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IMPROVING SERMON CONCLUSIONS IN EXPOSITORY
PREACHING AT HOLLY BAPTIST CHURCH,
CORINTH, MISSISSIPPI

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IMPROVING SERMON CONCLUSIONS IN EXPOSITORY
PREACHING AT HOLLY BAPTIST CHURCH,
CORINTH, MISSISSIPPI

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To Elizabeth,
my partner, my love

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
PREFACE	viii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose	1
Goals	1
Context	2
Rationale	6
Definitions and Limitations	7
Research Methodology	8
2. THE AUTHORITY OF TEACHING GOD’S WORD	10
The Old Testament Shows How the Word of God Is Authoritative And Can Change Lives	10
In the Gospels, Jesus Believed that the Word of God Is Authoritative And Can Change Lives	18
The Book of Acts Shows How the Word of God Is Authoritative And Can Change Lives	20
The Apostle Paul Shows How the Word of God Is Authoritative And Can Change Lives	21
Summary	32

Chapter	Page
3. GUIDELINES FOR IMPROVING CONCLUSIONS IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING	33
Creating Good Conclusions	34
Purposes of Good Conclusions	35
Guidelines for Good Conclusions	36
Effective Ways to Conclude a Sermon	39
Sermon Conclusions and the Invitation	46
Conclusion	51
4. A PRACTICAL PROJECT OF IMPROVING CONCLUSIONS IN EXPOSITORY MESSAGES AT HOLLY BAPTIST CHURCH	52
Enlistment of Project Participants	53
Project Part 1: Introductory Survey	54
Project Part 2: Teaching on Expository Preaching	56
Project Part 3: Evaluating Sermon Conclusions	59
Project Part 4: Jonah Sermon Series	65
Project Part 5: Post-Evaluation Survey	73
Conclusion	74
5. PROJECT EVALUATION	75
Introduction	75
Evaluation of the Project's Purpose	75
Evaluation of the Project's Goals	76
Strengths of the Project	86
Weaknesses of the Project	88

	Page
What I Would Do Differently	89
Theological Reflection	90
Personal Reflection	90
Conclusion	92
 Appendix	
1. Project Schedule	93
2. Week 3 Questionnaire.	94
3. Sermon Series Response Form	96
4. Five Main Parts of an Expository Sermon	99
5. Week 3 Survey Results	101
6. Week 14 Survey Results	106
7. Week 3 and Week 14 Survey Comparisons	110
8. Jonah 1:1-3	114
9. Jonah 1:4-9	117
10. Jonah 1:10-16	121
11. Jonah 2:1-10	123
12. Jonah 3:1-10	126
13. Jonah 4:1-11	128
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 131

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Survey results for question 1	77
2. Survey results for question 2	77
3. Survey results for question 3	78
4. Survey results for question 4	79
5. Survey results for question 5	80
6. Survey results for question 6	81
7. Survey results for question 7	82
8. Survey results for question 8	83
9. Survey results for question 9	84
10. Survey results for question 10	85

PREFACE

This D.Min. project would never have been completed without the help and support of many others. Dr. Robert Plummer, my supervising professor, not only challenged me to think academically and accurately, but also encouraged me along the way. Aplus Edits of Louisville, Kentucky, edited the format of the written portion of this project, which saved me hours of frustration.

I owe a tremendous amount of gratitude to Holly Baptist Church in Corinth, Mississippi. For the last five years, they have allowed me to fulfill this academic degree. I am grateful for their financial support and continued prayers along the way.

I will never be able to put into words the amount of gratitude that my wife, Elizabeth, deserves. She is my inspiration and the love of my life. She carried a humble spirit and was a constant encourager. I am also thankful for our three children, John Michael, Joleigh, and Joel. They were with me every step of the way. Although there were times that I had to be away to study and write, they were my biggest supporters. Joleigh and Joel were born while I was working on this academic degree. Joleigh was born with Down Syndrome. She had many challenges to overcome early in life, but God has been faithful. She is an inspiration to us all. I am blessed beyond measure.

And finally, I am thankful for the grace of God. Philippians 1:6 reads, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it

until the day of Jesus Christ.” It is only by His grace that I am able to do anything for Him.

John Michael Boler

Corinth, Mississippi

May 2013

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to improve sermon conclusions in expository preaching at Holly Baptist Church in Corinth, Mississippi.

Goals

This project focused on four goals that served as the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of this project. This first goal was to learn principles for creating good conclusions. Every sermon must have a solid conclusion. Preachers usually know where they want their sermon to end; however, getting there can be difficult. This goal answers the question, “How do I conclude a sermon?”

The second goal was to evaluate the use of different types of conclusions. Is the use of illustration the best way to conclude a sermon? What about the use of quotations or statistics? Should the final point of the sermon be the conclusion? Should humor ever be used during the conclusion? This goal sought to answer these questions.

The third goal of this project was to select and train an evaluation team from Holly Baptist. I selected eight members from Holly Baptist Church. This team watched via DVD four expository sermons from various preachers. They evaluated and discussed each sermon and conclusion. They listened to six sermons preached at Holly Baptist

Church. They also evaluated and discussed each sermon and conclusion. I met with this group on a weekly basis. I looked for both positive and negative feedback.

The fourth goal of this project was to become a better expositor of the Word of God. At the beginning of the project, I asked the evaluation team to take a pre-project survey. This survey evaluated their thoughts and views concerning expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. At the conclusion of the project, I asked the evaluation team to take the same survey. I personally evaluated the answers from each survey. By the end of the project, I hoped all areas of my preaching have been sharpened.

Context

Holly Baptist Church is located in the Wenasoga community of Corinth, Mississippi. Wenasoga, named for an Indian woman, is located just to the northwest of Corinth, Mississippi. Wenasoga is about three miles from the Tennessee state line.

In 1857, a railroad known then as the Memphis and Charleston was completed through Corinth, Wenasoga, and on to Memphis, Tennessee. The railroad became one of the means of making a living in Wenasoga. During the Civil War, the Confederate and Union armies passed through Wenasoga. In fact, the famous “Battle of Corinth” started just a short distance south of the railroad in Wenasoga. The war badly damaged the railroad system. In 1873, after much repair, the railroad became the Southern Railroad system.¹

By the turn of the century, Wenasoga had a gin, grist mill, saw mill, and seed thresh operation. Major businesses included the selling of crossties, lumber, logs, and

¹*The History of Alcorn County Mississippi*, Alcorn County Historical Association (Dallas: National ShareGraphics, 1983), 102.

cotton seeds. Everything was centered around the railroad system. The railroad business would thrive until the 1960s. After the roads were improved, power lines installed, and communications improved, small trade areas such as Wenasoga began to decline.

Wenasoga is located three miles from the city of Corinth. All major businesses are located in Corinth. Most people today work either in Corinth or drive about an hour and a half to Memphis, Tennessee, for their employment.

In 1980, Wenasoga community had a population of 1,775. In 2007, Wenasoga community had a population of 2,147. The population has barely changed in the past six years.²

Holly Baptist Church was first known as Cane Creek Baptist Church. Cane Creek was organized in 1880. There are no records of the name of the first pastor. Neither are there any records available of the church's ministry from the time of organization until 1892. Cane Creek Baptist Church was a member of the Tishomingo Baptist Association, which consisted of churches in Alcorn, Prentiss, and Tishomingo counties and a few neighboring churches in Tennessee.

In 1892, Cane Creek had fifty people enrolled in Sunday school with an average attendance of thirty. The pastor's salary for one year was \$33. The value of the church property was \$500. For the first several years, services were held on the first Sunday of each month. In 1920, the church included 126 members. During this time also, the Tishomingo Baptist Association was divided into smaller associations, and Cane

²“Demographics of Holly Baptist Church from 1997-2007,” Mississippi Baptist Convention, Corinth, MS, 2007.

Creek Baptist Church became a part of the Alcorn Baptist Association.³

Throughout the next several years, Cane Creek Baptist Church had increases and decreases in church membership. In 1935 there were one hundred members. This was the first year the church contributed to the Cooperative Program. The total amount was \$15.

A historic meeting took place on September 11, 1941, during the Alcorn Associational meeting at Antioch Baptist Church. During this meeting, a motion was made and approved for Cane Creek Baptist Church to use the name Holly Baptist Church. From that time, Cane Creek has been known as Holly.

Plans for a pastor's home were begun in 1950. The government had instructed the bank not to loan any money for new construction. According to church history, the money was borrowed from individuals in the church. The church rented land to plant cotton, and the members worked and used the income to pay off the debts. July 25, 1954, was a day of dedication for the parsonage, which was originally a white frame house. E. C. McCord was pastor at the time of the dedication.

During the 1950s the church continued to grow, and there was a desperate need for more space. Construction of a new sanctuary began in 1958. Growth continued in the 1960s and an educational building was built in 1968. After these buildings were paid in full, the church decided to build a recreation building. This building was completed in 1974.

³“Church Business Meeting Minutes,” Holly Baptist Church archives, Corinth, MS, June 1920.

The years 1989-1993 saw major growth at Holly Baptist Church. Philip Cooper served as pastor during these years. Sunday school average went from 114 to 159. Morning worship went from 135 to 175. Offerings during this time nearly tripled. In 1993, Holly voted to build a larger sanctuary. This is the sanctuary that is currently being used today.⁴

From 1994 to 2002, Holly Baptist church began to plateau. Average attendance stayed around 100-120 in Sunday school. Morning worship stayed around 150. In 2002, the church began to grow again. Tony Morrow served as pastor from 2002-2007. Sunday school average attendance began to reach 140. Morning worship average attendance reached 160. In 2003, Holly voted to build a new gymnasium directly across from the sanctuary. This building had three total phases. All three phases are complete.

Today, Holly Baptist Church has a sanctuary that seats around 250. Our gymnasium/fellowship hall is now called the Holly Life Center. All education and other ministries are located in this building.

I have served as pastor of Holly Baptist Church since July of 2007. God truly opened the door to allow my family and me to serve at Holly. When I first met with the pastor search committee, I soon realized their desire to see God work in marvelous ways. I often tell people that Holly Baptist Church was in a state of spiritual renewal while they

⁴“Church Bulletin for Dedication Service,” Holly Baptist Church archives, Corinth, MS, October 31, 1993.

were in the pastor search process. When my family came, we joined the spiritual renewal that was taking place at Holly.

Over the last five years, God has overwhelmed us with his blessings and grace. Sunday School average attendance has gone from 125 to 230. Morning worship attendance has risen from 165 to 290. We have started an additional Sunday morning worship service. These two services are allowing more people to come and worship. During the past five years, we have seen over 120 people follow the Lord in believer's baptism and seen over 100 other additions to the church. While Holly Baptist Church has a memorable past, I believe its greatest days are in the near future.

Rationale

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)⁵, Paul writes, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul writes, "For by grace you are saved by faith and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast." These two verses explain that a faith response is necessary for salvation. How do we receive faith? Faith comes through hearing the Word of God. Therefore, when the Word of God is spoken, people have an opportunity to be saved. One of the main tasks of a preacher is to preach in a way that will allow people to, by faith, accept Jesus as their Savior.

Preachers must preach in a way that will draw people to Christ. Improving conclusions in expository messages will focus on finishing the message strongly. What preachers say when they are concluding their message may have a direct impact on

⁵Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New King James Version.

whether someone will follow Jesus by faith. If the mission is to see souls saved, then the conclusion of the message must be said in a way that will lead into a public invitation to follow Christ.

I chose to write on improving conclusions in expository messages to improve a weakness of my own. Through this writing and research, I want to be able to conclude my messages in a more effective way. Therefore, this project will provide an educational benefit. It will also provide an opportunity to develop my preaching skills and make me become a better expositor of the Word of God.

Definitions and Limitations

In this project, I used the following definition of expository preaching from Greg Heisler's book *Spirit-Led Preaching*:

Expository preaching is the Spirit-empowered proclamation of biblical truth derived from the illumination guidance of the Holy Spirit by means of a verse-by-verse exposition of the Spirit-inspired text, with a view to applying the text by means of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, first to the preacher's own heart, and then to the hearts of those who hear, culminating in an authentic and powerful witness to the living Word, Jesus Christ, and obedient Spirit-filled living.⁶

The limitations of this project are as follows. First, this project lasted fifteen weeks. Weeks 1 and 2 consisted of sermon preparation. During week 3, I met with my evaluation team and had them complete an introductory survey. Weeks 4 through 7 consisted of watching four sermons that each concluded in a different way. Weeks 8 through 13 consisted of the project sermon series. During week 14, I met with my

⁶Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 21.

evaluation team and they completed a post-survey. Week 15 consisted of my own reflection of the overall evaluation of this project.

The second limitation was who would participate in the fifteen week project. I selected 8 people who were members of Holly Baptist Church. My selection of only 8 team members was based on the fact that more could be accomplished with a small group. They viewed different sermons via DVD. They also evaluated a six-week sermon series that I preached. This team was committed followers of Christ. This team had a love for the Word of God and a love for the preaching of the Word of God. Each team member was at least sixteen years of age. Maturity is the main reason for the age limitation.

Research Methodology

The purpose of this project was to improve conclusions in expository messages. During week 3 of this project, an introductory survey was distributed to a selected team. This survey measured their knowledge in the areas of expository preaching and conclusions.

Weeks 4 through 7 consisted of my selected team watching four sermons via DVD. Each week consisted of watching one DVD sermon. I met with the team each week. The team completed the sermon response form, and we discussed the sermon together.

During weeks 8 through 13, the selected team listened to a six-week sermon series preached at Holly Baptist Church. Each sermon was evaluated using the same sermon response form that was used in weeks 4 through 7. I met with the team each

week. The team completed the sermon response form, and we discussed the sermon for that week.

During week 14, the survey that was distributed during week 3 was used once again. The goal for this survey is to see if any changes have occurred within the team's understanding of expository preaching and conclusions.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a brief introduction to the project of improving conclusions in expository preaching at Holly Baptist Church in Corinth, Mississippi. Much of the foundational work for this project was processed in this chapter. The concluding chapters develop in detail what was planned and processed in chapter one.

CHAPTER 2

THE AUTHORITY OF TEACHING GOD’S WORD

Chapter 1 introduced the subject of improving sermon conclusions in expository preaching at Holly Baptist Church in Corinth, Mississippi. If the goal of a sermon conclusion from an expository message is to be powerful and effective, then there must first be an authority concerning the teaching of God’s Word. This chapter provides biblical accounts of people who had an authoritative view concerning the Word of God.

The Old Testament Shows How the Word of God Is Authoritative and Can Change Lives

Ezra 7:10, Ezra writes, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” Ezra was a Jewish priest, a scribe, and a Persian governmental secretary during the time of the restoration of Jewish life in Jerusalem after the Babylonian Exile.

When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem he discovered that the people had fallen into unacceptable practices. He was particularly concerned about marriages with foreign women involving priests, Levites, and chief officials. Ezra went into mourning, fasted, and prayed, citing prophetic prohibitions against mixed marriages.¹ The people

¹ Watson E. Mills, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), s.v. “Ezra,” by David A. Smith.

responded to Ezra's leadership. Moved by Ezra's grief the people responded by freely advocating the severe measure of expelling the foreign wives and their children. Ezra, as the leading religious official, accepted their oaths that they would do as they had covenanted. This was an extreme measure taken by Ezra. It was a measure that he felt was needed for the people of God.²

Ezra 7:10 describes the life and ministry of Ezra. He was a man dedicated and devoted to God. He honored God in every step of his life. Ezra 7:10, the author writes that he "had prepared his heart" which literally means "had set his heart on."³ Ezra dedicated all of himself and all his life to the wonderful ministry of serving God. Ezra was a man of conviction. Ezra was devoted to "seeking" the Law of the Lord. "Seeking" from שׁוֹרֵר, describes a careful search. It means to carefully seek God's word that has been handed down from his ancestors.

Ezra also devoted himself to "doing" the Law of the Lord. Seeking is of little value if one does not also obey God's will, which is known in his commandments. To study or "seek" the law means to determine its implications for daily life. The doer can be no mere demonstrator. He must be what he would have his followers be.⁴ Sermons are much harder to live than they are to preach. Ezra had a conviction to do the Law of the Lord. Ezra was not just a man of words. He also was a man of actions. He walked what he talked. He lived what he preached.

²Ibid.

³Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, New American Commentary, vol. 10 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 129-31.

⁴Ibid.

Ezra 7:10 continues with the phrase “and to teach statutes.” Ezra had prepared his heart to teach the Word of God. He had a conviction that one must faithfully teach the Word of God. Most of the time spent at church involves discipling, nurturing, and teaching. Teaching is not just about imparting facts. Proper teaching involves training in righteousness and motivating believers to love and obey God. Ezra had set his heart to seek the Law of God, to do the Law of God and to teach the Law of God.

Seeking, doing, and teaching are the correct order. God’s revelation has for its purpose the ordering of his people’s lives. Life brings no easy solutions or quick recipes to solve life’s problems. God needs men who have the testimony of Ezra, who will devote their lives to this ministry of seeking, doing, and teaching.

“Statutes” comes from the word קִיָּוָה which refers to statutes or appointed regulation of conduct. “Ordinances” comes from the word, חֻמֵּי, meaning laws, duties, or rights determined by custom and authority. These two words designate the legal emphasis of Ezra, they are used together to refer to all requirements of the Law of God.⁵

Ezra 7:10 is an example for all preachers to follow. Those who desire to be teachers of the Word of God must first seek and study the Word of God. They must seek the Lord with their whole heart. All preachers must have a conviction about the Word of God. Because of their conviction, preachers will study and prepare to hear from the Lord. Conviction must precede teaching. No one should teach unless one has studied and obeyed the Word of God. No one should teach unless one has a conviction about what they are teaching.

