in order to be obedient to God’s injunctions to leadership and has many practical implications. We saw that shared vision is one of the components that helps with the maintenance of a team in chapter 3. The vision “is a burning thought, and it exists only in the heads (and

²Susan Albers Mohrman, *Designing Team-Based Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 8.

hearts) of the team. The vision is the thing the team exists to do, defined in ambitious form. . . . Without team vision, there is no point to a team.”³

Table A10 in Appendix 9 shows the pre-project survey responses of the elders, describing their opinions, and understanding of expository preaching prior to the project. As the chart below shows, several observations may be made, all of which underscore the unity of the leadership.

First, there was generally near unanimous agreement among the leaders on statements relating to expository preaching. Four statements had a standard deviation of less than 0.5 among the respondents: statements 3, 5, 9, 13. In each of these questions, all the respondents were in general agreement, but one elder would mark one number slightly differently; for example, marking a 2 instead of a 1 as the other elders had done. Four more statements had a standard deviation of 0.55. On these questions, responders were generally in agreement, though two would mark “slightly disagree” instead of “strongly disagree,” for example. Two other questions had mostly agreement, but one or two respondents marked a “3.”

There were only three statements where one or more elders indicated agreement and one or more elder expressed disagreement: statements 6, 10, and 14. On statement 6, only one elder, elder 4, marked agreement. It seems that he misread the statement, especially based upon his response to the same question on the post-project survey.⁴ There is a wide divergence of answers to statement 10, possibly due to the poor wording of the statement. Elder 6 noted on his survey form that he was confused regarding what assertion the statement was making and apparently interpreted it differently post-project than he did pre-project. I should have been more clear that I was trying to

³Harvey Robbins and Michael Finley, *Why Teams Don't Work: What Went Wrong and How to Make it Right* (Princeton, NJ: Pacesetter, 1995), 103.

⁴See table A11.

determine if they believed it was best to derive the main message from a single text or a group of texts. Statement 14 suffers from a similar problem. One of the significant questions in the Doctorate of Ministry seminars has been what is expository preaching. The answer to that question affects how one responds to that statement.

Table A11 in Appendix 9 shows the same unity among the post-project survey responses. Unlike the sermon evaluations where there was no consistency among who was or was not turning in surveys from week to week, for these surveys there was consistency, in that the same five elders turned in each set of surveys.

Looking at the post-project surveys, one does not see any drastic changes. Most changes consist of elders going from a 4 to a 5 or a 2 to a 1 in their responses, but there were no major shifts. Statement 10 continued to cause confusion as the average answer and the deviation among the answers stayed about the same, but who was giving which answer changed somewhat. This confirmed that statement 10 had not been well worded and the interpretation of what it was asking changed. Statement 14 showed improvement in unity of answers after I had explained what I meant by the use of the term “expository preaching.”

The unity among the leaders was also observed and strengthened during the training sessions. As can be seen from the pre-project survey, I was not communicating brand new material to the elders but confirming that we were all on the same page concerning what a sermon was and what it should accomplish. As elder 3 mentioned, seeing how a sermon was prepared was helpful to many of the elders and their teaching ministries.

Modeling Accountability

Another strength of the project was that it improved my preaching as I learned how to rely on others. It helped me understand in what ways the team concept can be effective in the pulpit ministry and where it is not helpful. I am currently continuing to

send out weekly emails and asking for input in specific areas when I think it will be helpful.

The project served as a potential template for the elders as we think through how to allow others to speak into our ministries. When we began the church plant, each lay leader took responsibility for certain ministries. The positive aspect of this was that it caused the elders to feel the joy of truly overseeing a ministry. The negative aspect is that elders have not always felt responsibility for ministries besides their own and are not quite sure how to invite input from others into their ministries. Perhaps by seeking input into my ministry area first, I provide one possible model for how to maintain our oversight of a ministry while seeking the input of all the elders.

Self-Reflection among Elders

A final strength of the project was that it caused self-reflection among elders. Many of the elders confronted some weaknesses within their own ministries. One elder, as he realized there were many sermon evaluation forms he was unable to complete, realized that he was missing church too frequently. He was doing ministry in other areas of the church or on vacation for several weeks of the project. Convicted by his need to help shepherd the flock, he decided to evaluate how many Sundays in a given year he would be gone. He took his role as a shepherd of the flock seriously, realizing it was not just the Senior Pastor who needed to be in the pulpit a certain number of Sundays. Each spiritual leader had a need to be in the community of faith exercising care of the flock.

Weaknesses of the Project

Several weakness of the project manifested themselves over the course of the fifteen weeks. Even the weaknesses, however, proved to be helpful in determining the best way to incorporate the lay leadership into the pulpit ministry.

Burden on Elders

As we examine the data from chapter 4, it seems clear that the project required too much of the elders. Teamwork is not the optimum way to prepare the sermon and evaluate it on a weekly basis. As Mohrman observes, “The key question to ask is whether a particular task is best accomplished by establishing teams to allow members to integrate their activities.”⁵

The project explored a variety of methods in order to determine what tasks were appropriate for a group context. It was seen that weekly requirements with broad, open-ended demands were not helpful. As elder 6 remarked, he felt that he was giving input on areas after a few minutes reflection but I had put hours into evaluating the same content. This meant potentially using all of our time inefficiently.

Research Instruments

The research instruments were not as effective as they could have been for several reasons. First, some of the things that were happening were hard to quantify with numbers. It is hard to put a numerical value on increased participation in the sermon process. Second, there was a lack of consistency in who was completing the sermons. Though this was not optimal for data-gathering purposes, it provided data of a different kind. It supported one of the contentions of this project, that the elders are not all able to bear the responsibility for spending weekly time on the pulpit ministry.

These factors led to data that was somewhat inconsistent. It seems that the surveys, whether pre or post-sermon, were more effective in evaluating the individual sermons they were addressing.

⁵Mohrman, *Designing Team-Based Organizations*, 10.

What I Would Do Differently

The project needed to have greater flexibility and less formality, in the sense of weekly surveys with numerical values, while at the same time still producing tangible numbers and results.

Greater Specificity

A significant change that could produce a greater level of participation would be asking the elders for feedback on specific elements of the sermon. Instead of sending them an outline and essentially asking, “What would you change?” I would solicit input on specific elements of the sermon. For example, in the twelfth week of the project, when I asked for input regarding the application I was making on giving, I received excellent feedback. Another example was the discussion we had for the third sermon on “Forgiveness and Worship.” In this discussion, we focused on the narrower topic of how to handle some of the ambiguity that was in the text. The elders were fully engaged in the conversation. They were so engaged, in fact, that one called me during the week to discuss it. Other weeks, when the questions were more general, the responses were less helpful and lacked focus.

Meeting Elders Where They Are

Hindsight allows me to understand the schedules and the abilities of our elders. Instead of putting weight on them to return two surveys a week, I would work to find more creative opportunities of seeking and receiving their input.

Perhaps I could have scheduled a bi-weekly meeting on a Friday morning meeting at a coffee shop. I had assumed that an additional meeting would be burdensome, but I think some of them would find this less stressful than filling out surveys. The participation in the Friday training sessions for the project was significantly higher than the participation on the surveys. Phone conferences might also have helped to garner input.

Theological Reflections

My contention for this chapter is that the research project has proven to be effective in incorporating lay leadership into the expository preaching ministry at Bethany Community Church in Washington, Illinois. Our leaders gained some valuable insights into how to manage the tension that Scripture describes.