⁵Ibid.

Nehemiah 8:1-8 also shows the importance of the Word of God in the life of the people of God. The following text is from Nehemiah 8:1-8:

When the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities. Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose; and beside him, at his right had stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Urijah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah; and at this left hand Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. Then all the people answered, Amen, Amen! While lifting up their hands and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.

This passage tells of a great assembly in which Ezra the priest read the Law of God to the people and of how they were affected by it. The people came to the city from the surrounding countryside, gathered in the large public square near the Water Gate on Jerusalem's eastern side, and listened to Ezra. Ezra mounted a large wooden platform that had been erected for just this occasion, and there, standing by thirteen of the most prominent Levites, he read from the book of the Law from morning until noon.⁶

⁶James Montgomery Boice, *Nehemiah* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 90.

In verse 1 all the people gathered together. The object of that meeting was to restore the altar of burnt offerings and sacrificial worship.⁷

The most remarkable feature about this outdoor meeting was that it appears to have been initiated by the people rather than their leaders.⁸ “They told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses.” They craved for God’s Word as hungry people long for food. These people wanted to hear a Word from God. They had a conviction in their hearts to hear God’s Word.

Verse 3 describes the time of day in which this meeting occurred. The people met and listened to the Word “from morning until midday.” “Morning” comes from the word *אור*, which means the dawn of the day. It refers to the light that appears a good hour before sunrise.⁹ The people stood for about five hours attentively listening to the exposition of the Word of God. The people of Israel had a conviction to hear the Word of God taught. They were “attentive” to the Word of God. “Attentive” means ‘the ears of all the people were’ to the Book of the Law. This Jerusalem congregation clearly expected God to speak directly through the Word he had given to Moses several centuries ago. There was a vitality and urgency about their listening. They were hungry for the Word of God.

In verse 4 the people of Israel come together to hear the preaching of the Word of God. Nothing was going to distract them from the immense blessing they could

⁷Edwin Yamauchi, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, in vol. 4 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 723.

⁸Raymond Brown, *The Message of Nehemiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 129.

⁹*Ibid.*, 129.

receive from God's Word. Ezra stood behind a "platform made of wood." He was visible to everyone in attendance.

In verse 5 the people, convinced and convicted of its authority, rose to their feet. It was an outward expression of their immense reverence for the message of Scripture, a practice still maintained in synagogues and by some churches when the congregation rises for the reading of a biblical passage.¹⁰

In verse 6 the people responded to the message that was being read. There was "praising God." They answered, "Amen, Amen," which connotes the intensity of feeling behind the affirmation. Amen is making something one's own. When someone utters amen," the hearer affirms the wish that God may act, places him under divine judgment, and joins in praise to God.¹¹

The Jerusalem worshippers not only rose to their feet but fell to their knees. "And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground." Recognizing the power of the Word of God, they had no greater desire than to fall before him humbly, gratefully and adoringly. They were like a servant who waits obediently in the presence of a beloved master. It was natural to stand, and then to kneel before the God who was communicating with them directly through his Word. We do not worship the Book, but we adore the God of the Book who addresses us uniquely through it.¹²

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Yamauchi, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 724.

¹²Brown, *The Message of Nehemiah*, 131.

In verse 7 the Levites helped the people to understand the Law. This is an important lesson for all people. Explanation does not have the same authority as the Word of God itself, but it is important since the Bible is not meant only to be heard and revered but also to be understood, assimilated, and obeyed.¹³

Verse 8 is a summary of the worship experience. “They read” is from קרא , which means “to call, proclaim, or to read aloud.”¹⁴ The people gathered in smaller groups and read from the Word of God. The Levites listed in verse 7 were the ones who did the explaining. They explained how the passage related to the issues of their own day. This aspect of the Levites’ ministry was done so effectively that, within a short time, people’s consciences were smitten and they could not help shedding tears. They loved the Word of God. They loved to hear the Word of God. They wanted to hear the teaching of God’s Word. They loved to hear the Word of God explained. When the word was explained, the people were broken.

Ezra 7:10 and Nehemiah 8:1-8 shows the conviction of teaching and hearing the Word of God in the Old Testament. Ezra had a high view of Scripture. It was his life. He wanted the Word of God to control him. The people of Israel were overwhelmed when they heard the Word of God. They were also changed when they heard the Word. They fell on their faces in complete adoration. The lesson is quite clear from these texts. The Word of God can stand alone. When God speaks from his Word, great things will happen. Revival can break out. Churches can be set on fire by simply having a conviction to teach the Word of God and to hear the Word of God.

¹³Boice, *Nehemiah*, 93.

¹⁴Yamauchi, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 724.

The Old Testament contains more examples of people who had a conviction to teach and live by the Word of God. In Joshua 1:8, the Scripture says, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” The children of Israel were preparing to enter the Promised Land. A promise from the Lord was about to be fulfilled. The wandering in the wilderness had ceased. The waiting for the Promised Land was over. They were now ready to move on to see what God had in store for them. But before they were to enter in, the Lord gave Joshua and the children of Israel this command. The Word of God shall never leave your mouth. They must meditate in it day and night. They must obey everything that is written in it. The Lord was telling Joshua that he must have a conviction concerning the Word of God. He must take the Word of God with him everywhere he goes. The Word of God must be in the center of every decision he makes. The Word of God was now to become the life of Joshua. Every great leader of God has a conviction concerning the Word of God.

Psalm 119:30, the writer says, “I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me.” In this passage the writer chooses the way of truth. He records his conviction to live for God. Every child of God will face this decision. Sooner or later every child of God will face a decision to follow the ways of the world; or a decision to follow the ways of the truth. The writer chooses the truth. His conviction in God’s Word causes him to follow God’s Word.

Psalm 119:112, the writer says, “I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes Forever to the very end.” The writer had inclined his heart to live and teach

God's Word. He had a goal in sight. The Word of God gave the writer momentum in life. He never lost sight of the end of the journey. His heart was set on living and teaching God's Word forever. The conviction was to be there for a lifetime.

In the Gospels, Jesus Believed that the Word of God Is Authoritative and Can Change Lives

Luke 24:27, Luke writes, "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures concerning Himself." In this passage Jesus shows how He began with Moses and all the Prophets and expounded from all Scriptures the things concerning Him. While Jesus was here on Earth, he referred to the Scriptures as his source of teaching. He knew the power of the Word of God and how it could change lives. Jesus is the Word of God and He changed lives forever. While Jesus was on the road to Emmaus, he began to teach two disciples about who he is and what the Scriptures say about Him.

The Bible writes that Jesus "expounded" to them in all the Scriptures. "Expounded," is from the word διηρμήνευεν, which means "to interpret."¹⁵ Jesus explained "things concerning himself." How did He accomplish this purpose? The answer is short and simple:

Christ was the substance of every Old Testament sacrifice, ordained in the Law of Moses. Christ was the true Deliverer and King, of whom all the judges and deliverers in Jewish history were types. Christ was the coming Prophet greater than Moses, whose glorious advent filled the pages of prophets. Christ was the true seed of the woman who was to bruise the serpent's head, the true seed in who all nations were to be blessed, the true Shiloh to whom all the people were to be gathered, the

¹⁵A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament, vol.2 The Gospel According to Luke*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 307.

true scape-goat, the true brazen serpent, the true Lamb to which every daily offering pointed, the true High Priest of whom every descent of Aaron was a figure.¹⁶

The Word of God convicts. Luke writes in Luke 24:30-32, “Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, ‘Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while he opened the Scriptures to us?’” These disciples believed in the authority of the Word of God. The Word of God says that their heart burned within them while Jesus talked with them. The disciple’s authority concerning the Word of God caused them to go and tell others what they had seen and heard. The disciples were never the same because the Word of God had changed their lives forever.

John 6 is another example of how the authority of the Word of God changed a life. The context of the end of the chapter concerns many disciples leaving Jesus. The Words of Jesus were too much to bear according to some who were there. In verses 67 and following the Word of God writes, “Then Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’ But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.’” The conviction is evident in the statement made by Simon Peter. He was convicted and convinced that Jesus had the words of eternal life. A different way of life was not an option. Simon Peter wanted to stay close to the words of Jesus.

¹⁶J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 2:501.

The Book of Acts Shows How the Word of God Is Authoritative and Can Change Lives

In Acts 2:42 the Luke writes, “And they continued steadfastly in the doctrine.”

Acts 2:47 Luke writes, “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” The church in Acts 2 was exploding. They were experiencing tremendous growth. What was their secret? What was the cause of their growth? Several aspects caused the church to grow. However, the main reason was the authority concerning the Word of God. It changed the life of the people of God in the church. It also changed people’s lives that were added to the church. God designed the church to be a place where His Word is proclaimed and explained.¹⁷ The early church was continually devoted to the teaching of God’s Word. Only conviction can bring devotion. The early church had a conviction concerning the Word of God. Because of their conviction, they were devoted. Because of their devotion to the Word of God, many souls were saved.

As the early church continued to grow, the Word of God was continuing to change lives. In Acts 13, the Apostle Paul was preaching in Antioch. Paul started his sermon with the story of Moses and the children of Israel. He continued through the Old Testament telling about Samuel and David. Then He preached about Jesus. He showed how Jesus was the Savior for Israel. He preached about how Jesus died on the cross, and how He rose again. He told how Jesus could forgive sins and how He could justify people from all things. The Apostle Paul’s main point was to share Jesus with the Jewish nation and anyone else who would listen. The Jews did not heed the message; but the

¹⁷John MacArthur, *Acts 1-12, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 82.

Gentiles did. Acts 13:42 Luke writes, “So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.” The Gentiles desired to hear the Word of God. The Word of God says that on the next Sabbath that nearly the entire city came to hear the Word of God. God’s Word convicts people. When the Word of God convicts people, it changes people.

The Apostle Paul Shows How the Word of God Is Authoritative and Can Change Lives

The Apostle Paul in two different places in the Bible shows how the Word of God is authoritative and can change lives. The first passage comes from 2 Timothy 4:1-5:

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

The Apostle Paul is writing to a young preacher named Timothy. The Apostle Paul wanted to challenge Timothy and also encourage Timothy to develop a conviction concerning the Word of God. Timothy, who was a pastor, would need to carry that conviction into the church. The church cannot survive without the Word of God. It is the life that supports every church. It is the way in which God speaks to us today. The Word of God is an absolute necessity for the church today.

“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.” “Charge” comes from

διαμαρτύρομαι, and could be rendered, “I solemnly charge you!”¹⁸ This charge is especially challenging because it is carried out “before God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Every minister who is called Christ Jesus, constantly ministers under the omniscient scrutiny of His divine presence.¹⁹ It is serious matter to be brought before the Supreme Court of the United States to testify. Timothy was charged before the supreme court of the universe; he was put on notice that the proceedings were watched closely by God, and he was reminded that in a coming day he would be called to account by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Second Timothy 4:2 says, “Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” “Preach” comes from the word κήρυξον, which means to proclaim as a herald, to preach. It does not mean to “begin to preach,” but “preach as your first priority.”²⁰ This verb is in the imperative, which simply means a command. Paul is commanding Timothy to preach the Word. Paul was commanding Timothy to have a conviction to preach the Word of God. Every preacher is commanded to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are no exceptions. It does not matter if the message is popular. It does not matter if the message is unpopular; preachers are commanded to preach God’s Word. Preaching does not imply that an ordained minister is to stand behind a pulpit and expound Scripture. It is a

¹⁸Thomas D. Lea and Hayne R. Griffin, Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 241.

¹⁹John MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 168.

²⁰Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 506.

calling to a public heralding of the gospel message, whether done in a mass meeting or person-to-person.²¹

“Be ready in season and out of season.” This imperative describes a picture of soldiers on duty, ready for combat at any moment. The imperative could allude to both the one who proclaims and to the one who hears the Word. If this imperative refers to the preacher, then the proclaimer of the Word needs to stay with the task of preaching whether he feels like it or not. If it refers to listeners, then the preacher must be faithful to preach the Word regardless of whether listeners welcome it, reject it, or ignore it.²² The conviction must never leave the heart of the preacher. He is to be ready at all times. If the conviction is present in the heart of a preacher, he will preach at any time his name is called.

“Convince” is from the word ἐλέγχο, which carries the idea of correcting misbehavior or false doctrine. “Convincing” can also be translated “reproving.” This verb deals with affecting the mind, with helping a person understand that what he believes or is doing is wrong.²³

“Rebuke” is very similar to the last verb “convince.” Rebuke deals with the heart. It is the process of bringing a person under conviction of guilt. Human beings err from the truth and often fall in sin. Preaching the Word sometimes requires confronting people with their errors. To rebuke someone is to disclose the sinfulness of the sinner.

²¹Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 243.

²²Harold T. Bryson, *Expository Preaching: The Art of Preaching through a Book of the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 2.

²³MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 177.

“Exhort” comes from the work παρακάλεσον, a common New Testament word that can range in meaning from simply calling out to someone, to admonishing, which is clearly the meaning in this context. It also carries the idea of encouragement.²⁴ After having convinced and rebuked disobedient believers under his care, the faithful preacher is then to come alongside them in love and encourage them to spiritual change. A great preacher is a great encourager. A preacher is a herald of good news and encouragement for the people of the day.

“Teaching” comes from the word διδαχή, which can be translated as instruction or teaching. Only through the careful teaching of the Word of God can the tasks of convincing, rebuking, and exhortation be successfully carried out by a pastor. An unbeliever will not be convicted of his sin and come to salvation apart from some teaching from the Word of God about his lost condition and his need for saving faith in Jesus Christ. Nor will a believer be convicted of his sin and brought to repentance and restoration apart from the work of the Word in his heart.²⁵

Preaching the Word of God faithfully is the task of a born-again believer who has received a unique call of God. To preach the Word means to act as if everything in preaching depends on God and to work as if everything depends on the person. Preachers are commanded to be faithful in convincing, rebuking, and encouraging with all longsuffering and teaching.

Verses 3 and 4 says, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will

²⁴Ibid., 178.

²⁵Ibid., 179.

heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” If a preacher is faithful to preaching the Word of God, there will be opposition.

Paul says that a time is coming when people will not want to endure sound doctrine. Paul envisioned people in the last days not enduring sound doctrine.²⁶ In the last days, some people will no longer desire sound doctrine because of the difficulty they may be facing in life. They would rather run from it instead of endure it. There will be times in the life of a preacher when the only encouragement he has is his conviction to the Word of God. When it seems people are not listening, a preacher keeps preaching because of his conviction to the Word of God.

“Sound” comes from the word ὑγιαίνω, which means to be healthy.²⁷ “Doctrine” is simply the truth of God’s Word arranged. A day is coming, if it is not already here, when people will run from sound doctrine. It is because sound doctrine is a stinging rebuke to ungodly living that is unacceptable and intolerable to those who persist in sin. Those who live contrary to sound doctrine resent and resist the teaching of sound doctrine.

Timothy would soon face this situation. The more faithfully he proclaimed God’s Word, the more faithless some people in the church would prove to be. This situation is also spreading in churches today. Churches that once were evangelical, where the Bible was the divine standard for belief and living, are now compromising the Word of God. Conviction cannot be compromised.

²⁶Phillips, *Exploring the Pastoral Epistles*, 434.

²⁷MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 181.

“But according to their own desires” is the key to this problem. A person’s own desire is selfish, sinful, and self-satisfying. One’s own desire does not include repentance, restoration, or forgiveness of sin. It is to please their own desires that so many people today flock to preachers who prefer God’s blessings apart from His forgiveness, His salvation apart from their repentance, His acceptance as their Savior but not as their Lord.²⁸ They have “itching ears.” They want to feel good and not made good. They want to raise their comfort level, justify or overlook their sins. They also reject as unloving anyone who presumes to hold them accountable to doctrinal beliefs and moral standards they deem outmoded and irrelevant. Therefore, the preacher whom they least like to hear brings the message they need most to hear.²⁹

They will “turn away form the truth.” Because they do not desire the truth, they will cause themselves to turn away from the truth. When God’s truth is turned away, a door is opened for Satan to expose his “fables.” When God’s truth is knowingly rejected, Satan’s falsehood is inevitably, though often unknowingly, embraced.

Today, across America, our churches are filled to overflowing with those who have itching ears that desire the fables of easy-believism and the many variations of self-satisfying theology and so-called positive thinking. They come to have their egos fed and their sins approved, not to have their hearts cleansed and their souls saved.³⁰

Verse 5 says, “But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. Paul begins this verse by contrasting those

²⁸Ibid., 183.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

who have itching ears and the heart of Timothy. Timothy was to respond with spiritual intelligence. Paul gave Timothy four commands to follow.

“Be watchful in all things.” Timothy was to live continually in a state of alertness as he met heretical teaching. He was to watch his ministry and life closely. The challenge is not just for Timothy, but to all genuine preachers of the gospel. Preachers are to be watchful in all things. They watch their lives closely to make sure they are living holy righteous lives. They are to watch their doctrine closely to make sure they are preaching the accurate Word of God. They are to watch their life closely to make sure they are not compromising their conviction.

Preachers must also “endure afflictions.” This verb means to suffer evil for the sake of the Lord. There is no such thing as a faithful ministry that is not costly. A painless ministry is a shallow and fruitless ministry.³¹

“Do the work of an evangelist” involves spreading the gospel. Timothy was to preach the gospel and extend the invitation for people to respond to Christ. He was to talk to people about Christ; he was to be a witness and seek to lead people to Christ. His conviction was to share the Gospel to all people. The office of pastor and evangelist are two distinct offices according to Ephesians 4:11. However, both deal with sharing the gospel of the Jesus Christ.

“Fulfill your ministry” means the idea of giving full measure or bringing to completion. Paul was challenging and commanding Timothy to finish strong. Even in

³¹Ibid., 185.

the midst of adversary, finish strong. Preachers today must be eager and wholehearted when it comes to the ministry of the Lord. Preachers and churches today are in a battle with the forces of evil. They must finish strong. They must remain wholehearted. They must fulfill their ministry. A preacher will fulfill his ministry as long as his conviction is not compromised. If conviction remains, so will the ministry.

Another passage of Scripture that proves the necessity of the Word of God in the church today is 2 Timothy 3:16. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” This passage is the main focal point concerning the inspiration of the Word of God. It also focuses on the usefulness of the Word of God in Timothy’s life as well as in the church today. Preachers today must have a conviction concerning the Word of God. If they have this conviction, then they believe that the Word of God is divinely inspired. This passage confirms the divinely inspired Word of God.

“All Scripture” refers to the Old Testament. The Word used for “Scripture” is γραφή. It is used by Peter in 2 Peter 1:20, 21, “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” The Old Testament Scriptures were God’s breath, God’s words.

“All Scripture” also refers to the New Testament as well. In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul uses the same word for Scripture γραφή that he uses in 3:16 to refer to quotations from both the Old and New Testament: “For the Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain’ [Deut. 25:4] and ‘The worker deserves his

wages' [Luke 10:7]. Clearly Paul believed that the Scriptures included both the Old and New Testament.³²

The Apostle Peter also included Paul's writings in the category of Scripture. Second Peter 3:16 says, "as also in all his (Paul's) epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." Peter included Paul's writings as Scripture.³³

Therefore the phrase "All Scripture" includes both the Old and New Testaments. For Timothy, this marvelous view of Scripture is meant to make firm the ground of his conviction.

"Given by inspiration of God" evokes wonder in most readers. It simply means that all Scripture comes from God. All Scripture is inspired by God. "Inspired by God" comes from the word θεόπνευστος, which is translated "breathed out by God," or "God-breathed." It is of utmost importance to understand that it is the Scripture that is inspired by God, not the men divinely chosen to record it. Many men who wrote Scripture, such as Moses and Paul, were highly trained in human knowledge and wisdom, but that learning was not the source of the divine truth they recorded.³⁴

Because the Scriptures are inspired by God, it means that they are 100% accurate. God is perfect. He is holy in all His ways. If He is perfect, then His Word is perfect. Therefore, the Scriptures are 100 percent accurate.

³²R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 238.

³³Ibid.

³⁴MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 143.

The Scriptures are also infallible. God is not measured by time. His Words will never fade away. His words will never lose their power. They are just as powerful today as they were when they were spoken over two thousand years ago.

The Scriptures are “profitable,” which comes from the word *ὠφέλιμος*. It carries the idea of beneficial, productive, and sufficient.³⁵ Scripture is absolutely sufficient for all our needs. Psalm 119 and Joshua 1:8 affirm the absolute sufficiency of Scripture to meet all the spiritual needs of God’s people. It is profitable in four ways.

First, it is profitable for “doctrine.” Doctrine comes from the word *διδασκαλίαν*, which means “teaching.”³⁶ Because of the prominence of heresy among his readers, Paul emphasized the importance of sound teaching. The Word of God needs to be taught. It goes without saying that it is impossible to believe, understand, and follow what you do not even know.

Second, it is profitable for “reproof.” Reproof comes from the word *ἐλεγχον*, which is translated conviction. It is the conviction of sin because of misbehavior or because of a false doctrine. The Bible is the instrument of the Holy Spirit that he uses to quicken our consciences. It rebukes us. Scriptures can show sinners their failures, clarify the point of the mistake, and lead them to a new sense of peace and wholeness.³⁷

Third, it is profitable for “correction.” Correction comes from the word *ἐπανόρθωσιν*. This is the only time it is used in Scriptures, and it refers to the restoration of something to its original and proper condition. In secular Greek literature it was used

³⁵Ibid., 152.

³⁶Phillips, *Exploring the Pastoral Epistles*, 428.

³⁷Lea and Griffin, *1, 2, Timothy, Titus*, 237.

of setting upright an object that had fallen down and of helping a person back on his feet after stumbling. After exposing and condemning false belief and sinful conduct in believers, Scripture then build them up through diving correction.³⁸ Correction is one means God uses in order to restore people to spiritual positions they have forfeited.

Fourth, it is profitable for “instruction in righteousness.” Instruction comes from the word παιδείαν, which had the original meaning of bringing up and training a child.³⁹ Instruction denotes a system of discipline used by a parent to develop Christian character in a child. In this context it describes a system of discipline in Scripture that leads to a holy life-style.

Paul was giving young Timothy words of foundation for his ministry. Timothy was to have a conviction that God’s Word is divinely inspired. It is the Word from God; it is the Word of God. Timothy was to have a conviction that the Word of God was profitable in every area of life. Regardless of the circumstance, the Word of God will be of use for every person.

God’s Word is available to everyone for every need. If conviction is needed, the Word of God can convict. If training is needed, the Word of God can train. If correction is needed, the Word of God can correct. God’s Word is living and active. It is without error. It will never fade away. It is all the power one needs for life today.

³⁸MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 152.

³⁹Rogers and Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 506.

Summary

From the first pages in the Old Testament to the last pages of the New Testament, we see how important the authority of the Word of God is for the people of God. The Word of God changed people in the Old Testament. The Word of God changed people and churches in the New Testament. Conviction and authority concerning the Word of God will bring about blessing and spiritual renewal. The Word of God is the only source of divine authority in the church today. God has given us the recipe for our spiritual life. God has given us the blueprint to building a great life. God has given us the manual to follow if one desires joy and satisfaction. It is having a conviction concerning the authority of the Word of God. There are no substitutes. There is no need for anything else.

CHAPTER 3
GUIDELINES FOR IMPROVING CONCLUSIONS
IN EXPOSITORY SERMONS

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). If the Word of God is God-breathed and “profitable,” then the value of communicating its truth cannot be underestimated. Hearing a sermon preached and understanding the meaning of the text is the basis of faith. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). The main purpose of preaching is to share the timeless truths of the Word of God so that people can have the opportunity to respond to the Word. The first response is, of course, salvation. After salvation, the response will involve their growth in the Lord. The best way to share these timeless truths is by expository preaching.

Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.¹ Expository sermons contain a clear statement of the primary biblical idea that is carefully derived from a passage or

¹Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 21.

passages. Careful exegesis is needed for every passage that is preached. Also, the structure of the sermon must be consistent with the structure of the passage. The Bible contains many different genres. Therefore, an expository message will not always be preached the same way. It all depends on the genre. The structure must be consistent with the structure of the passage.

An expository sermon must also be relevant to listeners. An expository sermon is not a lecture. It is not a running commentary of a particular passage. Expository sermons are relevant when the preacher integrates biblical truth with real life. It does not matter how much biblical preparation has occurred through the week, if the preacher cannot make it applicable to the hearers, then it becomes a simple lecture.

One of the most difficult areas of preaching to master today is the sermon conclusion. The sermon conclusion is the part of the sermon where the preacher needs to be the most relevant to the hearers. It is the part of the sermon where the preacher is leading the hearers to a moment of response. The conclusion of the sermon is the last words that the hearer will hear. Therefore, it must be clear, simple, but, powerful.

This chapter will discuss the art of improving sermon conclusions in expository messages. It will include the purpose and guidelines for creating good conclusions. It will discuss how to prepare good conclusions and discuss different ways to conclude a sermon. The last part of this chapter will involve the sermon conclusion and the invitation.

Creating Good Conclusions

A good conclusion is vital for every sermon that is preached. Many preachers would probably admit that they struggle with concluding a sermon. They make a strong

introduction, develop a masterful outline, and even apply their message with vivid illustrations. Then they destroy the impact of their message because they do not know how to bring the sermon to a conclusion. Andrew Blackwood believed the conclusion surpasses in importance all items in the sermon except the text itself.² The sermon conclusion is the last opportunity to impress the purpose of the sermon on the hearts of the hearers. “The finest skills available to the preacher should be used to ensure the conclusion accomplishes its high purpose.”³

Purposes of Good Conclusions

A sermon conclusion exists not to conclude a sermon but for accomplishing a worthwhile purpose. The main purpose of a sermon conclusion is to lead the people from idea to action. People need to leave the place of worship as doers of the Word and not just hearers of the Word.

Harold T. Bryson, in his book *Expository Preaching*, gives three functions of a conclusion. First, the conclusion brings the sermon to an appropriate stopping place.⁴ A good sermon conclusion will keep the preacher from meandering to other material. It will keep the focus on the main point at hand. It will conclude what has successfully been preached. Second, the conclusion applies the main idea of the sermon.⁵ The conclusion allows the preacher to share principles from the sermon. John Bisagno says

²Andrew Blackwood, *The Preparation of Sermons* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1948), 162.

³H. C. Brown, et al., *Steps to the Sermon: An Eight-Step Plan For Preaching With Confidence* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 138.

⁴Harold T. Bryson, *Expository Preaching: The Art of Preaching through a Book of the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 337.

⁵Ibid.

that by using principles, the hearer has an instant connection and virtually never forgets what he or she has heard.⁶ The conclusion is the point where the listeners can come nearest to seeing the idea that the preacher is preaching. Third, the conclusion drives home the objective.⁷ No sermon is complete until the challenge has been made to act on a truth. Conclusions will help move the message to a time of public invitation and private commitment.

Because listeners are more likely to remember the conclusion than any other portion of the message, and because all the sermon's components should have prepared for this culmination, the conclusion is the climax of the message.⁸ The last sixty seconds are the most dynamic moments in great sermons. The conclusion is the sermon's destination. It is the end of the sermon. It is the main purpose of the sermon. Good conclusions should enable the listener to understand with even greater clarity what the sermon is all about. It should bring all of the information of the sermon into focus.

Guidelines for Good Conclusions

Preparing sermon conclusions can be a difficult task. For the sermon conclusion to be effective there must be time and thought put into the preparation process. Those final statements can drive the preaching point home in a way that few other parts of the sermon can.⁹ Jay Adams says, "Without a good conclusion, the

⁶John R. Bisagno, *Principle Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 3.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 244.

⁹Michael Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1990), 102.

(otherwise) best sermon is a dud.”¹⁰ Since there is not one particular way to accomplish this task, the preacher is able to go in several different directions when preparing for the sermon conclusion. However, knowing good guidelines will make this task a little easier.

First, one should not add new material in a conclusion. The purpose of the sermon conclusion is simply to conclude the sermon. Preachers should never introduce anything new in the conclusion.¹¹ Preachers should not add a point that they forgot in the sermon.

The sermon conclusion is the resume of the whole sermon. The hearers need to digest what has been said in a sermon. By this time in the sermon, all of the relevant concepts should have been presented and adequately developed.¹² When a preacher provides new material in a sermon, it will only confuse and will cause people to walk away without a clear meaning and purpose of the sermon.

The sermon conclusion is a summary of the sermon. It should bring all of the information of the message into burning focus. By the time the sermon conclusion is started, all of the relevant concepts and thoughts should have been presented and properly developed.

Second, conclusions must be clear and specific. A prepared sermon can come to naught if the conclusion is not clear and specific. The sermon can have a catchy introduction. The sermon can have accurate exegesis. The outline can be properly

¹⁰Jay Adams, *Truth Applied* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 68.

¹¹Rick Warren, “Tips for Concluding your Sermons,” *Christian Today*, <http://www.christian today.com/article/rick.warren.tips.for.concluding.your.sermons/15800htm> (accessed April, 17, 2012).

¹²Kent Edwards, “Satisfying Conclusions,” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 374.

structured. However, if the conclusion is not clear and specific all of the previous work will be in vain. People will remember the last thing they heard. The use of concrete words rather than abstract words or ideas will allow the hearers to grasp meaning, which they must be able to do before they can respond.¹³ That is why the conclusion must be clear and specific.

One way to keep the sermon clear and specific is to keep the sermon conclusion in mind all the way through the preparation process. Ask the question, “As a result of this message, what changes does God want in my life and the lives of those who hear it?”¹⁴ The congregation needs to clearly understand what the preacher is trying to say. Nothing destroys the impact of a conclusion faster than to have to explain what it means. A simple question to ask when writing a sermon conclusion is this: “Can everyone clearly understand what I am saying?” A clear objective must be the goal when preaching a sermon conclusion. Make the hearers leave the place of worship with one thing on their mind. That should be the main point of the sermon. The main goal of the sermon should be clear and specific in the conclusion.

Third, conclusions must be direct and brief. A good sermon conclusion should be no more than five minutes long. It is more effective to hit the highlights. If a preacher tries to rephrase their sermon during the conclusion they risk losing any interest they may have generated. Therefore, the sermon conclusion must be direct and brief. Sermon conclusions that tend to drag on forever will rob the entire message of power.

¹³Brown, et al., *Steps to the Sermon*, 140.

¹⁴John MacArthur Jr, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 253.

Just like the first sentence of a sermon, the last should also make a direct impression. Once the main point the conclusion has been clearly shared, then the sermon is over. Like a pilot that is landing a plane, once the plane hits its target, it begins to slow down and come to a stop. Sermon conclusions work the same way. Once a preacher hits his target, he begins to slow down and come to a stop. The most effective sermon conclusions are direct and brief. What a shame to destroy a well-prepared, Spirit-inspired, biblically-based message simply because we do not know how or when to stop.¹⁵

Effective Ways to Conclude a Sermon

The message of the Lord Jesus Christ has never changed. He is the only way to salvation. While the message never changes, the means to deliver this message can change. When delivering a sermon conclusion, many ways are possible to make the conclusion more effective. One week an illustration may seem appropriate. The next week may focus more on application. Many use video/multi-media to conclude a sermon. These are just a few of the ways a sermon can be concluded. The main point is that the sermon must be concluded. Whatever way seems best, make sure it concludes the sermon effectively.

Using Illustrations to Conclude a Sermon

An illustration can be one of the most effective ways to conclude a sermon.¹⁶ People today are enlightened when they hear a story. They seem to perk up a bit when a

¹⁵Michael Duduit, *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 224.

¹⁶Brown, et al., *Steps to the Sermon*, 141.

story is being told. Illustrations add light to a sermon. The main purpose of an illustration is to illustrate. Using an illustration to conclude a sermon should make a sermon understandable. The sermon conclusion is not the focal point of the sermon. An illustration during a sermon conclusion simply takes the listener from the known to the unknown.¹⁷ A good preacher will often use an illustration to conclude a sermon. However, it must be used in the right place, at the right times, and for the right purpose.

Some of the great preachers of all time used illustrations to drive home their message. Jesus himself used illustrations, as did D. L. Moody and Billy Graham.¹⁸ Illustrations will bring the message to the forefront. It will bring clarity and cause much thought towards the truth of the message.

When searching for an illustration to conclude a sermon, one must avoid misunderstanding. Illustrations will paint a picture. They will add light to a sermon. They help people understand and help the preacher explain himself. An illustration should never be used to conclude a sermon if it is not easily understood. The last thing a preacher wants is to have his people leave church confused because of the sermon conclusion.

Many different styles of illustrations can be used to conclude a sermon. Great skill is required in selecting and preparing an illustration which will throw light upon the major objective of the sermon and at the same time will not pervert the feelings and emotions of the people.¹⁹ One way to conclude a sermon is by using humor. People love

¹⁷Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 121.

¹⁸John Koessler, *The Moody Handbook of Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 90.

¹⁹Brown, et al., *Steps to the Sermon*, 141.

to laugh and they love to hear things that make them laugh. A humorous illustration to conclude a sermon can be very effective. It can also be very tricky. The goal is to make the hearers remember the sermon. When a preacher closes with a humorous illustration sometimes that is all the hearers will remember. Therefore, a humorous conclusion should only be used sparingly.

When humor is used appropriately, it can be very effective. Charles Spurgeon used humor in a many of his messages.²⁰ Humor breaks tension. By the time a preacher is concluding a sermon, some people may have drifted into another world. They may have lost their mental concentration. They need something that will make them relax for a few moments, and one of the easiest ways to secure their relaxation is to use humor and make them laugh.²¹

Humor will also tend to break the hardness of people's heart. A man with a stubborn and rebellious frame of mind might sit through an entire sermon without being moved or convicted. A humorous illustration might allow that man to open up a little and allow the Holy Spirit of God to begin the work of breaking the hardness of his heart.

When humor is used as a sermon illustration, it must be followed by the truth of the sermon itself. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "I would not dare to say that there is no place for humor in preaching; but I do suggest that it should not be a very big place because of the character of the Truth with which we are dealing."²² Humor will never be effective unless it leads to the main point of the message. Humor will cause people to

²⁰D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 240.

²¹John Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982; reprint, 1994), 289.

²²Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 241.

open their mouth and laugh. That is when a preacher must give them the truth. A preacher will use humor to soften the heart of the hearer. The gospel is then presented and it will change the heart of the hearer. Therefore, humor can be very effective only if it is followed by the truth of the message itself.