Double Honor

First, there is wisdom in having some elders receive “double honor.” The teaching ministry is incredibly time consuming and it is usually ideal to have someone in the church with a concentrated focus on it. As was observed in chapter 2, Nehemiah 8 tells us it is Ezra to whom the people appeal, as they demand that the Book of the Law of Moses be brought. He has a recognized position as a priest (Neh 8:2) and has been trained as a scribe (Ezra 7:6). Furthermore, Ezra 7:10 reveals that Ezra was spiritually prepared: “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.”

Our elders simply do not have the time to exercise oversight over the minutiae of the pulpit ministry. They are engaged in their full-time jobs and shepherding their families. They are working in other areas of the church, bearing the burden for the children’s ministry, adult Sunday School classes, Biblical Counseling ministry, small group discipleship, and so forth.

Protection of the Plurality

Second, the project confirms the wisdom of God’s plan to have a group of men shepherding the church’s pulpit ministry, or what was referred to in chapter 2 as “the protection of the plurality.” Even a leader as gifted as Moses is forced to come to the realization that he needs other leaders supporting the ministry he is doing. The other leaders work to help Moses by teaching and applying God’s law. In the early church, Paul tells the Ephesian elders that they have a collective responsibility to help maintain

the doctrinal integrity of the church. This means that they also need to exercise oversight of the pulpit ministry not only in terms of applying the sermon truths but also in helping guard the truths being taught.

In the context of Bethany Community Church, the elders are already striving to serve in this capacity. The project helped us see the biblical ideal more clearly. The elders, as we talked through the Scripture and implementation of it, expressed confidence in me and my ability to faithfully proclaim the Word. They have no desire to micromanage my sermons and have given me a great deal of freedom. At the same time, they have a greater realization of their responsibility to provide oversight. They have given me specific, tangible suggestions for how to seek and receive their feedback.

Personal Reflections

Several observations arise as I reflect on the personal impact of this project. First, it is an incredible privilege to be the elder that receives “double honor.” The lay elders on our board who serve could also do this ministry. They are intelligent, effective communicators, many of whom desired at one time to serve in vocational ministry. God has not opened the door to them yet, though He may do so in the future. To serve with these men and to possess the opportunity to prepare God’s Word on a weekly basis is an incredible blessing.

Second, it is difficult for me to open myself up to criticism. I do not doubt my need to grow and my need for critique, but my pride makes me more self-conscious of those faults that I already know exist. What is strange about this project is that I had to not only allow critique but ask—or, in some cases, beg—for it. I did not enjoy it. Part of me would prefer to just do a poor job. That is not a right attitude, but where I sometimes found myself during this project.

Third, even when there is unity regarding its purpose, evaluating preaching is to some degree subjective. Despite their agreement regarding what expository preaching

is and the purpose of a sermon, there were still significant differences at times when evaluating how successful a sermon had been. Elder 2 wanted to hear a full gospel presentation each week and felt as though the message was lacking without that. Another elder wanted applications to be very specific, but also seemed to feel that I should not go beyond the text.

Fourth, even though there are subjective elements of the sermon, it is important to observe the fundamental unity among the elders in evaluating a sermon. Even though there were the aforementioned subjective elements, the elders were in agreement concerning most aspects of the sermons.

Fifth, elders sometimes have disagreements regarding how to approach a text that is trivial enough to not materially affect the health of the pulpit ministry. In other words, there are going to be times that different elders would handle the preaching of a text differently than the way the Senior Pastor does in some minor areas. In our church, these differences would not come to light without something like a survey being passed around and sometimes these differences do not really need to come to light. For example, in chapter 4, I noted that in the sermon that began the Sower and the Seed series, I gave a great deal of background information on parables. Some elders mentioned, when asked, that I could have spent less time on this. I appreciated their feedback, but I disagreed. They were not of the opinion that my time spent on background material was wrong or unhealthy for the church—it was simply not how they would have approached the text.

Another example is pacing throughout a sermon. After the seventh sermon, elders 4 and 5 felt that I could have gone through the points differently. If I had not asked on the survey for this input, they probably would not have mentioned it—perhaps they would not have even thought about it. I think that was the right pacing for that sermon, though I can certainly see why someone would disagree.

One caveat is necessary here. It is important not to minimize the importance of receiving input regarding personal preference. An awareness of how other elders

approach teaching makes me a better teacher. While I do not envision my having the ability to suddenly become a much different type of preacher, it behooves me to consider the input of the elders on stylistic matters, and think through how I can improve.

Conclusion

The research project has proven to be effective in incorporating lay leadership into the expository preaching ministry at Bethany Community Church in Washington, Illinois. I am glad I had the opportunity to participate in it. As a result of the project, our elders were brought closer together and were able to think more deeply about the pulpit ministry.

I plan to continue sending weekly outlines of the sermons to the elders. Even though they may not be able to review them thoroughly, it gives them the chance to be a part of the pulpit ministry to a greater degree. I also plan to find times to meet informally with each elder at least once a quarter. During these times I can receive input on the pulpit ministry at a macro-level and not place an additional burden on their time. I also continue to ask for specific feedback when the occasion warrants. My prayer is that God uses this project for His glory and allows the continued proclamation of His Word through the pulpit ministry at Bethany Community Church in Washington, IL.

APPENDIX 1
FIFTEEN WEEK PROJECT OUTLINE

The following outline was given as a handout to the elders prior to the start of the project to help them understand their responsibilities.

Phase 1: Preparing the Project

Dates: 9/5 & 9/12 (Weeks 1-2)

1. Determine the sermon series (pre-project)
2. Complete survey entitled, “*Leadership Team Pre-Project Survey*”

Phase 2: Training the Lay Leaders

Dates: 9/19; 9/26; 10/3; 10/10 (Weeks 3-6)

1. Session 1: The Benefits of teamwork
2. Session 2: Philosophical Assumptions of Expository Preaching
3. Session 3: Principles of Hermeneutics
4. Session 4: Principles of Sermon Preparation, Delivery and Application

Phase 3: Preaching the Sermons

Dates: 10/17, 10/24; 10/31; 11/7; 11/14; 11/21; 11/28 (Weeks 7-13)

1. Complete “*Pre-Sermon Evaluation Survey*”: Give input on future sermons: receive outline of sermons on Tuesday night, return (if able) by Thursday night via email.
2. Complete “*Post-Sermon Evaluation Survey*”: Evaluate sermon just preached.
3. Discuss sermon and sermon series at elder meetings.

Phase 4: Evaluating the Series

Dates: 12/5; 12/12 (Weeks 14-15)

1. Complete “*Post-Series Evaluation Survey*”

APPENDIX 2

LEADERSHIP TEAM PRE-PROJECT SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to incorporate lay leaders in the preparation, evaluation, and application of expository messages at Bethany Community Church, Washington, IL. This research is being conducted by Daniel Bennett for purposes of his project research. In this research, you will be asked to fill out the following leadership team survey regarding the preaching ministry at Bethany Community Church. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Section 1: Evaluation of Teaching Needs

1. What has been the most exciting aspect of ministry for you since the church plant launch on September 7, 2008?
2. What do you believe are the greatest strengths of our church right now?
3. What do you believe are her greatest weaknesses?
4. As you prayerfully think through the upcoming months, what needs do you think should be addressed through the pulpit ministry?
5. What are some passages of Scripture that you believe could address these needs?

Section 2: Expository Preaching

Please give a brief answer to the following questions:

1. Define “expository preaching” to the best of your ability.

2. What are the three most important qualities of a sermon?
3. What is the most effective way to ensure that a sermon is faithful to God's original message to His People?
4. Describe the ideal process of preparation for a sermon.
5. Is it necessary for *all* spiritual shepherds to be involved in the pulpit ministry? Why or why not?

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements

(1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree):

1. I desire for a sermon to impact me both emotionally and intellectually.	1	2	3	4	5
2. A Sunday morning sermon should be designed so that it is directed primarily at the unbeliever.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Since they are no longer living, it is impossible to know what a biblical author's message to the original audience was.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Preaching expositional sermons is the best way for a pastor to fulfill his biblical mandate to preach the whole counsel of God.	1	2	3	4	5
5. A sermon should spend time exploring what the passage meant to the original audience.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Any preaching based on God's truth as found in His Word is expository preaching.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The ideal length of a sermon is less than twenty-five minutes.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Topical preaching is more effective than expository preaching because it is more sensitive to the needs of the congregation.	1	2	3	4	5
9. A sermon is more credible if the pastor cites secular sources, such as scientists or philosophers, to support the teaching of Scripture.	1	2	3	4	5
10. A sermon should focus on a variety of texts when dealing with a subject instead of looking at merely one passage of Scripture.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Any preaching that goes through a passage verse-by-verse is expository preaching.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The difference between expository preaching and topical preaching is primarily organization of material and not philosophical or theological.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Expository preaching is more like a lecture than a sermon.	1	2	3	4	5
14. A sermon should always be expository.	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3: Application

1. What struggles have you had in applying sermon messages in your personal life?
2. What are some examples of how you have recently applied the truth of God's Word from sermons in your daily life? If you cannot think of an example, please indicate that as well.
3. What are some examples of how you have recently helped others in the church apply the truth of God's Word from sermons in their daily life? If you cannot think of an example, please indicate that as well.

APPENDIX 3

PRE-SERMON EVALUATION SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to incorporate lay leaders in the preparation, evaluation, and application of expository messages at Bethany Community Church, Washington, IL. This research is being conducted by Daniel Bennett for purposes of his project research. In this research, you will be asked to fill out the following leadership team survey regarding the preaching ministry at Bethany Community Church. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Please review the attached the two-page outline and summary of this Sunday's sermon, then answer the following questions.

Your Name: _____

Text: _____

Sermon Title: _____

Stated Homiletical Idea:

1. Do you believe the sermon addresses and explains accurately the message to the original audience?
2. Do you believe the illustrations are appropriate and bring out the main points of the text? Would you suggest any changes?
3. Do you believe the sermon appropriately applies the timeless truths in the text to our church? Do you have any suggestions for additional applications? How will you specifically help people at BCC apply this truth?
4. Do you think there is anything else that should be emphasized in the sermon?

APPENDIX 4

POST-SERMON EVALUATION SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to incorporate lay leaders in the preparation, evaluation, and application of expository messages at Bethany Community Church, Washington, IL This research is being conducted by Daniel Bennett for purposes of his project research. In this research, you will be asked to fill out the following leadership team survey regarding the preaching ministry at Bethany Community Church. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Your Name: _____

Text: _____

Sermon Title: _____

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (*1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree*).

1. The sermon effectively communicated the main idea.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The sermon effectively communicated applications that were clear and based upon the text.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The pacing of the sermon gave appropriate weight to each element of the text.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Mannerisms, gestures, and dress were appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Delivery was clear and avoided any distracting elements.	1	2	3	4	5

Any comments/critiques/suggestions? Please list at least one change that would have enhanced the sermon.

APPENDIX 5

EVALUATING THE PROJECT LEADERSHIP SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to incorporate lay leaders in the preparation, evaluation, and application of expository messages at Bethany Community Church, Washington, IL This research is being conducted by Daniel Bennett for purposes of his project research. In this research, you will be asked to fill out the following leadership team survey regarding the preaching ministry at Bethany Community Church. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Section 1: Understanding Expository Preaching

Please give a brief answer to the following questions:

1. Define “expository preaching” to the best of your ability.
2. What are the three most important qualities of a sermon?
3. What is the most effective way to ensure that a sermon is faithful to God’s original message to His People?
4. Describe the ideal process of preparation for a sermon.

5. Is it necessary for *all* spiritual shepherds to be involved in the pulpit ministry?
Why or why not?

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements

(1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree):

1. I desire for a sermon to impact me both emotionally and intellectually.	1	2	3	4	5
2. A Sunday morning sermon should be designed so that it is directed primarily at the unbeliever.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Since they are no longer living, it is impossible to know what a biblical author's message to the original audience was.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Preaching expository sermons is the best way for a pastor to fulfill his biblical mandate to preach the whole counsel of God.	1	2	3	4	5
5. A sermon should spend time exploring what the passage meant to the original audience.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Any preaching based on God's truth as found in His Word is expository preaching.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The ideal length of a sermon is less than twenty-five minutes.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Topical preaching is more effective than expository preaching because it is more sensitive to the needs of the congregation.	1	2	3	4	5
9. A sermon is more credible if the pastor cites secular sources, such as scientists or philosophers, to support the teaching of Scripture.	1	2	3	4	5
10. A sermon should focus on a variety of texts when dealing with a subject instead of looking at merely one passage of Scripture.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Any preaching that goes through a passage verse-by-verse is expository preaching.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The difference between expository preaching and topical preaching is primarily organization of material and not philosophical or theological.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Expository preaching is more like a lecture than a sermon.	1	2	3	4	5
14. A sermon should always be expository.	1	2	3	4	5

Section 2: Lay Leader Involvement

1. How would you describe your impact upon the preaching ministry of BCC?
2. Can you think of specific suggestions you made that were utilized in the preaching ministry over the past seven weeks?

Section 3: Evaluation of the Process

1. What were some of the things you enjoyed most about the process of participating in sermon preparation?
2. What were some of the things you enjoyed the least?
3. How would you characterize the amount of work you put into sermons over the past two months?
4. What are some changes you might make to aid lay leaders in their sermon ministry involvement?

Section 4: Application

1. What are some examples of how you have recently applied the truth of God's Word from sermons in your daily life? If you cannot think of an example, please indicate that as well.

APPENDIX 6

QUANTIFIABLE SURVEY RESPONSES

Table A1. Pre-series survey responses of the elders

	Statement	Elder						Avg	StDev
		1	2	3	4	5	6		
1	I desire for a sermon to impact me both emotionally and intellectually.	N/A	4	5	3	3	5	4	1.00
2	A Sunday morning sermon should be designed so that it is directed primarily at the unbeliever.	N/A	2	2	2	1	1	1.6	0.55
3	Since they are no longer living, it is impossible to know what a biblical author's message to the original audience was.	N/A	2	1	1	1	1	1.2	0.45
4	Preaching expositional sermons is the best way for a pastor to fulfill his biblical mandate to preach the whole counsel of God.	N/A	5	4	5	4	4	4.4	0.55
5	A sermon should spend time exploring what the passage meant to the original audience.	N/A	4	4	4	5	4	4.2	0.45
6	Any preaching based on God's truth as found in His Word is expository preaching.	N/A	1	2	5	2	2	2.4	1.52
7	The ideal length of a sermon is less than twenty-five minutes.	N/A	3	1	1	1	2	1.6	0.89
8	Topical preaching is more effective than expository preaching because it is more sensitive to the needs of the congregation.	N/A	1	2	1	1	2	1.4	0.55
9	A sermon is more credible if the pastor cites secular sources, such as scientists or philosophers, to support the teaching of Scripture.	N/A	1	1	1	2	1	1.2	0.45

Table A1—Continued. Pre-series survey responses of the elders.