Personal illustrations are another way to effectively conclude a sermon. A preacher's life is a great source of illustrations, and they are often the best illustrations because the church knows him so well. Never apologize for personal illustrations, but try not to be the hero every time.²³

A preacher could also use illustrations from someone else's experience. It could be someone in the audience, in Scripture, in history, or in literature. When this method is used, one must never give out confidential information. The illustration must also be accurate. Do not ever try to change the story to fit the sermon. Integrity needs to be maintained in the pulpit at all times.

Using Application to Conclude a Sermon

Application of the sermon refers to the threads of relevance that run throughout the sermon but are finally drawn together for personal appeal and action for both preacher and people.²⁴ Application can be an effective way to conclude a sermon. In fact, application is one of the most basic types of sermon conclusions.²⁵ A preacher may take

²³Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons*, 124.

²⁴H. Wayne House and Daniel G. Garland, *God's Message, Your Sermon* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 88.

²⁵Brown, et al., *Steps to the Sermon*, 141.

the timeless truths of Scripture and use his conclusion to apply it to the hearers today. No message is complete until it has been applied to the hearers.

Application during a sermon conclusion should be short and to the point. It should make a simple appeal to the will of the hearer. This should not be a high-pressure sales pitch, feisty challenge, or emotional manipulation.²⁶ Good application during a sermon conclusion does not flatter or make outlandish promises. It simply guides the listener to accept the challenge of actually being doers of the Word.

Application answers the question, “So what?” Once the sermon has been preached, what do we do now? That is where application during the sermon conclusion comes in to play. A preacher must give specific ways to apply the sermon to everyday life. He must avoid repeating tired, worn-out phrases and clichés. People want specific ways to apply a sermon to their life. The focus of the sermon conclusion should be in issues of thought, action, and attitude. The only way a message can change the life of a person is by specific, pointed and relational application. Application speaks to real people, with real needs, in real places.

Many of the sermons recorded in Scripture conclude with strong application. Joshua 24:15 says, “And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as

²⁶Ibid., 90.

for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua was asking the people of that day to make a choice. He was applying the message by asking for a concrete behavioral change.²⁷ Matthew 7:24-27 says, “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” In this passage, Jesus was calling for the hearers to build their lives on the rock of his words. Jesus was not just preaching a message. He was applying the message to the hearers and asking for their response.

Using Video/Multi-Media to Conclude a Sermon

Today, America is in a technology revolution. It is here whether we like it or not. People have access to all types of modern technology. It is being used in all circles of life. Many homes in America have the latest technology. Most school classrooms have computers and other technology advancements available for the teachers and children. New cars are filled with the modern inventions of technology. It is all around us.

What about the church? Has the technology revolution made its way into the church? Is there a place for modern technology inside the church? While most churches

²⁷Haddon W. Robinson and Craig B. Larson, *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 375.

have not embraced the modern technology movement, some are seeing great blessing by using the latest technology. Power point media has become a popular means of communication for pastors today. Pastors are using power point to share their notes and outlines. This allows the congregation to be able to take notes at a much easier pace. If the congregation is able to take notes, they will be able to remember more of the sermon itself. Projecting still images helps the preacher to focus the attention of listeners on key ideas.²⁸ The pastor must be able to connect with his people. Power point is a good way to start.

Video clips and drama are especially helpful for making connections with the contemporary world and establishing the relevancy of biblical truth. One must be very careful when selecting a video clip. Great discretion should be used when selecting a video clip. When using a video clip, one must always establish a clear connection with your point so that the wrong message is not communicated.²⁹

In sermon conclusions, video and multi-media can be a useful tool in communicating with the congregation. Modern technology can be useful in the body of the sermon as well as the conclusion of the sermon. The same principles apply in the sermon conclusions as they do in the body of the sermon. Great discretion is still needed. Few churches can come close to matching people's visual expectations without investing huge amounts of time.³⁰ There is also the risk of the technology failing at the moment of

²⁸Kenton C. Anderson, "In the Eye of the Hearer," in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 607.

²⁹Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 336.

³⁰Anderson, "In the Eye of the Hearer," 607.

need. That will always cause a communication breakdown. No videos or multi-media should ever be used in a sermon conclusion that will detract from the message. Using video and multi-media to conclude a sermon is an enormous risk. Most preachers will probably not willing to take that risk.

Sermon Conclusions and the Invitation

The purpose of good preaching is to herald the good news and call people to action. This usually occurs during the invitation. The invitation is the climactic call for listeners to commit themselves to acting on the truth that has been preached before they walk out the door.³¹ It is an opportunity for the hearer to become a doer of the Word and not just a hearer. The conclusion of the sermon immediately precedes the invitation. When a preacher exposes the congregation to the truth of God's Word, the time has come for the preacher to inspire them to act on it. Every sermon should be intent upon bringing change in the lives of people. The entire message must move toward this purpose. When preachers preach Jesus, they should allow people to respond to Jesus.

The Link between Conclusion and Invitation

The conclusion of any sermon should lead into the invitation process. Many preachers and theological writers do not even see the invitation as an integral part of the sermon. Many see the conclusion as the end of the sermon. Therefore, they do not proceed with an invitation. John Keossler gives three reasons why preachers may fail to

³¹Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 336.

call for a response or offer an invitation. First, there is fear.³² Fear will often exist when there is uncertainty or inexperience. There are times when the most experienced preacher will omit any kind of invitation because he fears no response. It is much easier to close with an outstanding conclusion than risk no response during the invitation. However, fear must not rob preachers of an awesome opportunity to draw people to Jesus Christ.

Second, preachers may not offer an invitation because they have misconceptions concerning salvation.³³ Some may not allow for a response because they feel an inconsistency between the truth of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Regardless of one's belief concerning soteriology, an invitation to follow the Lord Jesus must be given.

Third, preacher may not offer an invitation because they feel fatigue.³⁴ It is possible to be so consumed in the message itself that the preacher has left little strength for the time of invitation. Proclamation of God's truth implies the call for decision, and proclaimers of the biblical text must call upon listeners to act upon the preached word. Whether or not persons are asked to respond with some immediate, public indication of their decision every time preaching occurs is a different matter.³⁵

The invitation is a call to respond to the message that was preached. A link between the conclusion and the invitation is rightly justified. Most conclusions will lead right into the invitation. In fact, for the hearer most will not even know the difference

³²John Koessler, ed., *The Moody Handbook of Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 87.

³³*Ibid.*, 87.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 88.

³⁵Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 212.

between the conclusion and the invitation. They just seem to flow together. Well-crafted conclusions give the audience a way to remember the gist of the sermon.³⁶ This gives them a more condensed basis for deciding how to respond.

The transition from the conclusion to the invitation should be smooth. The invitation must tie in with the sermon and its conclusion without any break or delay. It should be as though the invitation is part of the sermon itself. The conclusion is the end to the message and the invitation is the beginning of the response to the message. They both go together. The conclusion and the invitation should flow naturally together. While the conclusion may end a powerful message, the invitation can lead to an even greater message. This message can prick the heart and change a life forever. It is the message of Jesus Christ. There is a link between the conclusion and the invitation. It is Jesus. The conclusion wraps up a message about Jesus and the invitation invites people to respond to Jesus. That is the link between the conclusion and the invitation.

The Conclusion and the Plan of Salvation

The sermon conclusion should always point people to Jesus. In most cases, this occurs by given and evangelistic conclusion to a sermon. An evangelistic conclusion will flow right into the invitation where the plan of salvation can be shared. The purpose of evangelistic conclusions is to arouse the lost to seriously and promptly respond to God's gracious offer of salvation through His son, Jesus Christ. It requires earnest and serious preparation both in matter and method of appeal.³⁷

³⁶House and Garland, *God's Message, Your Sermon*, 95.

³⁷Frank Shivers, *The Evangelistic Invitation 101* (Sumter, SC: Hill, 2004), 17.

G. Campell Morgan held firmly to the conviction that the conclusion of a sermon must conclude, include, and preclude. “It must positively conclude the message, must include the spiritual and moral impact and appeal of what has been said, and must preclude the possibility that our hearers escape from the message.”³⁸ The evangelistic conclusion and the evangelistic invitation will go hand in hand.

All sermons are not evangelistic. Although all sermons should point people to Jesus, not all sermons are evangelistic. Therefore, a preacher may conclude his message and offer an invitation to respond to the message. If the message is not directly evangelistic, then the invitation is not directly evangelistic. A preacher may have just preached on Daniel 3. This is the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The point of the sermon is to not hang out with the crowd. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood for the Lord. The invitation should persuade the congregation to stand for the Lord. But after the direct invitation is given, the plan of salvation should be shared. No matter what message is preached, Jesus is the ultimate answer. How can a person stand for the Lord? The only way is a relationship with Jesus. How can a person live right? The only way is a relationship with Jesus. How can a person make it in this world today? The only way is a relationship with Jesus. That is why the plan of salvation must be given during each invitation. If a preacher asks his people to respond without giving them Jesus, he has failed. When people respond to the message, they are responding to Jesus. Therefore, every sermon conclusion should ultimately point people to Jesus.

³⁸Ibid.

The Invitation as Conclusion

Do all sermons need a conclusion? That issue can be debated. However, sometimes the invitation will serve as the conclusion. A preacher may have preached an outstanding sermon. Everything about the sermon was eloquent. His introduction captured the hearer's attention. His exegesis was consistent with the text. His application and illustrations were very relational. At the conclusion of the sermon, instead of offering a standard sermon conclusion, the preacher begins the invitation. I have seen and heard this style on many occasions. Sometimes a text is so powerful and the Spirit is so present that a sermon conclusion is not needed. After the text has been preached, the invitation needs to be given.

If this style is to be used, the invitations must be cohesive with the sermons that precede them. Expressions of response called for at the close of some preaching events have become so routine that they often have absolutely no relationship to the message that has been preached.³⁹ The invitation should never appear to be an addendum to the sermon. It must flow naturally from the sermon itself.

If the invitation is going to serve as the conclusion of the sermon then it must be clear and specific. Because there is no natural conclusion to the sermon, the invitation can have the tendency to be broad. This must not happen. If a preacher is concluding his message by going right into an invitation, then he must tell the hearers exactly what he is trying to accomplish. This is where the invitation and sermon should line up together. The invitation should invite people to respond to the message that was preached.

³⁹Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 215.

Conclusion

Improving conclusions in expository preaching has been the goal of this chapter. Several guidelines have been given that prove to be helpful in the art of sermon conclusions and preaching. This whole chapter can be summed up in a couple of words. All sermon conclusions should point people to Jesus. The preparation, purposes, guidelines, and effectiveness will be of no value if it does not point people to Jesus. May preachers today work hard by preparing good sermon conclusions. May they work hard by pointing people to Jesus.

CHAPTER 4

A PRACTICAL PROJECT OF IMPROVING CONCLUSIONS IN EXPOSITORY MESSAGES AT HOLLY BAPTIST CHURCH

In the autumn of 2012, I enlisted 8 members of Holly Baptist Church to participate in my D.Min. Project of “Improving Conclusions in Expository Messages.” Within the context of this project, it was my objective to accomplish four strategic goals that I believe would strengthen their view of expository preaching and the sermon conclusion: (1) to gauge their understanding of expository preaching and the sermon conclusion, (2) to teach basic principles of expository preaching and the sermon conclusion, (3) to allow the team to listen and evaluate expository sermons and solid conclusions, (4) to strengthen my skills as an expository preacher.

This practical project of improving conclusions in expository messages at Holly Baptist Church was divided into five main parts. The first part of the project consisted of the team members taking a survey on expository preaching and sermon conclusions. This survey allowed me to gage their understanding of expository preaching and sermon conclusions. The second part of the project consisted of practical teaching concerning expository preaching and sermon conclusions. During one of our weeks together, I taught basic principles of expository preaching and sermon conclusions. The third part of the project allowed the team to listen to four expository sermons. These sermons where preached by men of God who value expository preaching. The team

listened, evaluated, and discussed each message. The fourth part of the project allowed the team to listen to six expository messages that I preached from the book of Jonah. They listened and evaluated each message. We met weekly and discussed the messages together.

The final part of the project involved the team taking the same survey that they took in week three. I wanted to see if anything changed concerning their view of expository preaching and sermon conclusions.

Enlistment of Project Participants

In the first two weeks of my project, I enlisted a team of 8 members to participate with this project. I chose 8 members of Holly Baptist Church. Each participant has a growing love for the Lord and a desire to please Him in all things. Each participant is a faithful member of Holly Baptist Church.

This project team reflected a variety of ages. I wanted a diverse group of people to serve on this team. Therefore, two team members were between the ages of 15 and 19. One team member was between the ages of 20 and 29. Three team members were between the ages of 30 and 50. Two team members were between the ages of 50 and over.

Another category of interest was number of years as a Christian. Two team members were saved in the last 5 years. One team member was saved in the last 6 to 10 years. Two team members were saved in the last 11 to 15 years. Three team members had been saved for over 20 years.

The last category of interest involved church membership. Each team member was a faithful member of Holly Baptist Church. Two team members were church

members for less than two years. Two team members were church members between 3 and 6 years. Two team members were church members between 6 and 10 years. Two team members were church members for 10 years or more.

As I put this team together, I purposefully chose a diverse group. This team had new Christians as well as seasoned Christians. This group had teenagers as well as median ages. This group had new church members as well as long time church members.

Project Part 1: Introductory Survey

During week 3 of the project, I had the project team participate in an introductory survey. This survey was intended to gauge their understanding of expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. I explained to the team that they would be taking the same survey at the end of the fifteen-week project. It was my desire to see a good measure of growth within the team concerning expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. The survey consisted of 10 response questions and 4 short answer questions. During the response questions each participant could respond with the likes of strongly agree, disagree, uncertain, agree, and strongly agree.

The results of the introductory survey were not surprising to me. Question 1 asked if they believed that the Bible is the Word of God, without any mixture of error. All 8 members either agreed or strongly agreed. Question 2 asked if expository preaching is verse-by-verse preaching. 6 of the 8 members were uncertain and 2 members agreed. Question 3 asked if each portion of Scripture should be studied and preached in the same manner. Four members disagreed, 2 members were uncertain, and two members agreed. Question 4 asked if they believed that preaching should be the central activity in our times of corporate worship. One member was uncertain, 5

members agreed, and 2 members strongly agreed. Question 5 asked if they believed that the sermon conclusion is the most important part of the message. One member disagreed, 1 member was uncertain, 5 members agreed, and 1 member strongly agreed. Question 6 asked if all sermons should end the same way. One member strongly disagreed, 6 members disagreed, and 1 member agreed. Question 7 asked if they believed the sermon conclusion should be no longer than 5 minutes. Two members strongly disagreed, 2 members disagreed, 3 members were uncertain, and 1 member agreed. Question 8 asked if the use of illustration was the best way to conclude a sermon. Two members agreed, 1 member was uncertain, and 5 members agreed. Question 9 asked if they believe that humor should never be used in a sermon. Three members strongly disagreed, 4 members disagreed, and 1 member agreed. Finally question 10 asked if the sermon conclusion should always point to Jesus Christ. One member was uncertain, 2 members agreed, and 5 members strongly agreed.

The last part of the introductory survey consisted of 4 short answer questions. First, “What is the most important part of the sermon?” Six members identified the conclusion as the main part of the sermon. Two members were uncertain. Second, “What is your definition of expository preaching?” Six members were unsure of how to answer this question. Two members said that expository preaching means exposing the Scripture. Three members were uncertain. Third, “List some ways in which a sermon could conclude.” Three members were uncertain. Five members mentioned illustrations, stories, humor, and quotes. Fourth, “What should a sermon conclusion accomplish?” Two members were uncertain. Three members said that the sermon conclusion should

lead into the invitation. Two members said that the sermon conclusion should conclude the message itself.

Project Part 2: Teaching on Expository Preaching

The second part of my project allowed me to teach some basic principles of expository preaching. The first thing I wanted to do was give a clear definition of expository preaching. I chose to use four different definitions for this task. The first definition is from Greg Heisler: “Expository preaching is the Spirit-empowered proclamation of biblical truth derived from the illumination guidance of the Holy Spirit by means of verse-by-verse exposition of the Spirit-inspired text, with a view to applying the text by means of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, first to the preacher’s own heart, and then to the hearts of those who hear, culminating in an authentic and powerful witness to the living Word, Jesus Christ, and obedient, Spirit-filled living.”¹ The second definition was from Ramesh Richard: “Expository preaching is the contemporization of the central proposition of a biblical text that is derived from proper methods of interpretation and declared through effective means of communication to inform minds, instruct hearts, and influence behavior toward godliness.”² The third definition was from Haddon Robinson: “Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.”³ The

¹Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 21.

²Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons*, 19.

³Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 19.

fourth definition I used was from Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, “An expository sermon is a discourse that expounds a passage of Scripture, organizes it around a central theme and main divisions which issue forth from the given text, and then decisively applies its message to the listeners.”⁴

After I gave the four definitions of expository preaching, I then gave an expository sermon checklist that seemed to be very helpful. The following is the checklist arranged by Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix:

1. It must be based upon a passage from the Bible. The actual meaning of the passage must be found.
2. The meaning must be related to the immediate and general context of the passage.
3. The eternal, timeless truths in the passage must be elucidated.
4. The truths must be gathered around a compelling theme.
5. The main divisions of the sermon must be drawn from the structure of the passage itself.
6. Every possible method to apply the truths must be utilized.
7. The hearers must be called to obey those truths and to live them out in daily life.⁵

I used this format of definitions and checklist to provide my team with a tool for understanding expository preaching. During the introductory survey, the results showed that six of eight members were uncertain of what expository preaching really was. This tool provided a deeper understanding and knowledge of expository preaching.

The second aspect of teaching expository preaching was to give the five main parts of an expository sermon. During the remainder of the project, the team was going to engage in listening to a variety of sermons. I wanted to teach the five main parts of a sermon before they started this process. I did not go into much detail with each part of the sermon; I simply just gave an overview of the different parts of the sermon.

⁴Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 29.

⁵Ibid., 31.

The first part of the sermon is the introduction. I used as a resource John MacArthur's book *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*. He listed seven reasons why introductions are important.

1. Capture and redirect the audience's attention to focus on the preacher and his message.
2. Enhance the audience's goodwill toward the preacher.
3. Create audience interest in and anticipation of the body of a message.
4. Demonstrate the biblical importance of a message.
5. Answer every listener's unspoken question, "Why should I listen to this message?"
6. Orient listeners to the preacher's wavelength.
7. Make the preacher's intended course of discussion clear to his audience so that they can follow along and not get lost on the preaching journey.⁶

The second part of the sermon consists of exegesis. Exegesis comes from a word that means "to lead out of."⁷ Exegesis as a concept means to inquire what the original authors of a biblical text meant. This process includes: historical background, word studies, genre forms, and context.

The third part of the sermon is the use of illustration. Once again I used as a resource John MacArthur's *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*. He gives seven reasons why illustrations are important.

1. To interest the mind and secure the continuing attention of the audience.
2. To make our preaching three dimensional and lifelike.
3. To explain Christian doctrine and duties in a clear understandable manner.
4. To communicate convincingly to those who respond better to pictures than to facts.
5. To ensure that the message is unforgettable.
6. To involve all the human senses in the communication process.
7. To catch the hearing of the disinterested.⁸

⁶MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 244.

⁷Bryson, *Expository Preaching*, 145.

⁸MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 248.

The fourth part of the sermon is application. This part of the message presents consequence of spiritual truth.⁹ Application answers the questions of “what” and “how.” I mentioned to our team that application is the part of the sermon that one meditates on throughout the following week. While a listener remembers the introduction, the exegesis, the main point, and maybe even the conclusion, the application is the part of the sermon that will stick with him or her.

The last part of the sermon is the sermon conclusion. The sermon conclusion reinforces the proposition and reviews its relevancy.¹⁰ This part of the sermon will be the focus in the remaining project.

After this teaching phase, I believe our team had a greater understanding of expository preaching and sermon conclusions. I noticed as they watched the sermons in part three of this project, that many kept this teaching guide beside them as a basis to guide them during the sermon. My goal for this phase was to engage each team member to have a greater knowledge and understanding concerning expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. I was encouraged by the spiritual growth during this part of the project.

Project Part 3: Evaluating Sermon Conclusions

During weeks 4 through 7, I asked the project team to listen to four different sermons from four different preachers. Each sermon was pre-selected before this part of the project started. After the project team listened to each sermon, they evaluated each

⁹Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 199.

¹⁰Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 207.

sermon. Even though the evaluation covered the entire message, the majority of the focus was on the sermon conclusion.

As the team listened to each sermon, I wanted them to really focus on the sermon conclusion. Each of the four sermons concluded in a different way. I wanted to see their reaction to each sermon conclusion. On the evaluation form each team member was able to share their thoughts and feeling toward each sermon conclusion. The following questions were used to guide each team members as they listened to the sermons.

1. I was able to identify the conclusion of the message?
2. The conclusion of the message was effective?
3. The conclusion led into the invitation?
4. The conclusion effectively concluded the message?
5. The length of the conclusion was appropriate?
6. The conclusion spoke personally to your heart?
7. The conclusion will encourage you to remember the message?

Each team member was able to answer the questions by using a scale of 1 to 10. Number 1 was considered strongly disagree, and number 10 was strongly agree. At the conclusion of each sermon, I gathered the evaluation forms and began my assessment of each sermon conclusion.

The first sermon was from Adrian Rogers. Rogers served as the long-time pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. His sermon was entitled “A Guided Tour Through Heaven.” This passage was taken from Revelation 21 and 22. The following is the sermon conclusion from his message:

Dear Dr. Rogers, I hope you're doing very well I just wanted to write you a few lines for the first time to tell you how much I enjoy your sermons. I do believe you are the best teacher and preacher that I have ever heard. Dr. Rogers said, "I don't agree with him, but I like to hear that." Your presentations are so plain and easy to understand. I accepted Christ as my savior about two years ago. Since then I have read the entire Bible three times. I have been taking Bible study courses, mostly online. I have not been watching your program very long but ever since I first listened to you on Sunday a.m. every Sunday morning I sit waiting for your program with my pen and paper in hand. You see, I don't get out much anymore. God is my strength and salvation today. I am an inmate in the Arkansas State Prison awaiting death row. I look forward to that great and glorious day when Christ takes us home to heaven. I wanted to thank you for all that you have done to turn my life around. There is hope in Christ. Dr. Rogers said, "I wrote him back and this is what I said. Friend, you are not on death row, you are on life row. Because Jesus said that He who believes and lives in me, shall never die. Aren't you glad for the gospel? Aren't you glad that Christ can take a poor lost sinner and saved him by his glorious power? What God has done for this man row, he can do for you. You may step out of an office into hell, while this man steps out of death row into heaven."¹¹

At conclusion of this message, the project team evaluated the entire sermon with their focus on the sermon conclusion. Rogers concluded this sermon by reading a letter that was written to him by an inmate on death row. Even though the sermon conclusion was read verbatim, it still proved to be very effective. As I listened to each team member evaluate and discuss the sermon conclusion, each one kept coming back to the same remark. Rogers said, "You may step out of an office into hell, while this man steps out of death row into heaven."¹² According to the project team, the entire sermon was effective and spoke personally to each one's heart. However, they will never forget this sermon because of that last statement. That last statement made this sermon conclusion highly effective and very purposeful.

¹¹Adrian Rogers, *A Guided Tour Through Heaven*, DVD (Memphis: Love Worth Finding Ministries, 2012).

¹²Ibid.

The second sermon was from Johnny Hunt, the long-time pastor of First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia. His sermon was entitled “A Biblical Portrait of a True Disciple.” This passage was taken from Matthew 16:24-27. The following is the sermon conclusion from his message:

This was written by my good friend David Jeremiah. When we try to live our lives by our own strength we fail. And if we don't fail, we fall very short of God's purposes for us. So, being a disciple is the power for the Christians life, it is endowed to you and flow through you in this exchanged life; so you can be on mission with Him. When we operate in the flesh, three things are always true. First, we will always lack the power of the Spirit, and we will suffer from fatigue. Second, we will always lack the vision of the Spirit and we will suffer from frustration. We will always lack the sustaining ministry of the Spirit, and we will suffer from failure. Do these consequences sound familiar? You will always suffer these results when you tackle life in your own strength. When tragedy strikes, when an illness comes, when financial hardships come, you turn to God. Because when you feel helpless and weak, the Spirit of God gives you strength. All of the sudden you realize something dynamic is going on that you have never experienced. It's not your own power, its Gods. So the Apostle Paul says if weakness is what it takes to get God's power in his life, then that is what he wants. Because when you are weak, then you are strong. It takes a crisis sometimes to get many Christians to Christ.¹³

After listening to the sermon, the project team evaluated this message. Hunt is a powerful preacher. He preaches with great conviction and passion. One team member said, “While I had a tough time following the conclusion, the passion behind it, kept me listening.” The other members tended to agree with that statement. Passion and conviction should be the heartbeat of every good sermon. The sermon conclusion is part of the sermon therefore it should have passion and conviction as the main body of the sermon.

¹³Johnny Hunt, *A Biblical Portrait of a True Disciple*, DVD (Woodstock, GA: It's a New Day Ministries, 2011).

The third sermon was from Junior Hill, a full-time evangelist and founder of Junior Hill Ministries. His sermon was entitled “The Valley of Baca.” This sermon was taken from Psalm 84. The following was the sermon conclusion of his message:

I drove home from that revival so discouraged. I had a sinus infection. I had to get up early the next morning. I had to get up at 9:30. I hate these people that tell you how early they get up in the morning. They and joggers are the worst borers in the world. I am going to start telling those people how much I eat. “I ate five whoppers last night.” I felt horrible. I was setting there fretting and whining. The devil, the sorry rascal that he is, came up beside me and said, “You are fat.” Now I did not believe that because Jesus said he was a liar. I was sitting there going through the Valley of Baca, and my wife walked in and said, Honey, what do you want on your tombstone? Wives have the best timing don’t they? That will bless your heart. I was sitting there thinking what I wanted on my tombstone and this is what I came up with. I want my tombstone to say, “Slim at last.” But as I sat there thinking, God’s Holy Spirit sat there and spoke to me. I said honey put these words, “He that wins souls, is wise. You see I’ll never be the pastor of a big church. I’ll never be a great preacher like Dr. Merritt. I’ll never be a great pastor like Dr. Lindsey. I’ll never preach with eloquence like Dr. Vines. I will never write books like John MacArthur. But I can tell you what I have learned. I can help people who have been in the Valley of Baca. I can say, “Lift up your shoulders, keep your head up, we are just passing through.”¹⁴

After listening to this sermon, the project team evaluated this message. This was a favorite for each team member. Hill is a mastermind at using humor throughout his entire messages. His conclusion was filled with humor. Humor has a way of keeping the people’s attention. This was true with the project team. This conclusion proved to be very effective and will be remembered for quite some time. The length of the sermon conclusion was more than five minutes. In most cases, this would be too long. However, when humor is used, time is not an issue. Hill was using humor to set up his last statement.

¹⁴Junior Hill, *The Valley of Baca*, CD (Hartselle, AL: Junior Hill Ministries, 2012).

While the conclusion had a great amount of humor, the part that was remembered the most, was the last statement. “Lift up your shoulders, keep your head up, we are just passing through.” We are just passing through the Valley of Baca.

Each project team member thoroughly enjoyed this message. They had a chance to hear how humor can be used to conclude a sermon. By looking at the evaluation forms, each team member agreed that this message spoke personally to each of their hearts. Everyone can relate to the Valley of Baca., including the project team.

The last sermon in project part 3 was from Jerry Vines, the former pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida. He is currently a full time speaker for conferences, revivals, and other meetings. His message was entitled “Will Christians Be Judged?” This sermon was taken from 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. The following is the sermon conclusion of his message.

One of my dearest friends is Bobby Welch, who was President of the Southern Baptist Convention for a couple of terms. I don't know if you have ever heard his testimony. He was a Green Beret, while serving in Vietnam. He got shot up and they thought he was dead. They took his body on a helicopter and threw it on a pile of other dead bodies. He moved and they realized that he was still alive. And if you have ever heard his testimony, Bobby said that he was a backslidden Christian, and he thought he was going to die. He said, I was going to die. He said that I was not afraid to die. He said I was ashamed to die. I was going to die a wasted life. 1 John 2:28 says that when He comes, may we not be ashamed?

This sermon conclusion did not include any humor like the previous sermon conclusion. However, the project team evaluated this message, and once again, it proved to be very effective. This sermon conclusion was the shortest of the four. It was short and straight to the point of the message. Vines wanted his hearers to understand the possibility of living a wasted life and standing in the judgment of the Lord.

The project team all agreed that this conclusion spoke personally to their hearts. Personal illustrations will speak to the hearts of the people. The project team was able to identify the sermon conclusion and also identify the main point of the sermon conclusion. The project team also agreed that this conclusion will cause them to remember the rest of the sermon.

Project Part 4: Jonah Sermon Series

In project part 4, I preached a six-week sermon series from the book of Jonah. As in project part 3, I asked the project team to evaluate and discuss each sermon with major emphasis on the sermon conclusion. The evaluation forms were identical to the forms in project part 4. Each message was preached in consecutive weeks on Sunday mornings.

I chose to conclude each sermon in a different way. I wanted to see how the project team would evaluate each message. There was a possibility that one sermon conclusion would be more effective than another conclusion. I wanted to know that information.

During week 8 of the project, I preached my first message from Jonah. The sermon was entitled "Running from the Presence of the Lord." The sermon was taken from Jonah 1:1-3. I chose to conclude the sermon in the following way:

Henry Blackaby, the author of *Experiencing God*, tells this heart wrenching story about a situation he encountered early in his ministry. He writes, "The first funeral I ever conducted was for a beautiful three-year-old. She was the first child born to a couple in our church, and the first grandchild in their extended family. Unfortunately, she was spoiled. While visiting the little girl's home one day, I observed that she loved to ignore her parents' instructions. When they told her to come, she went. When they said, "sit down," she stood up. Her parents laughed, finding her behavior cute. One day their front gate was inadvertently left open. The parents saw their child escaping out of the yard and heading toward the road. To

their horror, a car was racing down the street. As she ran out between two parked cars, they both screamed at her to stop and turn back. She paused for a second, looked back at her parents, then gleefully laughed as she turned and ran directly into the path of the oncoming car. The parents rushed their little girl to the hospital, but she died from her injuries. As a young pastor, this was a profound lesson for me. I realized I must teach God's people not only to recognize His voice but also immediately to obey His voice when they hear it. It is life."¹⁵

This sermon illustration from Henry Blackaby was a tough illustration to share. Anyone with children can relate to this story. I told the project team that in any ordinary sermon, I would not have chosen this illustration to conclude my message. I believe it is too personal. A preacher never knows if someone in the congregation has lost a child due to a car accident. However, I chose to share this illustration as my sermon conclusion for two reasons. First, I was not aware of any in my congregation who had lost a child due to a car accident. Second, because of the nature of this project, I wanted to see how each team member responded to the sermon conclusion.

As our project team gathered together that afternoon to discuss the message and the sermon conclusion, I was a little surprised by their comments. Each one agreed that the sermon conclusion was risky. But each one also agreed that it spoke volumes to their hearts. One team member said, "The illustration that led to the conclusion was a very powerful and emotional one. I could relate so well to the situation of a parent needing their child to listen to them. I also could relate to that child, as a child of God, and hearing him calling my name or telling me to do something, yet I just keep going." That statement proved to be a reflection of the entire project team. The sermon conclusion spoke personally to their hearts.

¹⁵Henry Blackaby, "Tragic Result of Disobedience," <http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2003/august/14550.html> (accessed January 24, 2013).

As we conclude our meeting, I asked the project team if they understood why I would never use that illustration in a normal circumstance. Immediately, they responded with understanding. They agreed that this illustration could be too personal for someone.

As preachers, we must always be careful with our choosing of illustrations. We want them to be personal and effective. We want them to be life-changing. We must also keep in mind that the main point of a sermon conclusion, is to point people to Jesus. The main point in a sermon conclusion should not be a character or a child in a story. The main point should always be Jesus.

During week 9, I preached my second sermon from Jonah. It was entitled “Sleeping in the Storm.” The sermon was taken from Jonah 1:4-9. I chose to conclude the sermon in the following way:

A Church Building Gets 'Converted' into a Luxurious Home. It was an online description of a real estate listing in Dallas. The headline just said, "Converted church." Once it had been a church, now it was somebody's house. According to John Whiteside, the realtor showing the house, "De-sanctified churches are the number-one type of building converted to residential use." Whew! That's something of a mind-bender for Christians who call each other brother and sister, and talk about their church home. The article said, "The altar has been adapted for use as a granite and stainless steel themed kitchen, in homage to the cooking gods." That's the words they used—"in homage to the cooking gods"! It went on, "The choir loft has been rewired for a home theater." There was no baptistery, but there was a soaking tub—and, among other things, a game room, a music room and an exercise studio. All this for about \$2 million! Oh, and the 15,000 square foot church/home now has 11 bedrooms. Nice to know the folks there can sleep comfortably, once the church has been "de-sanctified" and "converted."¹⁶

I concluded this message in a way that is not my normal routine. I preached the entire message like I normally do. However, when it came time for the conclusion, I never changed my demeanor. I simply read this illustration verbatim and closed the

¹⁶Lee Eclov, “A Church Building Get’s ‘Converted’ into a Luxurious Home,” <http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2010/November/4111510.html> (accessed January 24, 2013).

message. There was not much of a change between my last major point and my conclusion. I did this on purpose to see how the project team would respond. I wanted to see if they would be able to identify the conclusion.

As I met with my project team, we began to discuss the sermon. Here are some of the statements that I heard. “Awesome sermon, but I completely lost the conclusion. It was so short and ended so quick that I completely missed it.” Another one said, “The conclusion was too quick. I did not know it was the conclusion until it was over.” Another said, “I loved the illustration, but I was not able to identify that it was the conclusion.” As I continued to listen to the comments, I noticed a couple of thoughts being repeated. First, the conclusion was too short. It was only about thirty seconds. Second, it was read to them. The project team preferred a conclusion that was not read to them. I would agree with that statement. You tend to lose the interest of people when illustrations are simply read to them. Third, the project team could not identify the conclusion. I did not have a transition between the body of the sermon and the actual sermon conclusion. The project team all agreed that the sermon conclusion was effective, but each one did not know it was the actual sermon conclusion.

As a pastor, I try to make the transition to the body of the sermon and the sermon conclusion as noticeable as I can. Most of the time that simply means moving from the platform down to the main floor. I leave the pulpit area and walk down to be closer to the people. The sermon conclusion is the link between the body of the sermon and the invitation. I choose to be closer to the people just to make the sermon conclusion a little more personal.