10	A sermon should focus on a variety of texts when dealing with a subject instead of looking at merely one passage of Scripture.	N/A	2	5	2	5	4	3.5	1.73
11	Any preaching that goes through a passage verse-by-verse is expository preaching.	N/A	2	2	1	3	2	2	0.71
12	The difference between expository preaching and topical preaching is primarily organization of material and not philosophical or theological.	N/A	2	1	1	1	2	1.4	0.55
13	Expository preaching is more like a lecture than a sermon.	N/A	1	1	1	1	2	1.2	0.45
14	A sermon should always be expository.	N/A	2	1	1	4	2	2	1.22

Table A2. Sermon 1 survey responses

Num	Statement	Elder						Avg
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	The sermon effectively communicated the main idea.	N/A	5	5	4	5	N/A	4.75
2	The sermon effectively communicated applications that were clear and based upon the text.	N/A	5	4	4	5	N/A	4.5
3	The pacing of the sermon gave appropriate weight to each element of the text.	N/A	4	4	4	5	N/A	4.25
4	Mannerisms, gestures, and dress were appropriate.	N/A	5	5	4	5	N/A	4.75
5	Delivery was clear and avoided any distracting elements.	N/A	5	4	4	5	N/A	4.5

Table A5. Sermon 4 survey responses

Num	Statement	Elder						Avg
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	The sermon effectively communicated the main idea.	N/A	5	4	N/A	N/A	5	4.67
2	The sermon effectively communicated applications that were clear and based upon the text.	N/A	5	5	N/A	N/A	5	5.00
3	The pacing of the sermon gave appropriate weight to each element of the text.	N/A	5	3	N/A	N/A	4	4.00
4	Mannerisms, gestures, and dress were appropriate.	N/A	5	5	N/A	N/A	4	4.67
5	Delivery was clear and avoided any distracting elements.	N/A	5	3	N/A	N/A	5	4.33

Table A6. Sermon 5 survey responses

Num	Statement	Elder						Avg
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	The sermon effectively communicated the main idea.	N/A	5	5	5	N/A	5	5
2	The sermon effectively communicated applications that were clear and based upon the text.	N/A	5	5	5	N/A	5	5
3	The pacing of the sermon gave appropriate weight to each element of the text.	N/A	5	4	4	N/A	4	4.25
4	Mannerisms, gestures, and dress were appropriate.	N/A	N/A	4	4	N/A	4	4
5	Delivery was clear and avoided any distracting elements.	N/A	5	4	4	N/A	5	4.5

Table A7. Sermon 6 survey responses

Num	Statement	Elder						Avg
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	The sermon effectively communicated the main idea.	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5
2	The sermon effectively communicated applications that were clear and based upon the text.	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5
3	The pacing of the sermon gave appropriate weight to each element of the text.	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5
4	Mannerisms, gestures, and dress were appropriate.	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5
5	Delivery was clear and avoided any distracting elements.	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5

Table A8. Sermon 7 survey responses

Num	Statements	Elder						Avg
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	The sermon effectively communicated the main idea.	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	5	5	4.67
2	The sermon effectively communicated applications that were clear and based upon the text.	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	5	5	4.67
3	The pacing of the sermon gave appropriate weight to each element of the text.	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	5	5	4.33
4	Mannerisms, gestures, and dress were appropriate.	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	5	4	4.67
5	Delivery was clear and avoided any distracting elements.	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	5	4	4.67

Table A9. Post-series survey responses of the elders

Num	Statement	Elder						Avg	StDev
		1	2	3	4	5	6		
1	I desire for a sermon to impact me both emotionally and intellectually.	N/A	4	4	4	3	4	3.8	0.45
2	A Sunday morning sermon should be designed so that it is directed primarily at the unbeliever.	N/A	2	2	1	1	1	1.4	0.55
3	Since they are no longer living, it is impossible to know what a biblical author's message to the original audience was.	N/A	2	1	1	1	1	1.2	0.45
4	Preaching expositional sermons is the best way for a pastor to fulfill his biblical mandate to preach the whole counsel of God.	N/A	5	5	5	4	4	4.6	0.55
5	A sermon should spend time exploring what the passage meant to the original audience.	N/A	4	4	5	5	4	4.4	0.55
6	Any preaching based on God's truth as found in His Word is expository preaching.	N/A	1	1	1	2	2	1.4	0.55
7	The ideal length of a sermon is less than twenty-five minutes.	N/A	1	2	1	1	1	1.2	0.45
8	Topical preaching is more effective than expository preaching because it is more sensitive to the needs of the congregation.	N/A	1	1	1	1	2	1.2	0.45
9	A sermon is more credible if the pastor cites secular sources, such as scientists or philosophers, to support the teaching of Scripture.	N/A	1	1	1	2	1	1.2	0.45
10	A sermon should focus on a variety of texts when dealing with a subject instead of looking at merely one passage of Scripture.	N/A	2	4	4	5	2	3.4	1.34
11	Any preaching that goes through a passage verse-by-verse is expository preaching.	N/A	2	1	1	3	2	1.8	0.84
12	The difference between expository preaching and topical preaching is primarily organization of material and not philosophical or theological.	N/A	2	2	1	1	2	1.6	0.55
13	Expository preaching is more like a lecture than a sermon.	N/A	1	3	1	1	2	1.6	0.89
14	A sermon should always be expository.	N/A	2	2	2	4	2	2.4	0.89

APPENDIX 7
SELECTED COMMENTS

Pre-Sermon Series Survey

A. Elder 2

1. [Responding to question regarding the enjoyable aspects of the church] “I have been blessed to be part of a biblical, mature, and humble leadership team who looks to God for our help and guidance, who really listen to each other and . . . find consensus in decisions made. I have been blessed by the SS teachers I have sat under. I have been blessed by the biblical counseling ministry to learn how to use God’s Word in helping my marriage and in being used to help others.”
2. [Responding to what needs could be addressed through preaching ministry] “Reminder of what the TRUE gospel is and how one can be born again. We have people from all kinds of backgrounds . . . who need to be taught a non-works (legalistic) type of Christianity.”
3. “I found this academic definition [of expository preaching]: Expository preaching is ‘the presentation of biblical truth, derived from a transmitted thought, a historical, grammatical, spirit-guided study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit applies first to the life of the preacher and then through him to his congregation.’”
4. “[Elders do not need to be involved] in the pastor’s preparation of the message, but we are accountable to listen for error and confront when error is found.”

B. Elder 3

1. [Responding to question regarding the enjoyable aspects of the church] “Watching our church form from a BBC Sunday School class in the gym and eventually at Five Points [Community Center] into a community that now fellowships, grows, serves, and worships together. We had an unusual opportunity to expand our initial vision to rent the “entire” . . . facility—we took it and it turned out to be a great decision.”