During week 10, I preached my third sermon from Jonah. It was entitled “Why Is This Happening to Me?” The sermon was taken from Jonah 1:10-16. I chose to conclude the sermon in the following way. I chose to take the last two sub points of the message as a bridge to the conclusion. The last two sub points were, “When there is Surrender,” and “When there is a Sacrifice.” Our storms in life will provide peace when we surrender. Jonah surrendered and obeyed the Lord. When he finally surrendered, the seas became calm. We too, must surrender our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. We must give Him our lives and invite Him to be our Savior and Lord. When we make that decision, our storms of life will not diminish. Our storms will simply provide a peace because the Prince of Peace will walk through the storm with us.

The second sub point was “When there is a Sacrifice.” Jonah had to be a sacrifice for the sailors if their seas were to be calm. Jonah became a picture of Jesus Christ. Jesus said in Matthew, “Just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth, three days and three nights.” Jonah sacrificed because he as the one who had sinned. Jesus sacrificed His life for us and He became our sin. First Corinthians 5:21 says, “He who knew no sin became sin for us that we may be the righteousness of God.”

Therefore, this conclusion was evangelistic in nature. The last two sub points linked straight to Jesus. It was a link to sin and the cross. It was a link to a sacrifice and salvation. There was no illustration to conclude this sermon. Humor was not used. The last two sub points simply became part of the conclusion.

When I met with the project team, I learned that there responses were nearly the same. One team member said, “The conclusion was hard, yet simple; strong, yet soft

touching and so true to everyone's life." Each member agreed that they could see the link between the last two sub points and the sermon conclusion. They agreed that the flow of the sermon was never hindered.

Because of the nature of those last two sub points, it would not have been effective to use humor or another illustration to conclude the message. Those last two sub points told the sermon. They also concluded the sermon. This is a case where the end of the body of the sermon simply becomes the conclusion. All sermons will not end this way, nor can the end of the body of the sermon be used as the conclusion. But when it can be used this way, it can be very effective and life-changing.

During week 11, I preached my fourth sermon from Jonah entitled "When You've Hit Rock Bottom." The passage was taken from Jonah 2:1-10. I chose to conclude the message in the following way:

If you say you're sorry for all the stuff you do
Know that he is ready with a second chance for you
Praise the Lord He's the God of Second Chances
You'll be floored how His love in life enhances
You can be restored from your darkest circumstances
Our God is a God of Second Chances.¹⁷

I chose to conclude this message by using a song. I did not sing the song, but simply read it. It was short; therefore the conclusion was only about ten to fifteen seconds. As I met with the project team, I began to hear their responses to the sermon and the conclusion. One team member said, "The song was good. I have never heard it but thought it went well with the sermon. The last sentence was strong and touching." Most of the other team members agreed with that statement.

¹⁷"God of Second Chances," *Jonah: A Veggie Tales Movie*, DVD (Nashville: Big Idea Productions, 2001).

Songs provide a different way to conclude sermons. Some preachers have the gift to sing and could be effective by concluding their messages by singing their conclusion. This is extremely risky and should only be used with great thought and wisdom.

During week 12, I preached my fifth sermon from Jonah entitled “A Second Chance in Life.” The sermon was taken from Jonah 3:1-10. I chose to conclude the message by using a personal illustration of my own:

Several weeks ago, I was fishing on Sardis Lake. It was a beautiful day full of sunshine. During the early morning hours the lake was calm and peaceful. The fish were slow to bite, but I was able to catch a few. As the day continued, the wind began to blow stronger and stronger. I was fishing toward the west and the wind was blowing straight out of the west. I was fishing right into the wind. For about an hour, I struggled keeping the boat still. The wind was powerful and caused extra stress on my life. I finally gave up about noontime. I gave up because I was tired of fighting the wind. The boat ramp was back to the east. Therefore, I had to turn the boat around in order to go back to the ramp. When I began to drive the boat back to the ramp, I noticed a change in nature. Now the wind was at my back. It was no longer a burden, but a help. It is much easier to drive a boat with the wind at your back than it is facing the wind head on. The Holy Spirit is all around us. He lives inside the life of a Christian. In the first two chapters of Jonah, the Holy Spirit was a burden to Jonah’s life. The Holy Spirit was a burden because Jonah kept resisting Him. He was facing the Holy Spirit head on and he realized that the Holy Spirit was a powerful person. It was not until Jonah repented and turned his life around, that Jonah realized that the Holy Spirit can be the greatest power for any individual. It is not until the Christian realizes that he must be obedient to the Holy Spirit and allow the Holy Spirit to direct his life. Jonah repented, turned his life around, and the Holy Spirit did a great work in his life. He will do the same for you.

As I met with the project team they each agreed that they could easily understand the conclusion. They said that the conclusion was simple yet profound. They all agreed that personal illustrations are one of their favorite ways to help understand sermons. Personal illustrations can easily reach to the heart of an individual. Everyone loves to hear a good story. Preachers must use caution when it comes to personal

illustrations. One must not share too many for fear of being self-centered. While personal illustrations speak volumes to the heart, they must be used sparingly.

During week 13, I preached my sixth and final sermon from Jonah. It was entitled "A Spirit of Resentment." The sermon was taken from Jonah 4:1-11. I chose to conclude the message in the following way:

A preacher told of a woman who came into his office complaining that his sermons always being about forgiveness and grace. She said he needed to come down harder on the sinners and in her words, "nail them." After her rant, the preacher asked, "So, you've got forgiveness and grace all worked out in your own life?" "Well, preacher" she replied, "there are some things you can't turn loose of, things that don't deserve grace, or forgiveness. That's just the way it is. I know it's that way in my family." She leaned over my desk and revealed a heart hardened by resentment and bitterness, "No, forgiveness is not an option. I've been hurt too much." The grudge was too embedded. And her spiritual life was powerless and trapped in the wilderness. Lack of forgiveness had turned her into a critical, judgmental woman. Then the preacher went on to say "She wanted me to make everyone else as miserable as she was."

I gathered the project team together and we began to discuss the sermon conclusion. This was now the tenth sermon conclusion that they have had to evaluate. They were experts now. As we discussed this particular sermon conclusion one member said, "the conclusion hit home with me because I often judge others and don't realize the sin I have . . . along with judging." This conclusion was also personal in nature. Every Christian life is a work in progress. We all struggle with resentment and bitterness. It is a temptation that can easily be avoided by simply clinging to the Grace of God. The project team, once again, agreed that the sermon conclusion was effective because everyone can relate to the illustration.

Project Part 5: Post-Evaluation Survey

Week 14 had the project team take a post-evaluation survey. This survey was identical to the one the project team took in week 3. After 10 weeks of listening and teaching, I was curious to see if there would be any different responses to the questions. I was encouraged by the responses. Question 1 asked if they believed that the Bible is the Word of God, without any mixture of error. All 8 members strongly agreed. Question 2 asked if expository preaching is verse-by-verse preaching. All members either agreed or strongly agreed. Question 3 asked if each portion of Scripture should be studied and preached in the same manner. All members either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Question 4 asked if they believed that preaching should be the central activity in our times of corporate worship. All members either agreed or strongly agreed. Question 5 asked if they believed that the sermon conclusion is the most important part of the message. All members strongly agreed. Question 6 asked if all sermons should end the same way. All members either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Question 7 asked if they believed the sermon conclusion should be no longer than five minutes. All members either agreed or strongly agreed. Question 8 asked if the use of illustration was the best way to conclude a sermon. Two members strongly agreed, 1 member was uncertain, and 3 members agreed, and one member strongly disagreed. Question 9 asked if they believe that humor should never be used in a sermon. One member strongly disagreed, 1 member disagreed, 2 members were uncertain, 2 members agreed, and 2 members strongly agreed. Finally question 10 asked if the sermon conclusion should always point to Jesus Christ. Every member strongly agreed.

The final part of the survey included 4 short answer questions. First, “What is the most important part of the sermon?” The results showed that all team members agreed that the sermon conclusion is the most important part of the sermon. Second, “What is your definition of expository preaching? Their definitions included words such as historical background, word studies, verse by verse preaching, and application. Third, “List some ways in which a sermon could conclude.” Their responses included illustrations, humor, songs, and personal stories. Fourth, “What should a sermon conclusion accomplish?” All project team members agreed that the sermon conclusion should always point people to Jesus. That is the main goal of every sermon.

Conclusion

I cannot begin to express my thankfulness to my project team from Holly Baptist Church. They spent many hours together listening and evaluating sermons. They learned about expository preaching and how to identify sermon conclusions. They never once complained or showed frustration. They always showed a heart of service and an attitude of learning. I personally want to thank each one of them for their hard work on this project.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

Introduction

This chapter concludes the project of “Improving Conclusions in Expository Preaching” by offering a seven-step evaluation. First, I will present an evaluation of the project’s purpose. Second, I will restate and evaluate the project’s four goals. The third and fourth section will evaluate the project and identify strengths and weaknesses.

In the fifth part of the evaluation, I will seek to identify any area of the project that I would do differently. The sixth part of the evaluation will be a theological reflection of what I learned about God through this project. The seventh and final step will conclude this project by offering personal reflections.

Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose

The purpose of this project was to improve sermon conclusions in expository preaching at Holly Baptist Church in Corinth, Mississippi. The entire project centered on expository preaching and sermon conclusions. This purpose was fulfilled by two ways. First, I enlisted a project team to help with this project. As they listened and evaluated sermon conclusions, they began to gain a hunger for expository preaching. This project improved their desire to hear the Word of God. Second, I gained a deeper understanding for expository preaching and especially the sermon conclusion. Today, I spend more time on the preparation of the sermon conclusion than I have in the past. Therefore, the

purpose was fulfilled by those who are listening to the sermons, and by the one who is preaching the sermons.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Within the context of this project, it was my objective to accomplish four strategic goals that I believe would strengthen my project teams' view of expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. The first goal was to gauge my project teams' understanding of expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. The second goal was to teach basic principles of expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. The third goal was to allow the team to listen and evaluate expository sermons and solid conclusions. The fourth goal was to strengthen my skills as an expository preacher.

The first goal was to gauge my project teams understanding of expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. I sought to accomplish this goal by giving an identical survey in weeks 3 and week 14. By week 14, I wanted to see knowledge and understanding concerning expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. The following are the comparative results from week 3 and week 14.

Question 1 provided nearly the same responses from weeks 3 and 14. The only exception was in week fourteen the entire team strongly agreed that the Bible is the Word of God, without any mixture of error. As a pastor, this is extremely encouraging to see this result. This is very important for a church to take the position of knowing that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. This belief will take care of many issues that we are facing today. If we believe that the Bible is without error, then we must believe it and obey it. Table 1 lists the results for question 1.

Table 1. Survey results for question 1

<i>I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, without any mixture of error.</i>				
	Week 3		Week 14	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Strongly Disagree	12.5	1	0	0
Disagree	0	0	0	0
Uncertain	0	0	0	0
Agree	12.5	0	0	0
Strongly Agree	75	6	100	7

Question 2 asked if expository preaching is verse-by-verse preaching. In week 3, uncertainty seemed to be of the majority. In fact, 75 percent were uncertain of the

Table 2. Survey results for question 2

<i>Expository preaching is verse-by-verse preaching.</i>				
	Week 3		Week 14	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
Disagree	0	0	0	0
Uncertain	75	6	0	0
Agree	25	2	14.3	1
Strongly Agree	0	0	85.7	6

definition of expository preaching. However, by week 14, 100 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that expository preaching is verse-by-verse preaching. The evaluation of this question shows that my first goal is in the process of being accomplished. Table 2 lists the results for question 2.

Question 3 asked if each portion of the Scripture should be studied and preached in the same manner. The responses in week 3 were quite varied. Fifty percent disagreed, 25 percent were uncertain and 25 percent agreed. By the time week 14 came around, all of the team was under the same understanding. Seventy-one percent strongly disagreed, and 29 percent disagreed. They understood that each portion

Table 3. Survey results for question 3

<i>Each portion of Scripture should be studied and preached in the same manner.</i>				
	Week 3		Week 14	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Strongly Disagree	0	0	71.4	5
Disagree	50	4	28.6	2
Uncertain	25	2	0	0
Agree	25	2	0	0
Strongly Agree	0	0	0	0

of Scripture should not be studied and preached in the same manner. In our evaluations, we discussed the different type of genres in the Bible. From history, narrative, wisdom literature, prophecy, gospels, letters and more, each portion of Scripture should not be

preached in the same manner. Table 3 lists the results for question 3.

Question 4 asked if the team believed that preaching should be the central activity in our times of corporate worship. This question also provided very little change from week 3 to week 14. In week 3 only one person was uncertain of the question. The other 73 percent either agreed or strongly agreed. By week 14 all of the team members either agreed or strongly agreed that preaching should be the central activity in our times of corporate worship. Table 4 lists the results for question 4.

Table 4. Survey results for question 4

<i>I believe that preaching is the central activity in our times of corporate worship.</i>				
	Week 3		Week 14	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
Disagree	0	0	0	0
Uncertain	12.5	1	0	0
Agree	62.5	5	28.6	2
Strongly Agree	25	2	71.4	5

Question 5 asked if the team believed that the sermon conclusion is the most important part of the message. During week 3, the team was not all in agreement with their answers. One team member disagreed with the question. One team member was uncertain. Five team members or 62 percent agreed with the question. One team member strongly agreed. By week 14, each team member came to the following conclusion. Each team member, 100 percent, strongly agreed that the sermon conclusion is the most important part of the message. Table 5 lists the results for question 5.

Table 5. Survey results for Question 5

<i>I believe the sermon conclusion is the most important part of the message.</i>				
	Week 3		Week 14	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
Disagree	12.5	1	0	0
Uncertain	12.5	1	0	0
Agree	62.5	5	0	0
Strongly Agree	12.5	1	100	7

Question 6 asked if every sermon should end the same way. There was not much change from weeks 3 to 14. During week 3, 88 percent either

disagreed or strongly disagreed that every sermon should end the same way. One person (12 percent) agreed with the question. By week 14, 100 percent of the team either disagreed or strongly disagreed that every sermon should end the same way. Table 6 lists the results for question 6.

Table 6. Survey results for question 6

<i>I believe every sermon should end the same way.</i>				
	Week 3		Week 14	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Strongly Disagree	12.5	1	57.1	4
Disagree	75	6	42.9	3
Uncertain	0	0	0	0
Agree	12.5	1	0	0
Strongly Agree	0	0	0	0

Question 7 asked the team if they believed that the sermon conclusion should be no longer than five minutes in length. This question brought the most change from weeks 3 to 14. During week 3, 50 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the question. Thirty-seven percent of the team was uncertain of the question. Twelve percent of the team agreed with the question. Therefore, week 3, brought a several different responses concerning the length of the sermon conclusion. By week 14, the entire team, 100 percent, either agreed or strongly agreed that the sermon conclusion should be no longer than five minutes in length. Table 7 lists the results for question 7.

Table 7. Survey results for question 7

<i>I believe the sermon conclusion should be no longer than five minutes.</i>				
	Week 3		Week 14	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Strongly Disagree	25	2	0	0
Disagree	25	2	0	0
Uncertain	37.5	3	0	0
Agree	12.5	1	42.9	3
Strongly Agree	0	0	57.1	4

Question 8 asked the project team if they believed that illustration is the best way to conclude a sermon. During week 3, 25 percent disagreed with that question. Twelve percent were uncertain, and 63 percent agreed that the use of illustration is the best way to conclude a sermon. When week 14 came, one team member or 14 percent strongly disagreed, 1 team member (14 percent) was uncertain and 72 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that the use of illustration is the best way to conclude a sermon. Therefore, by week 14, most of the team agreed that they would rather hear an illustration as a sermon conclusion as opposed to another method. Table 8 lists the results for question 8.

Table 8. Survey results for question 8

<i>I believe that using an illustration is the best way to conclude a sermon.</i>				
	Week 3		Week 14	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Strongly Disagree	0	0	14.3	1
Disagree	25	2	0	0
Uncertain	12.5	1	14.3	1
Agree	62.5	5	42.9	3
Strongly Agree	0	0	28.6	2

Question 9 asked the project team if they believed that humor should never be used in a sermon conclusion. During week 3, 88 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 1 team member or 12 percent agreed. Week 14 results showed that one team member (14 percent) strongly disagreed, 1 team member, 14 percent, disagreed. It also showed that 2 team members, 29% were uncertain, 2 team members, 29 percent agreed, and 1 team member, 14 percent, strongly agreed. These results showed that by week 14 the project team had mixed responses concerning humor and the sermon conclusion. Table 9 lists the results for question 9.

Table 9. Survey results for question 9

<i>I believe that humor should never be used in a sermon conclusion.</i>				
	Week 3		Week 14	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Strongly Disagree	37.5	3	14.3	1
Disagree	50	4	14.3	1
Uncertain	0	0	28.6	2
Agree	12.5	1	28.6	2
Strongly Agree	0	0	14.3	1

The last question asked if the sermon conclusion should always point people to Jesus Christ. For the most part, the questions were answered the same in both weeks 3 and 14. During week 3, one team member, 12 percent, was uncertain, and 88 percent either agreed or strongly agreed. By week 14, 100 percent of the project team strongly agreed that all sermon conclusions should point people to Jesus Christ. Table 10 lists the results for question 10.