2. “We have a core of very gifted people who serve well in our ministries to children, in worship, teaching, ushering, and deacons. Our preaching and teaching ministry is focused on truth directly from the Word.”
3. “Our greatest weakness is too much love for the things of this world and too little love for Christ. I believe this is the source of much of our resistance to engage in at least one ministry, to actively risk our reputation and share our faith, to give sacrificially, to invest time in prayer, and to serve one another outside our comfort zones. This battle extends from the ‘attendee’ all the way to the elders, but it’s being waged far too casually (self included).”
4. “I believe the Gospel of Luke is a great place to preach. It speaks clearly into [areas of weaknesses cited previously]. [For example:] July 11: ‘The way you treat other people reveals the kingdom you identify yourself with.’ July 18th: ‘How would the church be if everyone was as committed to holiness as me.’ August 22nd: ‘You must inspect the fruit of your heart.’ August 29th: ‘One who truly calls Christ, “Lord”—Does what he says and perseveres.’”
5. “I think all [elders] should have some role in evaluating or suggesting topics, changes, etc. An elder should listen carefully and talk with the pastor if he sees imbalanced or unbiblical approach to truth. Elders should also purpose to encourage the pastor in areas they see good preaching.”
6. “I have struggled with finding applications to some of our early studies which were aimed at developing our foundational understanding of topics like ‘qualifications of an elders’ or ‘Biblical roles of parent/child or husband/wife relationships.’ ‘Selection of the twelve’ was interesting to me, but not as easily applied.”
7. “Our study of Luke has heightened my concern over my lack of holiness. [After the sermon on Luke 6:39-42,] I was led to apologize/confess to my oldest daughter for not more carefully choosing a movie we had watched the previous week and not turning it off when it dishonored Christ. ‘If I am trying to instruct someone in godliness without a focus on true godliness in my life – I am a great danger to that person . . . a student will not rise above his teacher.’”
8. “The Luke sermon series, particularly Luke 5:33-39 “Fasting for the Bridegroom,” generated a lot of thoughts of significant changes in my life that would allow me to better apply Colossians 3:1-2. I’m questioning whether Christ approves of the level of engagement I have in my job—and whether it goes beyond the intent of Colossians 3:23. This sermons and the one on Luke 6:43-45 (‘you must have a changed heart before you can change your behavior’) helped me choose to not engage in two things I really want to do in order to clear some time in my life for spiritual disciplines. I am experiencing a battle in the form of my job which quickly changed to absorb any margin I

created (Luke 4:31-44 ‘Christ’s authority is revealed in His Word, and resisted by the demonic realm’).”

9. “Our family talked about ‘Kingdom Ethics’ several times and God’s Extraordinary Ethic ‘treat people with kindness regardless of how they have treated you.’ Many applications of this at school and work.”

C. Elder 4

1. “Seeing Bethany Community Church develop and foster a church-wide culture that embraces the sufficiency and superiority of the Gospel and God’s Word [has been the most exciting part of the church plant.]”
2. “[The strengths of our church are...] a humble pastor that views himself as one of a team of solid elders, leadership’s commitment to sound hermeneutics and expository preaching, and a culture of loving, compassionate, personal ministry.”
3. “The Book of Luke (which is what we are studying) will be a fine text [to meet the needs our church has].”
4. “Expository preaching seeks to study the text in the grammatical, historical, literary context to draw out (expose) the intent of the Holy Spirit to the original audience, explain the timeless truths (through biblical/theological & systematic analysis) contained therein and make practical application in the current cultures.”
5. “Not all shepherds are gifted in the area [of preaching], but all need to take responsibility for what is done in the pulpit. All are responsible and accountable to God.”
6. “Last Sunday’s message was about having nothing to offer to come to Christ. I was moved to repent and ask for forgiveness from two people that I’d interacted with in the previous week.”
7. “During discipleship, several times a week, every week [I am helping others apply the truth of God’s Word in their daily lives].”

D. Elder 5

1. “[The three most important qualities of a sermon are] that the hearer is left with the knowledge of his sin and what to do about it (gospel), that it accurately uses scripture in the right context, and that its life application is easily understood.”

2. “Any struggle [in applying sermon messages] usually involves my lack of focus during the sermon.”

E. Elder 6

1. “[Since the church launched, I have enjoyed] seeing people grow in their love for and knowledge of the savior as well as living their faith more consistently as I’ve been involved in shepherding through one-on-one discipleship, leading a care group, and teaching in other venues.”
2. “[The greatest strengths of our church are a] commitment to God’s Word, involvement in mercy ministries/commitment to the less fortunate, and committed and involved elders.”
3. [What are some passages of Scripture that you believe could address the needs of the church?] Luke
4. “[Expository preaching is] taking a passage of scripture and both explaining its meaning and giving application.”
5. [Is it necessary for all elders to be involved in the pulpit ministry?] “It depends on the meaning of involvement. If you mean weekly involvement with the preparation and delivery of sermons, then the answer is no. Not all elders are gifted in this area and scripture seems to show that there were specially gifted and called elders who focused on this task. If you mean regular involvement in the decisions on what is taught and a feeling of ownership over the teaching of the people, then the answer is yes. All elders are responsible for the shepherding of the flock and, when preaching is one of the central means of shepherding in a church, all elders must be involved in its oversight and direction.”
6. “A recent sermon on a tree being known by its fruit has spurred me to more purposefully pursue spiritual conversations with my brother who, though professing Christ, does not live in such a way as would suggest that he actually knows Christ.”
7. “Sadly, I have heard so few sermons in the last four months because of involvement in children’s ministries and travel that I have had to use other sources of teaching in my interaction with others.”

**Sermon 1: Authentic Ministry,
Luke 7:24-28**

A. Pre-Sermon Comments

1. Elder 2
 - a. “As one of the Elders, [I will help apply the sermon by making] sure that our church and all the ministries stay committed to the authentic God-exalting gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Elder 3
 - a. “Sometimes, I am tempted to tell someone how large our church plant is [so this sermon will help me keep the right focus in doing ministry].”
 - b. “My concern [with the sermon draft] is that if people do not perceive themselves as leaders of ministry they may find it [the sermon] informational but not personally applicable.”
3. Elder 5
 - a. “We need to show our ministries have that same connection back to the word of God. We need to be able to show how all of our ministries stand in agreement to the Gospel and that they are in concert with one another.”

B. Post-Sermon Comments

1. Elder 3
 - a. “I felt like this passage required you to ‘reach’ further from the central passage for what we can learn from it or the application.”

Sermon 2: The Heart of Unbelief, Luke 7:29-35

A. Pre-Sermon Comments

1. Elder 2
 - a. “I like how you explain the difference between simple doubt (which we all have from time to time) and unbelief that is defiance and rejection of Christ.”
 - b. “As an elder, I need to continually repent of my sins first before I teach others the importance of individual repentance of sin in the life of the true believer.”

B. Post-Sermon Comments

1. Elder 1
 - a. “Cough was distracting.”
2. Elder 2
 - a. “I didn’t hear a clear gospel presentation on how we could appropriate... forgiveness.”

**Sermon 3: Forgiveness and Worship,
Luke 7:36-50**

A. Pre-Sermon Comments

1. Elder 3
 - a. “Help the congregation see how we are like Simon—both in the way we embrace Christ (not fully but keeping Him at a distance) and often judge others.”
2. Elder 5
 - a. “Be careful with wording. Scripture was ambiguous when describing the sin of the woman, so make sure you are careful as well.”
3. Elder 6
 - a. “Principle 2 [‘As we grow in our understanding of Christ’s forgiveness, we grow in our love for Him’] has to be understood for the rest [of the principles] to make sense. Given the diverse backgrounds of our attendees, there will be many who need help understanding this.”

B. Post-Sermon Comments: N/A

**Sermon 4: Hearing the Word, Part 1,
Luke 8:1-21**

A. Pre-Sermon Comments

1. Elder 2
 - a. “I’m so glad you are ending with a clear presentation of the gospel! In a church our size I’m sure there are some that are not saved and some others who think they are but don’t really understand the true gospel!”

2. Elder 6

- a. “Good explanation of the use and meaning of parables, especially given the tendency to over-interpret.”
- b. “Spend plenty of time on the last item: proclaiming the gospel.”

B. Post-Sermon Comments

1. Elder 2

- a. “Great clear explanation of what the TRUE gospel is!!!”
- b. “When you have us stand and read God’s Word, it has been awhile since you told the people why we stand to read it [in honor of His Word]. On that same point, have you thought of saying ‘to stand if you are able’ . . . ?”
- c. “Have an elder down front again to help anyone [who wishes to respond to the gospel].”

2. Elder 3

- a. “I thought some of the introduction was distracting from the main topic [opening illustration, discussion of Luke’s treatment of women in Scripture].”
- b. “I was very interested when you went through God’s revelation transitioning from mystery to partial revelation to disciples to wide proclamation after the cross.”
- c. “The sermon didn’t have a lot of time to focus on the characteristics of ‘the path’ and hardness of the human heart. I would like to have dwelt some more on how this manifests in the life of people. For instance, religion, legalism, Pharisaism, Catholicism hardens many people’s hearts to the true gospel.”
- d. “This message was helpful to me as I’m trying to work through some hardness of heart in one of my little ones and the seed on the path gave us a visual to talk about.”

3. Elder 6

- a. “The extended focus on the presentation of the gospel was . . . beneficial going into the several weeks we will spend on this parable. I especially appreciated it because my aunt, who is not a believer, was present for the child dedication.”

Sermon 5: The Tragedy of Temporary Faith, Luke 8-21

A. Pre-Sermon Comments

1. Elder 2
 - a. “This heart withers when tested reminds me of what Peter says about [Christians suffering] in 1 Peter 2:21; 4:1, 12-13.”
2. Elder 3
 - a. “I agree with the dangers in how we understand the way the word ‘believe’ is being used . . . [It is not indicating] true belief . . . was later invalidated.”
3. Elder 4
 - a. “[There is a] burden on the teacher (parent, disciple, pastor/teacher, etc.) to make every effort to teach biblical truths effectively (Neh 8:8).”
 - b. “Great message, I’m looking forward to the responses.”
4. Elder 6
 - a. “The emphasis on what ‘belief’ means in this part of the parable is good. It addresses a particular need in our body.”

B. Post-Sermon Comments

1. Elder 2
 - a. “I don’t know if you emphasized enough that we cannot lose our salvation? Are you saying that we cannot fall way from our faith (i.e., the prodigal son)? I don’t think so!”
 - b. “Did you give the plan of salvation at the end?”
2. Elder 4
 - a. “I thought the dating analogy was very effective.”
 - b. I think there are scriptures like Romans 10:13 that can seem contradictory to your point that a person who confesses may not in the end be saved—perhaps could address that.”

**Sermon 6: Choking on Riches,
Luke 8:1-21**

A. Pre-Sermon Comments

1. Elder 2

- a. “My view is . . . my tithe (10% of the gross as a minimum) goes to the local church, then I am free to give over and above to building funds, other missionaries, parachurch ministries, Christians schools, etc.”

2. Elder 3

- a. “I think that the message loses some of its focus [on the original message] as it delves into the philosophies and strategies of giving to parachurch versus church, giving to missionaries personally versus through the church, and keeping the church central to our giving.”
- b. “I also think living out our faith, serving others is a much lower priority than the things which promote the career. It’s a rare thing to turn down a promotion because it will consume too much of our time and energy, even more rare to let go of a ‘good job’ to regain time and energy for ministry.”

3. Elder 4

- a. “Great opening illustration.”
- b. “I’m pickin’ up what you’re layin’ down, Bro.” [email, not survey]
- c. “More than enough content—didn’t need more.”

4. Elder 6

- a. “The only question I have about the sermon is that it only focuses on one of the three definitions of the thorns given in verse 14. ‘Cares’ . . . and ‘pleasures of life’ are given equal billing with ‘riches’ in the explanation of the parable. Is it faithful to the text to deal with only one of these [riches]?”

B. Post-Sermon Comments

1. Elder 2

- a. “You’re doing a fine job, Daniel!”

Sermon 7: The Grounds of Biblical Assurance, Luke 8:1-21

A. Pre-Sermon Comments

1. Elder 1 [via phone conversation]
 - a. “Assurance is an area that needs to be touched on quite a bit. Folks in our church may be dealing with a sin that makes them question their salvation. Of course they need to turn from that sin, but Satan can use that sin to beat down a believer even more. Good to help people see the biblical grounds for assurance.”
2. Elder 2
 - a. “I will reinforce this [truth] with the men’s bible study guys.”
3. Elder 3 [via phone conversation]
 - a. “I’m currently memorizing parts of 2 Corinthians. I would emphasize the Holy Spirit’s work in the process of assurance as well. Ask, ‘How do you know you are experiencing the Holy Spirit’s presence in your life?’”
4. Elder 5 [via phone conversation]
 - a. “These first three soils aren’t hard and fast categories. Some may be trying to fit their family members into the hard soil or the rocky soil. But there is a lot of overlap.”
 - b. “Make sure you mention sufficiency and its relationship to sufficiency. A person who adds truth to Scripture can erode their assurance of the gospel and God’s Word.”
5. Elder 6 [via phone conversation]
 - a. “This is a good focus for two groups of people: those who don’t have a point in time that they can point to as the moment when they were saved but are saved *and* those who think they can point to an event but aren’t holding fast now.”

B. Post-Sermon Comments

1. Elder 4
 - a. “Limit amount of main points to body and allow more time for application points.”

- b. “Some opening/introductions are half of a sermon. [They] should have some note space. [They] should reduce the rest of the sermon or limit intro.”
2. Elder 5
 - a. “Your gestures are a little too repetitive.”
 3. Elder 6
 - a. “It was clear that points 2-4 were tied to specific parts of the text, but point one, though all true, was not so clearly tied to the text. I think it was there (especially when you include v. 15 as a prelude to 16–21) but the source of that point did not seem clearly defined in the text. I don’t think that it should have been excluded, only better defined.”

Post-Series Comments

A. Elder 2

1. “[Elders do not necessarily need to be in] the pastor’s preparation of the message, but we are accountable to listen for error and confront when error is found. We are to be like the Berean Christian (Acts 17:11) and search the Scriptures that are taught and advise if necessary.”
2. “Through this written evaluation process of Pastor Daniel’s preaching, I have been able to make comments, critiques, and suggestions that I would not normally make. [I am not sure if they made an impact on the preaching ministry], you would have to ask Daniel.”
3. “I know there some [suggestions I gave that were used] but I can’t remember what they were.”
4. “It was very interesting to see the process that Daniel went through to prepare for his messages. It was enjoyable to get a sneak-peak of what the message was about before. But the most important part was just being involved as a lay leader in the preaching of God’s Word. This is something that I have never done before in the 30+ years I have been saved.”
5. “It did take extra time to do both the pre & post surveys each week, but it was time well spent.”
6. “This process did help me read the passage before the sermon and review my notes after the sermon.”