Table 10. Survey results for question 10

<i>I believe that the sermon conclusion should always point to Jesus Christ.</i>				
	Week 3		Week 14	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
Disagree	0	0	0	0
Uncertain	12.5	1	0	0
Agree	25	2	0	0
Strongly Agree	62.5	5	100	7

The second goal was to teach basic principles of expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. In chapter 4, I explained this goal in detail. I taught these principles after completion of the week 3 survey. I believe this goal was accomplished because of the survey results from week 14. This goal was attainable and proved to be one of the highlights of the project. At the beginning of the project many of the team members were not familiar with the concept of expository preaching. This teaching was a joy because I was able to teach basic principles of expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. Today, my team members understand the nature of expository preaching and can also identify and evaluate sermon conclusions.

The third goal was to allow the project team to listen and evaluate expository sermons. The project team listened to four messages from outside preachers and they listened to six messages that I preached myself. These messages occurred in a span of ten weeks. These sermons were all expository in nature. The team members were able

to discuss and evaluate each message on a weekly basis with the other project team members. Therefore this goal was accomplished.

The fourth goal was to strengthen my skills as an expository preacher. Preparing expository sermons takes prayer, study time, and focus. This project kept me focused on praying and preparing solid expository sermons. I knew that each week, 8 members were going to evaluate the sermon and that I would have to accept their feedback. I am also aware that today over 250 members come to Holly Baptist Church expecting to hear solid expository sermons. This project has strengthened my prayer and preparation time.

This project has also brought to my attention the importance of the sermon conclusion. I have seen how good sermon conclusions can be extremely effective. I have learned to finish strong. People will remember parts of the sermon. People will never forget solid conclusions. Today, I spend a considerable amount of time on the preparation of the sermon conclusion. Therefore, I have strengthened my skills as an expository preacher in regards to prayer, study time, and focus.

Strengths of the Project

One of the strengths of this project was working with the project team. I was able to select 8 individuals that would help me with this project. Through this journey, I was able to teach and train 8 individuals on the subject of expository preaching and sermon conclusions. Today, each team member has a brighter understanding and has developed a love for expository preaching. Today, some of the team members are taking notes on each sermon. Note taking was not occurring before this project. The project has also strengthened the project team's love for the Word. Today, they understand the Word

in a much better way. This project has also strengthened the project team's listening skills. They can now identify the different parts of each sermon. They understand the historical background, word studies, genres, illustrations, application, and the sermon conclusion. Through this project, I believe the project team has a greater love for the Word of God and the expository preaching of God's Word.

Another strength of this project came during weeks four through seven. During this time the project team was able to listen and evaluate four different messages. These four messages were preached by Adrian Rogers, Junior Hill, Johnny Hunt, and Jerry Vines. This gave the project team an opportunity to hear some of the finest preachers of today. They were able to hear some of the greatest expository preachers of this generation. This was a highlight of the project because of the power of each message.

Preaching through a book of the Bible is an extraordinary privilege. It is one of the exciting opportunities as a preacher. It is also a delight for a church to journey together through a particular book of the Bible. During this project, I had the joy of preaching through the book of Jonah. This was one of the strengths for this project. Although outside of this project I normally preach through books of the Bible, it was refreshing to preach through Jonah for educational purposes. As a project team and also as a church family, we ventured through Jonah and learned about a "God of Second Chances." It took six weeks to walk through this book. We learned about the call of God on our life. He calls us to be obedient to Him in all areas of our life. Jonah ran from that call and went and found a ship headed for Tarshish. He went into the bottom of the boat and fell asleep while the people around him were crying out in fear. Today, Christians

must wake up from their sleep and realize that we have the answer to the problems of life. His name is Jesus Christ. In chapter 2, Jonah is in the belly of a great fish. He prays and repents. This message spoke personally to several members of my church family. It is encouraging to know that no matter where we are at in life, we can call on the Lord and he hears our prayers. In chapter 3, Jonah is obedient and preaches in Nineveh. Revival swept through the nation and the whole city was changed. Finally in chapter 4 we find Jonah bitter and full of resentment. Some Christians do not want real revival. Real revival changes people, and some people do not want to be changed. These messages were very timely for our church. It was an awesome journey through the book of Jonah. We are able to see how the Word of God can convict, challenge, and also heal many broken hearts. His Word is truly all that we need.

Weaknesses of the Project

Expository preaching and sermon conclusions are two separate subjects. One of the weaknesses of this project was the inability of fully teach and train on the importance of the sermon conclusion. Because of the project team's uncertainty concerning expository preaching, I felt I needed to teach and train on expository preaching. I taught and trained extensively on expository preaching during week 3. With that being said, I did not leave myself much time for teaching and training on the sermon conclusion. I did teach and the project team did evaluate each sermon conclusion; however, I believe more time could have been spent on additional teaching and training on the sermon conclusion. This was a weakness of the project.

What I Would Do Differently

If I had the opportunity to do this project again, there are a couple of things that I would do differently. First, I would enlarge the project team. I had 8 members on my project team. They did a fabulous job. However, if I had more people on the team, I believe the project would have been more effective. If I had it to do over again, I would have selected 12 to 15 members. More project team members would have given me a more thorough evaluation of each sermon that was preached. More project team members would have given me the opportunity to teach them about expository preaching and the sermon conclusion.

Second, I would have selected a group of pastors to be part of this project. I would have asked them take the survey that was given in week 3 and week 14. This would have allowed me to gauge how pastors view expository preaching and sermon conclusions. If pastors were a part of this project, it would have allowed me to have more research and feedback on the subject of expository preaching and the sermon conclusion.

Third, if I had the opportunity to do this project again, I would ask my project team to listen to a non-expository sermon. During week 4 through 7 the project team listened to four expository sermons each concluding in a different way. If I did it differently, I would have asked the team to listen to a topical sermon. I would ask them to evaluate and compare the two types of sermons. It would have been good to see what the strengths and weakness of each sermon type would have been.

Theological Reflection

While this project had many personally beneficial aspects, perhaps none was more valuable than teaching fellow church members about expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15 and said, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Paul wrote to the church of Colossae in Colossians 1:28-29 and said, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end, I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” It is with great joy that I have the opportunity to fulfill the call that the Lord has placed on my life. There is no greater calling than the calling to preach the Word of God. What a privilege to be able to preach expository sermons. What a blessing to preach expository sermons to a congregation who loves the Word of God.

Reflecting theologically on this project, I am completely overwhelmed by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. After nearly six years working on fulfilling the Doctor of Ministry requirements, I am amazed at how rich the grace of our Lord really is. With all of the roadblocks, trials, and other activities that slowed my journey, God’s grace was greater than anything else. His grace really is amazing.

Personal Reflection

This project has changed me in a couple of different areas. First, it has instilled in me a greater love for the Word of God. Through this project and my entire journey through the Doctor of Ministry program, I spent an enormous amount of time reading. I read books on expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. I researched

the Internet, magazines, and read articles on expository preaching and the sermon conclusion. None of that reading can compare to the time I spent in the Word of God. Today, I have a great love for the Word of God because of my time at Southern Seminary and working through the Doctor of Ministry program.

Second, this project has made me changed my sermon preparation. Every week I find myself digging in the Scriptures and searching for the truths of the Word of God. Today, I have a desire to flesh out word studies; seek to understand the historical background; and focus more time on application and illustration. This project has made me an overall better expositor of the Word of God.

Third, this project has brought a greater emphasis on the sermon conclusion. Today, I understand the importance of finishing strong. I understand the need to close out sermons clearly. I understand how the conclusion and the invitation can be joined together for the greater good. I understand that the preparation of the sermon conclusion should take time and prayer. This project has made me a better preacher because I seek to finish each message in a clear and precise way.

Last, this project has brought a greater emphasis on my personal prayer life. I would have never made it through this journey without the ability to pray to my Lord and Savior. I am grateful that He answers prayer. I am grateful that when I am weak, He is strong.

I would like to thank my project team for their tremendous work on this project. Their great work ethic and caring attitude made this project a blessing and not a burden. They never once questioned what they were asked to do. They accepted each

challenge and I am thankful that the Lord gave me this opportunity to work with them on this project.

Conclusion

As this journey comes to a close, I cannot help but thank the Lord for his amazing grace and provision along the way. He was truly my helper during this journey. I believe I am a better person and better preacher because of this program.

In conclusion, I owe a tremendous amount of gratitude to my wife, Elizabeth, and our three children, John Michael, Joleigh, and Joel. They were with me every step of the way. Although there were times that I had to be away to study and write, they were my biggest supporters. I am blessed beyond measure.

APPENDIX 1

PROJECT SCHEDULE

- A. Weeks one and two will involve sermon preparation.
- B. Week three will involve meeting with my evaluation team and having them complete an introductory survey about expository preaching and conclusions.
- C. Week four – Adrian Rogers Sermon
- D. Week five – Johnny Hunt Sermon
- E. Week six – Junior Hill Sermon
- F. Week seven – Jerry Vines Sermon
- G. Week eight – Jonah 1:1-3: Meet with evaluation team
- H. Week nine – Jonah 1:4-9: Meet with evaluation team
- I. Week ten – Jonah 1:10-16: Meet with evaluation team
- J. Week eleven – Jonah 2:1-10: Meet with evaluation team
- K. Week twelve – Jonah 3:1-10: Meet with evaluation team
- L. Week thirteen – Jonah 4:1-11: Meet with evaluation team
- M. Week fourteen- Evaluation team will take survey again.
- N. Week fifteen – Personal evaluation of project¹

¹This schedule was given to the team in week 3.

APPENDIX 2

WEEK 3 QUESTIONNAIRE

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of conclusions in expository sermons. This research is being conducted by John M. Boler for his Doctor of Ministry project addressing the issue of improving conclusions in expository sermons. In this research you will be called on to evaluate the use of conclusions. You will be asked to give both positive and negative feedback. 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 this study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Pre-Project Questionnaire

1. Please write your name: _____

2. Circle the number of years since you came to faith in Christ:

1-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

20+

3. Age

_____ Less than 20

_____ 20-30

_____ 31-40

_____ 41-50

_____ 51-60

_____ 61+

APPENDIX 3

SERMON-SERIES RESPONSE

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of conclusions in expository sermons. This research is being conducted by John M. Boler for his Doctor of Ministry project addressing the issue of improving conclusions in expository sermons. In this research you will be called on to evaluate the use of conclusions. You will be asked to give both positive and negative feedback. 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 this 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: _____

Date: _____

Text: _____

Title: _____

Rating Scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Poor Average Good Outstanding

The Preacher and His Delivery

Posture

Clothing and Appearance

Eye Contact and Facial Expressions

Mannerisms

Gesture

Voice

Rating Scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor			Average		Good			Outstanding	

The Message and Its Content

Introduction

Exposition

Illustrations

Relevance and Application

Exhortation

Conclusion

Rating Scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

1. I was able to identify the conclusion of the message _____
2. The conclusion of the message was effective _____
3. The conclusion led into the invitation _____
4. The conclusion effectively concluded the message _____
5. The length of the conclusion was appropriate _____
6. The conclusion spoke personally to your heart _____
7. The conclusion will encourage you to remember the message _____

APPENDIX 4

FIVE MAIN PARTS OF AN EXPOSITORY SERMON

Introduction - From *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* by John MacArthur

1. Capture and redirect the audience's attention to focus on the preacher and his message.
2. Enhance the audience's goodwill toward the preacher.
3. Create audience interest in and anticipation of the body of a message.
4. Demonstrate the biblical importance of a message.
5. Answer every listener's unspoken question, "Why should I listen to this message?"
6. Orient listeners to the preacher's wavelength.
7. Make the preacher's intended course of discussion clear to his audience so that they can follow along and not get lost on the preaching journey.¹

Exegesis – comes from a word that means “to lead out of”²

Exegesis as a concept means to inquire what the original authors of a biblical text meant. This process includes: historical background, word studies, genre forms, and context.

Illustration – From *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* by John MacArthur

1. To interest the mind and secure the continuing attention of the audience.
2. To make our preaching three dimensional and lifelike.
3. To explain Christian doctrine and duties in a clear understandable manner.
4. To communicate convincingly to those who respond better to pictures than to facts.
5. To ensure that the message is unforgettable.

¹John MacArthur, Jr., *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 244.

²Harold T. Bryson, *Expository Preaching: The Art of Preaching through a Book of the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 145.

6. To involve all the human senses in the communication process.
7. To catch the hearing of the disinterested.³

Application – the present consequence of scriptural truth⁴

Answers the questions of “What” and “How.”

Conclusion – reinforces the proposition and reviews its relevancy⁵

³MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 248.

⁴Bryan Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 199.

⁵Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 207.

APPENDIX 5

WEEK 3 SURVEY RESULTS

Number of years since you came to faith in Christ:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1-5 yrs	25.0%	2
6-10 yrs	12.5%	1
11-15 yrs	25.0%	2
20+ yrs	37.5%	3
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Your age:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
< 20	25.0%	2
20-30	12.5%	1
31-40	37.5%	3
41-50	0.0%	0
51-60	25.0%	2
61+	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, without any mixture of error.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	12.5%	1
Disagree	0.0%	0
Uncertain	0.0%	0
Agree	12.5%	1
Strongly Agree	75.0%	6
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Each portion of the Scripture should be studied and preached in the same manner.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	50.0%	4
Uncertain	25.0%	2
Agree	25.0%	2
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Expository preaching is verse-by-verse preaching.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
Uncertain	75.0%	6
Agree	25.0%	2
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe that preaching is the central activity in our times of corporate worship.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
Uncertain	12.5%	1
Agree	62.5%	5
Strongly Agree	25.0%	2
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe that illustration is the best way to conclude a sermon.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	25.0%	2
Uncertain	12.5%	1
Agree	62.5%	5
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe sermon conclusion is the most important part of the message.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	12.5%	1
Uncertain	12.5%	1
Agree	62.5%	5
Strongly Agree	12.5%	1
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe every sermon should end the same way.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	12.5%	1
Disagree	75.0%	6
Uncertain	0.0%	0
Agree	12.5%	1
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe the sermon conclusion should be no longer than five minutes.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	25.0%	2
Disagree	25.0%	2
Uncertain	37.5%	3
Agree	12.5%	1
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe that humor should never be used in a sermon conclusion.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	37.5%	3
Disagree	50.0%	4
Uncertain	0.0%	0
Agree	12.5%	1
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe the sermon conclusion should always point to Jesus Christ.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
Uncertain	12.5%	1
Agree	25.0%	2
Strongly Agree	62.5%	5
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		0

What is the most important part of the sermon?

Number	Response Text
1	conclusion - drawing it all together.
2	The Word of God.
3	The conclusion as it should sum up the entire message.
4	I think the conclusion is the most important. You need to leave them with something to think about.
5	The conclusion because it is what wraps it all up.
6	the conclusion.
7	The explanation of the points in clear English & the conclusion.

What is your definition of expository preaching?

Number	Response Text
1	not sure - more in depth "studying" or look at Scripture.
2	I don't know.
3	Exposing the meaning of the Scriptures.
4	I don't know.
5	I don't know.
6	Don't know.
7	I'm not sure. I have always likened pastors to either Adrian Rogers (orator) or Charles Stanley (the teacher).

List some different ways in which a sermon could conclude.

Number	Response Text
1	a story with symbolism.
2	I don't know.
3	Note sure? Could conclude with a story illustrating the sermon.
4	Just get a strong point across.
5	humorous, serious, anecdote, real life story.
6	illustration, invitation, altar call, prayer
7	A sermon can conclude with humor, a challenge, a plea, or an admonition as long as there is an invitation to accept Chris.

What should a sermon conclusion accomplish?

Number	Response Text
1	an invitation - to plant a seed.
2	Teaching the Word of God.
3	It should leave you with a final impression of the message.
4	It should leave the audience thinking.
5	It should accomplish to get the entire message summed up & hit on the high part(s).
6	To tie all the sermon together and reach the hears of the church & point to Jesus.
7	presentation of the Gospel & invitation to accept.

APPENDIX 6

WEEK 14 SURVEY RESULTS

Number of years since you came to faith in Christ:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1-5 yrs	28.6%	2
6-10 yrs	14.3%	1
11-15 yrs	14.3%	1
20+ yrs	42.9%	3
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Your age:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
< 20	28.6%	2
20-30	14.3%	1
31-40	42.9%	3
41-50	0.0%	0
51-60	14.3%	1
61+	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, without any mixture of error.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
Uncertain	0.0%	0
Agree	0.0%	0
Strongly Agree	100.0%	7
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Expository preaching is verse-by-verse preaching.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
Uncertain	0.0%	0
Agree	14.3%	1
Strongly Agree	85.7%	6
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Each portion of the Scripture should be studied and preached in the same manner.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	71.4%	5
Disagree	28.6%	2
Uncertain	0.0%	0
Agree	0.0%	0
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe that preaching is the central activity in our times of corporate worship.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
Uncertain	0.0%	0
Agree	28.6%	2
Strongly Agree	71.4%	5
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe sermon conclusion is the most important part of the message.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
Uncertain	0.0%	0
Agree	0.0%	0
Strongly Agree	100.0%	7
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe every sermon should end the same way.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	57.1%	4
Disagree	42.9%	3
Uncertain	0.0%	0
Agree	0.0%	0
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe the sermon conclusion should be no longer than five minutes.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
Uncertain	0.0%	0
Agree	42.9%	3
Strongly Agree	57.1%	4
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe that illustration is the best way to conclude a sermon.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	14.3%	1
Disagree	0.0%	0
Uncertain	14.3%	1
Agree	42.9%	3
Strongly Agree	28.6%	2
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe that humor should never be used in a sermon conclusion.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	14.3%	1
Disagree	14.3%	1
Uncertain	28.6%	2
Agree	28.6%	2
Strongly Agree	14.3%	1
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		0

I believe the sermon conclusion should always point to Jesus Christ.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
Uncertain	0.0%	0
Agree	0.0%	0
Strongly Agree	100.0%	7
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		0

What is the most important part of the sermon?	
Number	Response Text
1	conclusion.
2	If people don't hear anything else, hopefully they will hear the conclusion. I think the conclusion should sum up the message of the sermon & drive the point's home.
3	The conclusion is the most important part of the sermon.
4	the conclusion & invitation to accept Christ.
5	conclusion.
6	conclusion.
7	

What is your definition of expository preaching?