7. "I would like to continue this from time to time."
8. "I have applied the truth that Daniel has preached in my own life, with my wife, with a couple we are mentoring, with the men in my Bible study, and with other individuals in church."

B. Elder 3

1. "I think all spiritual shepherds should provide honest feedback to the preaching pastor on specific messages and about the general content over a series or longer period. I'd be honored if you ask for occasional input, [but] not necessarily involved in weekly preparation."
2. "I don't have a major role [in the preaching ministry of BCC] but do provide input and feedback on series/passage selection. I need to be more diligent to discuss those rare times where I have difficulty with a sermon but I usually try to mention sermons I find particularly helpful."
3. "I learned some things about how to lay a better foundation when I'm preparing to teach."
4. "I had a hard time getting my input turned in on time so I felt guilty."
5. [How would you characterize the amount of work you put into sermons over the past two months?] On some, about 30-60 minutes."
6. "The Luke series has been impacting the way in which I think . . . One example is that too much to get done at work with too few resources often brings me stress and negative outlook. The series has continually brought my perspective back to God's Word. It has also provided help in talking with my girls. For example, last week [we talked about] pursuing the author of the truth."

C. Elder 4

1. [How would you describe your impact upon the preaching ministry of BCC?] "Pastor knows he will be accountable and is careful . . . he is personally driven to be solidly biblical."
2. "I can speak into the preparation [of the sermons] and comment afterwards at any time."
3. [Can you think of specific suggestions you made that were utilized in the preaching ministry over the past seven weeks?] "Yes."

4. [What were some of the things you enjoyed most about the process of participating in sermon preparation?] “The exposure to the process of expository sermon-prep.”
5. [What were some of the things you enjoyed the least?] “Having a limited amount of time to devote to the process.”

D. Elder 5

1. “[I would define expository preaching as] teaching through scripture, keeping to its original context to the original audience. Not that it can’t reference other scripture, because it should to . . . [ensure] its interpretation does not contradict any other scripture.”
2. “[All spiritual shepherds should be involved in the pulpit ministry] in some way. All teaching at Bethany Community has to be tied together. I think all the shepherds need to be on the same page when it comes to what is taught. I don’t think at my former church we had like-mindedness on the elder board. I don’t think they all necessarily have to influence what is taught in the pulpit, but they do have to propagate what is taught in the pulpit, so they have to be like minded.”
3. “I really don’t like surveys . . . really.”

E. Elder 6

1. “It is necessary for all elders to be *responsible* for the pulpit ministry as with any other ministry of the church. The week-to-week involvement of those not directly preaching will vary from elder to elder and time to time, but all are responsible. Involvement involves providing feedback on sermons as needed, communicating ideas for issues in the congregation that might be addressed by a future passage, etc.”
2. “My involvement impacted me as I interacted more thoroughly with the text before hearing the sermon. I believe that some of my comments positively affected the direction of certain points and applications. I hope my involvement was an encouragement to the pastor.”
3. “In discussing the doctrine of assurance, I suggested that it be applied to those who don’t struggle with feeling assured but perhaps should in addition to applying it to those who don’t feel assured. Also, suggesting the broader context of the seed that grew but was choked on the weeds beyond the main focus of riches (also pleasures and worries).”

4. “[The project] helped me sense my responsibility as an elder for this ministry. It aided in my own spiritual life as I considered the scriptures involved and their meaning/application.”
5. “I’m not sure that there was anything I didn’t enjoy, but I certainly struggled to find the time to adequately participate. . . . I was able to give about an hour a week at most to considering the text and the outline of the sermon and communicating my thoughts.”
6. “Presenting an outline of the sermon each week to the elders seems beneficial on multiple levels. It creates a sense of accountability on the part of the one who preaches and a sense of responsibility on the part of the other elders. Weekly, formalized feedback is probably unrealistic given the work, family, and ministry responsibilities of the lay elders (though if there were a pressing need, the time could be found for short durations). Lay elder involvement in the weekly preaching ministry is probably more realistically reactive (responding to what is written in the outline or said from the pulpit if it causes concern or sparks a thought that might be valuable). Other involvement is probably bigger picture: general direction (like when we talked about broader applications about how our church can be involved in God’s love and care for the outcast in the early chapters of Luke), next series (what book will follow Luke), and major issues (like if sermons stopped being expository or started to focus on the unsaved, etc).”
7. “In a sermon early in the series, the gospel was a major focus and one of the applications in the outline that struck me was the question of whether I am a hindrance to my own Gospel conversations. It helped me look at some of the ways in which I interact with family members who are not saved and evaluate how my relationship with them might negatively impact my gospel ministry to them. Also, the emphasis the last two Sundays on knowing and holding fast to the truth has encouraged me to return to the practice of scripture memorization as I have not been doing well with this lately.”

APPENDIX 8
SAMPLE OUTLINE

“Choking on Riches”
Hearing the Word, Part 3: Luke 8:1-21
Rough Draft of Sermon Outline

The following rough draft represents my Tuesday evening thoughts on this passage. I will continue revising and honing the message over the next several days.

Central idea of this sermon: Abandon the world and cling to Christ.

Intro

In 1857, *SS Central America*, a steamer bound for New York left port in Colon, Panama. It was carrying nearly 10 tons of gold and 578 people, 101 crew and 477 passengers. Hurricane. Begins to sink. Some passengers held on to gold and drowned. Others were willing to throw gold away in order to live.

My goal for our time this morning would be that you would fling your hard earned treasure on the deck and cling to the person of Jesus Christ.

Personal: We all struggle with a love of material things. Manifests itself in both spending and hoarding. Love of world leads to life but death.

Consider Philippians 3:8-10: gain Christ! **Central Idea of the Text:** So, brothers and sisters, my encouragement to you this morning is: *lose the world and gain Christ.*

Exposition

Four things to note about these hearts:

1. Hears
2. Goes on their way. Passivity. There is not a decision on their part to pursue Christ in faith, nor does it seem that they recognize the value of the message.
3. Choked by three things (all modified by phrase, “of life”):
 - a. Cares of life: heart troubled based on lack of access to physical resources.

Illustration: Debt commission and our unwillingness to do hard things.

- b. Riches of life: this is referring to those physical resources themselves. They are loved and treasured. This is the sports, gadgets, cars, homes, numbers on a spreadsheet.
- c. Pleasures of life: we've surrendered to the things this world offers. Ease and satisfaction becomes the driving force and motivation for what we do. The tv's, computers, etc.
- d. Summary:

First, collectively, these three things similar to pleasures described elsewhere in Luke: 7:25; 12:19; and 16:19.

Second, we all can be tempted to fall into each of these categories. We love security, the treasures themselves, and the pleasures of life.

- 4. Result: Fruit does not mature. No edible fruit. Same situation as the first two soils.

Transitional application / pastoral concern: For those concerned regarding salvation, your concern is a good sign! Heb 6:9: Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.

For the believer, there is going to be a desire to be brought into greater conformity to the character of God when it comes to our finances...to actively resist the thorns that creep up around us.

Questions to Test Your Heart

- 1. Do you value Christ above all else?

Give you some Scriptures for your meditation on this great truth. Ps 16:5; Ps 27:4; Ps 70:4; 1 Peter 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4-6; Col 3:11

- 2. Have you consciously rejected the values of this world?

Haggai 1

Two masters—they can't both be served; your heart cannot be divided; the demands of Christ and the world are mutually exclusive. World says do _____ with your finances; Christ says do _____.

Illustration: Often, Christian financial counseling / radio advice still betrays a love for worldly resources, even though offering good advice. Be careful that you're not trading one idol (spending) for another (amassing wealth).

3. Does your heart find its security in God?

Luke 12. Parable of fleeting nature of wealth. Your heart cannot find security in the things of this world.

4. Have you recognized that all you own is God's?

Sometimes we have this idea that we give God back something when we tithe. God, you get 10%--even the first 10% --and I'll handle the rest. I've done my duty.

Here's the startling truth we have to come to grips with: everything we have belongs to God!

Psalm 50:9-15

⁹ I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. ¹⁰ For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹ I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. ¹² "If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. ¹³ Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? ¹⁴ Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, ¹⁵ and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."

In other words, God doesn't need you to offer Him anything. It's all His. And giving Him a couple bucks or a bull doesn't remove you from being under His great authority.

5. Are you being faithful in how you manage God's resources?

Here is what God wants you to be doing with His resources:

- a. Paying your taxes
- b. Providing for your family
 - Immediate
 - Extended
- c. Sacrificially Supporting the Local Church
 - Acts model: people giving; elders directing
 - Why this is important: the local church is the institution through which Christ has said the gospel will be proclaimed and people strengthened.
 - A word about supporting parachurch ministries and foreign missions: Questions to ask:
 - Is this leading to the establishment of or strengthening of a local church?
 - Is this ministry or minister under the authority of a local church (sending church and wherever they are ministering)?

Assure that BCC's supported missionaries are under authority and committed to local church ministry.

- d. Helping those in need (even this could be a subset of letter c, in some ways)

Jesus in Mark 10:21 to the rich, young ruler, recognizing that he was being choked by his riches.

- e. Enjoying His blessings (be careful with this principle! Joy for the Christian doesn't look like the world's joy!)

Conclusion: Return to the life and death choice one makes: cling to the world or embrace the surpassing value of Christ.

APPENDIX 9

PRE- AND POST-PROJECT SURVEYS

Table A10. Pre-project survey responses of the elders.

Num	Statement	Elder						Avg	StDev
		1	2	3	4	5	6		
1	I desire for a sermon to impact me both emotionally and intellectually.	N/A	4	5	3	3	5	4	1.00
2	A Sunday morning sermon should be designed so that it is directed primarily at the unbeliever.	N/A	2	2	2	1	1	1.6	0.55
3	Since they are no longer living, it is impossible to know what a biblical author's message to the original audience was.	N/A	2	1	1	1	1	1.2	0.45
4	Preaching expositional sermons is the best way for a pastor to fulfill his biblical mandate to preach the whole counsel of God.	N/A	5	4	5	4	4	4.4	0.55
5	A sermon should spend time exploring what the passage meant to the original audience.	N/A	4	4	4	5	4	4.2	0.45
6	Any preaching based on God's truth as found in His Word is expository preaching.	N/A	1	2	5	2	2	2.4	1.52
7	The ideal length of a sermon is less than twenty-five minutes.	N/A	3	1	1	1	2	1.6	0.89
8	Topical preaching is more effective than expository preaching because it is more sensitive to the needs of the congregation.	N/A	1	2	1	1	2	1.4	0.55
9	A sermon is more credible if the pastor cites secular sources, such as scientists or philosophers, to support the teaching of Scripture.	N/A	1	1	1	2	1	1.2	0.45
10	A sermon should focus on a variety of texts when dealing with a subject instead of looking at merely one passage of Scripture.	N/A	2	5	2	5	4	3.5	1.73
11	Any preaching that goes through a passage verse by-verse is expository preaching.	N/A	2	2	1	3	2	2	0.71

Table A10—Continued. Pre-project survey responses of the elders.

12	The difference between expository preaching and topical preaching is primarily organization of material and not philosophical or theological.	N/A	2	1	1	1	2	1.4	0.55
13	Expository preaching is more like a lecture than a sermon.	N/A	1	1	1	1	2	1.2	0.45
14	A sermon should always be expository.	N/A	2	1	1	4	2	2	1.22

Table A11. Post-project survey responses of the elders.

Num	Statement	Elder						Avg	StDev
		1	2	3	4	5	6		
1	I desire for a sermon to impact me both emotionally and intellectually.	N/A	4	4	4	3	4	3.8	0.45
2	A Sunday morning sermon should be designed so that it is directed primarily at the unbeliever.	N/A	2	2	1	1	1	1.4	0.55
3	Since they are no longer living, it is impossible to know what a biblical author's message to the original audience was.	N/A	2	1	1	1	1	1.2	0.45
4	Preaching expositional sermons is the best way for a pastor to fulfill his biblical mandate to preach the whole counsel of God.	N/A	5	5	5	4	4	4.6	0.55
5	A sermon should spend time exploring what the passage meant to the original audience.	N/A	4	4	5	5	4	4.4	0.55
6	Any preaching based on God's truth as found in His Word is expository preaching.	N/A	1	1	1	2	2	1.4	0.55
7	The ideal length of a sermon is less than twenty-five minutes.	N/A	1	2	1	1	1	1.2	0.45
8	Topical preaching is more effective than expository preaching because it is more sensitive to the needs of the congregation.	N/A	1	1	1	1	2	1.2	0.45
9	A sermon is more credible if the pastor cites secular sources, such as scientists or philosophers, to support the teaching of Scripture.	N/A	1	1	1	2	1	1.2	0.45
10	A sermon should focus on a variety of texts when dealing with a subject instead of looking at merely one passage of Scripture.	N/A	2	4	4	5	2	3.4	1.34

Table A11—Continued. Post-project survey responses of the elders.

11	Any preaching that goes through a passage verse-by-verse is expository preaching	N/A	2	1	1	1	2	1.8	1.84
12	The difference between expository preaching and topical preaching is primarily organization of material and not philosophical or theological	N/A	2	2	1	1	2	1.6	0.55
13	Expository preaching is more like a lecture than a sermon.	N/A	1	3	1	1	2	1.6	0.89
14	A sermon should always be expository.	N/A	2	2	2	4	2	2.4	0.89

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ABSTRACT

INCORPORATING LAY LEADERSHIP INTO THE EXPOSITORY PREACHING MINISTRY AT BETHANY COMMUNITY CHURCH, WASHINGTON, ILLINOIS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011
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This research project sought to incorporate lay leaders in the preparation, evaluation, and application of expository messages at Bethany Community Church, Washington, Illinois. Chapter 1 introduces the goals for and an overview of the project.

Chapter 2 explores the relationship between the pastor and the plurality of shepherds from a biblical perspective. It considers the prominent teaching role of a single pastor/elder while also contending that all elders bear responsibility for the pulpit ministry of the church.

Chapter 3 examines the dynamics of teams and how they accomplish tasks, looking at several examples of churches seeking to incorporate teams into the pulpit ministry.

Chapter 4 details the actual carrying out of the project.

In chapter 5 the project is evaluated, concluding that the research project proved to be effective in incorporating lay leadership into the expository preaching ministry at Bethany Community Church in Washington, Illinois

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