Number	Response Text
1	background, word studies.
2	verse by verse preaching, word studies & historical data about the text.
3	preaching that is verse by verse.
4	verse by verse preaching
5	It should be verse by verse explaining of the text. It should give historical background. It should be from the Bible and be explained in a clear manner. The main focus should be to reach into the hearts of the audience.
6	historical background; verse-by-verse preaching
7	verse-by-verse preaching

List some different ways in which a sermon could conclude.

Number	Response Text
1	tell stories, illustrations - this typically hits home with me; evangelistic
2	illustrations, reading a story or article, demonstration.
3	illustrations that include visual aids (apples); a plea to do something in scripture
4	a real life story; going back over main points; illustrations.
5	my personal preference is personal illustrations; visuals, stories.
6	by using a visual, or illustration.

What should a sermon conclusion accomplish?

Number	Response Text
1	soul searching, stronger believes, better Christian, wanting to live better, better example to others.
2	The conclusion should be something that sticks with you to help you remember the message of the sermon.
3	The sermon conclusion should point people to Christ.
4	It should point to Christ & an invitation.
5	It should point to the main topic of the story. It should reach the hearts of the hearers. It should also lead to the invitation.
6	to sum up the entire message in such a way where people can memorize it along with the message.
7	leave the audience thinking, and help them to remember the sermon.

APPENDIX 7

WEEK 3 AND WEEK 14 COMPARISON RESULTS

I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, without any mixture of error.				
<u>Answer Options</u>	<u>Week 3</u>		<u>Week 14</u>	
	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>
Strongly Disagree	12.5%	1	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Uncertain	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Agree	12.5%	1	0.0%	0
Strongly Agree	75.0%	6	100.0%	7

Expository preaching is verse-by-verse preaching.				
<u>Answer Options</u>	<u>Week 3</u>		<u>Week 14</u>	
	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Uncertain	75.0%	6	0.0%	0
Agree	25.0%	2	14.3%	1
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0	85.7%	6

Each portion of the Scripture should be studied and preached in the same manner.				
<u>Answer Options</u>	<u>Week 3</u>		<u>Week 14</u>	
	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0	71.4%	5
Disagree	50.0%	4	28.6%	2
Uncertain	25.0%	2	0.0%	0
Agree	25.0%	2	0.0%	0
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0	0.0%	0

I believe that preaching is the central activity in our times of corporate worship.

<u>Answer Options</u>	<u>Week 3</u>		<u>Week 14</u>	
	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Uncertain	12.5%	1	0.0%	0
Agree	62.5%	5	28.6%	2
Strongly Agree	25.0%	2	71.4%	5

I believe sermon conclusion is the most important part of the message.

<u>Answer Options</u>	<u>Week 3</u>		<u>Week 14</u>	
	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Disagree	12.5%	1	0.0%	0
Uncertain	12.5%	1	0.0%	0
Agree	62.5%	5	0.0%	0
Strongly Agree	12.5%	1	100.0%	7

I believe every sermon should end the same way.

<u>Answer Options</u>	<u>Week 3</u>		<u>Week 14</u>	
	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>
Strongly Disagree	12.5%	1	57.1%	4
Disagree	75.0%	6	42.9%	3
Uncertain	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Agree	12.5%	1	0.0%	0
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0	0.0%	0

I believe the sermon conclusion should be no longer than five minutes.

<u>Answer Options</u>	<u>Week 3</u>		<u>Week 14</u>	
	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>
Strongly Disagree	25.0%	2	0.0%	0
Disagree	25.0%	2	0.0%	0
Uncertain	37.5%	3	0.0%	0
Agree	12.5%	1	42.9%	3
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0	57.1%	4

I believe that illustration is the best way to conclude a sermon.

<u>Answer Options</u>	<u>Week 3</u>		<u>Week 14</u>	
	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0	14.3%	1
Disagree	25.0%	2	0.0%	0
Uncertain	12.5%	1	14.3%	1
Agree	62.5%	5	42.9%	3
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0	28.6%	2

I believe that humor should never be used in a sermon conclusion.

<u>Answer Options</u>	<u>Week 3</u>		<u>Week 14</u>	
	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>
Strongly Disagree	37.5%	3	14.3%	1
Disagree	50.0%	4	14.3%	1
Uncertain	0.0%	0	28.6%	2
Agree	12.5%	1	28.6%	2
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0	14.3%	1

I believe the sermon conclusion should always point to Jesus Christ.

<u>Answer Options</u>	<u>Week 3</u>		<u>Week 14</u>	
	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>Response Percent</u>	<u>Response Count</u>
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Uncertain	12.5%	1	0.0%	0
Agree	25.0%	2	0.0%	0
Strongly Agree	62.5%	5	100.0%	7

APPENDIX 8

RUNNING FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

Jonah 1:1-3

Introduction: An angry newspaper subscriber stormed into the reporter's office and demanded an apology because he had been mistakenly put in the obituaries. The reporter said, "I never write retractions, but what I will do tomorrow is list you in the birth column and give you a brand new start."

I've got good news. Today, you can start over with the Lord God. He will never leave you nor forsake you.

- Jonah is about a man who was swallowed by a fish because he did not obey the Lord. We learn about him from our earliest days in Sunday school.
- However this book is not about a fish. In fact, only three verses deal with the fish. The other forty-five verses tell us the real message of Jonah's story.
- It is a story of his struggles, calling, disobedience, problems, and his prayer life. It is a story of second chances, his successes, his failures.

***G. Campbell Morgan said, "Men have been looking so long at the great fish they have failed to see the great God!"

I. Jonah Left a Divine Call

A. It Was Special

Illustration: My family is close friends with another family who faithfully attends our church. Often we spend Sunday afternoons together relaxing at our house. Recently, when I phoned our friends, their 4-year-old daughter, Alicia, answered and politely asked who was calling. To tease her, I said kiddingly, "Alicia, you come to my house almost every Sunday and you don't know who I am?" In a reverential voice, she replied breathlessly, "Jesus?"

B. It Was Specific

***Max Lucado: "You are valuable because you exist. Not because of what you do or what you have done, but simply because you are."

II. Jonah Leaned on a Depraved Comfort

C. The Comforts of Sin

Illustration: When Adam sinned he ran and hid himself from the presence of God. I heard a Jewish rabbi talking the other night on the radio, and he said that once a very godly Jewish rabbi was in jail. The jailer was interested in the old man. He went to the rabbi and said, "Rabbi, I've got a theological question I'd like to ask you, out of your own Bible. Do you believe God knows everything?"

"Oh, certainly," said the rabbi.

"Well, how is it then that God said, 'Adam, where art thou?' If God knew where he was, why did He ask?"

"Well, son," the rabbi said, "that's not hard. God said, 'Adam, where art thou?' not because He didn't know where Adam was, but because Adam didn't know where he was. The question was asked of Adam. Adam was lost, not God."

God knew where Adam was, but Adam didn't know where he was. Adam was alienated from God, and I think the old rabbi had the explanation right.

D. The Comforts of Selfishness

Illustration: Christ says, "Give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there. I want to have the whole tree down. I don't want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think are innocent as well as the ones you think are wicked—the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you myself: my own will shall become yours."

—C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

III. Jonah Lived by a Disastrous Choice

A. It Was Continuous

Illustration: Jonah's sulking disappointment came from a failure of imagination, a failure of heart. He had no idea what God was doing--the largeness of his love and mercy and salvation. He had reduced his vocation to his own performance--he was in the right place, doing the right thing--but he interpreted everything through his Jonah ideas, his Jonah desires.

B. It Was Costly

Conclusion: Henry Blackaby, the author of *Experiencing God*, tells this heart wrenching story about a situation he encountered early in his ministry. He writes, "The first funeral I ever conducted was for a beautiful three-year-old. She was the first child born to a couple in our church, and the first grandchild in their extended family. Unfortunately, she was spoiled. While visiting the little girl's home one day, I observed that she loved to ignore her parents' instructions. When they told her to come, she went. When they said, "sit down," she stood up. Her parents laughed, finding her behavior cute. One day their front gate was inadvertently left open. The parents saw their child escaping out of the yard and heading toward the road. To their horror, a car was racing down the street. As she ran out between two parked cars, they both screamed at her to stop and turn back. She paused for a second, looked back at her parents, then gleefully laughed as she turned and ran directly

into the path of the oncoming car. The parents rushed their little girl to the hospital, but she died from her injuries. As a young pastor, this was a profound lesson for me. I realized I must teach God's people not only to recognize His voice but also immediately to obey His voice when they hear it. It is life"

APPENDIX 9

SLEEPING IN THE STORM

Jonah 1:4-9

Introduction: A man had a fine canary whose song was unusually beautiful. During the summer, it seemed a shame to keep the bird inside the house all the time. So the owner placed the cage in a nearby tree for the bird to enjoy the sunshine and the fresh air. Many sparrows frequented the tree and were attracted to the cage. At first the canary was frightened, but soon enjoyed his companions. But gradually and almost imperceptibly he lost the sweetness of the song. By the end of the summer his "singing" was little more than the twitter of the sparrows. Spending his summer in the wrong environment caused the canary to lose his finest song.

I. He Forgot His Goal in Life

- Jonah had a calling from God to go to Nineveh.

- This was God's will for his life.

- He was a prophet of God who had a lifestyle of doing God's will.

***When you leave the Lord, you leave your greatest goal in Life.

Hebrews 13:18: "Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably."

***If your goal in life is to not do the will of God, I can assure you that you have never been born again.

***Jonah was the only man on board who knew God.

***He was the only man on board who could lay hold of God.

***He forgot his goal in life

- While others on board were fighting for the lives, Jonah was sleeping through the storm.

Illustration: Wake up America

- Psalm 33:10-12: "The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance.

While Christians have been sleeping in the storm:

- the divorce rate among Christians is higher than the world.

- the traditional family is under attack because men have failed to be the spiritual leaders in their homes.

- Pre-marital sex is at an all-time high.
- Drugs and Alcohol are becoming just as frequent in Christians as Non-Christians.
- The devil has had a field day in some of our churches.

Hosea 10:12: “Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.”

*****"It's not the ship in the water but the water in the ship that sinks it. So it's not the Christian in the world but the world in the Christian that constitutes the danger."**

—Evangelist and pastor **J. Wilbur Chapman (1859-1918)**

“The Lord sent out a great wind” – The Lord loves you so much that he will do whatever it takes to bring you back home.

Psalm 119:67: “Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.”

Psalm 119:71: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn You statutes.”

***It is hard to believe that Jonah could sleep in such a storm.

***It shows how insensitive we can become.

***Sin hardens the heart

***When you are on the run from the Lord’s will, it is inevitable that we become spiritually insensitive.

Ephesians 4:18-19: “[H]aving their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”

“being past feeling” – callous; a skin that has lost sensitivity

This is what happens to our hearts if we continue in sin and leave the will of God

***We become hard-hearted and without feeling toward God.

***The trouble with Jonah was that he was content with his rebellion.

***When Christians become comfortable in their sin, it is a danger signal.

***Many Christians are not content with uselessness.

***It is possible to be on the run from God’s will even if we are not going anywhere.

Illustration: Old Friends Can't Remember Last Restaurant

This is a story of 30-year-old friends who had a reunion and were discussing where they should go for dinner. Somebody suggested that they meet at the Glowing Embers Restaurant because the waiters and waitresses there are young and beautiful. They all agreed. Fifteen years later, at 45 years of age, they met and discussed again where they should have dinner. Somebody suggested the Glowing Embers because the food and wine

selection there are very good. They all agreed. Another 15 years later at 60 years of age, they once again discussed where to meet. Somebody suggested the Glowing Embers because you can eat there in peace and quiet and the restaurant is smoke free. They all agreed.

Another fifteen years later, at the age of 75, the group discussed again where they should meet. Somebody suggested that they should meet at the Glowing Embers because the restaurant is physically accessible and they even have an elevator. They all agreed. Finally, 15 years later at the age of 90, the same group of friends discussed one more time where they should meet for dinner. Somebody suggested that they should meet at the Glowing Embers because they had never been there before. And they all agreed.

II. He Forfeited His Gift in Life

***When we leave the will of God, we leave the ability to hear God.

- Jonah had a God who spoke to him. Now the communication is forfeited.

***Everyone was praying except Jonah.

Psalm 66:18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear."

***When we live in open unrepentant sin in our lives, we cannot communicate with God.

***There is a sense in which what we are when we pray is more important than what we pray.

(vs. 7) It is a sad day when a child of God has to be exposed to an unbelieving world. Numbers 32:23, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

III. He Failed His God in Life

Illustration: Catfish stink bait on moustache

"This bed stinks"; "This room stinks"; "This whole house stinks"; "This whole world stinks";

***Could it be that we are the ones who are making everyone else miserable by our rebellion against God?

***We are quick to blame them and feel that if they only starting acting right, things would be wonderful.

***Backsliding Christians make everyone around them miserable.

***Jonah had lost his testimony.

(vs. 10) "Why have you done this?" Coming from a lost man.

(vs. 9) Jonah was quick to respond to the questions. If he really feared the Lord, he would be in Nineveh.

Conclusion: A Church Building Gets 'Converted' into a Luxurious Home

It was an online description of a real estate listing in Dallas. The headline just said, "Converted church." Once it had been a church, now it was somebody's house. According to John Whiteside, the realtor showing the house, "De-sanctified churches are the number-one type of building converted to residential use." Whew! That's something of a

mind-bender for Christians who call each other brother and sister, and talk about their church home.

The article said, "The altar has been adapted for use as a granite and stainless steel themed kitchen, in homage to the cooking gods." That's the words they used—"in homage to the cooking gods"! It went on, "The choir loft has been rewired for a home theater." There was no baptistery, but there was a soaking tub—and, among other things, a game room, a music room and an exercise studio. All this for about \$2 million!

Oh, and the 15,000 square foot church/home now has 11 bedrooms. Nice to know the folks there can sleep comfortably, once the church has been "de-sanctified" and "converted."

APPENDIX 10

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING TO ME

Jonah 1:10-16

Introduction: How'd You Like to Fall 24 Miles at 834 M.P.H.?

On Sunday, October 14th, Felix Baumgartner, an Australian daredevil, made the highest and fastest jump in history. After seven years of preparation, he completed his daring fall of more than 24 miles, at one point free-falling for over five and half minutes and reaching a maximum speed of 833.9 miles per hour. He broke the previous records set over half a century by Joe Kittinger. After his successful fall, Baumgartner said, "It was harder than I expected. Trust me, when you stand up there on top of the world, you become so humble. It's not about breaking records any more. It's not about getting scientific data. It's all about coming home."

I. Identify the Root of the Crisis

"What shall we do to you. . ."

- In every crisis, it is important to get to the root, the cause of it.

- In the midst of crisis, many of us are far more concerned with the cure rather than the cause.

***The reason we cannot find the cure, is because we have not identified the cause.

Crisis:

A. Because we live in a fallen world

Matthew 5:45: "It rains on the just and the unjust."

B. He is Testing us. Testing comes from God to cause the Christian to stand

C. He is Disciplining us. A storm was raging as a result of his going his own way, rebelling against the will of God.

D. Selfishness

- lives with you on the throne and not the Lord

***When a crisis comes, we find out who you really are.

Proverbs 13:10: "By pride comes nothing but strife."

Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."

1 John 2:16: "For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father, but is of the world."

E. Stubbornness

- Jonah would have rather died, than to do the Lord's will.

- We do not want to humble ourselves before the mighty hand of God.

- We forget that God sent the storm.

Illustration: A Prayer for Disturbance

Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves, when our dreams have come true because we have dreamed too little, when we arrive safely because we have sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when with the abundance of things we possess, we have lost our thirst for the waters of life; having fallen in love with life, we have ceased to dream of eternity; and in our efforts to build a new Earth, we have allowed our vision of the new heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly, to venture on wider seas where storms will show your mastery; where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars. We ask you to push back the horizons of our hopes; and to push into the future in strength, courage, hope, and love."

—Sir Francis Drake, explorer and naval pioneer during the Elizabethan era

II. Increasing Your Role Is Catastrophic

A. Your Strength Is Limited

“They rowed harder”

- By your own efforts, you will never do or be what God wants you to do or be.

***The Christian life is not difficult. It is impossible.

Colossians 1:27: “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

***You cannot fix your life.

B. Your Solution Is Lifeless

“They let go of the cargo.”

***One test of Christian character is not our actions but our reactions.

III. Immediately the Result Is Calmness

A. When There Is Surrender

- Jonah had stopped running.
- He had admitted his sin.
- He took responsibility
- He didn't blame everyone else for the storm.

B. When There Is a Sacrifice

- “What shall we do to you?”

Conclusion: Jesus and Jonah

APPENDIX 11

WHEN YOU'VE HIT ROCK BOTTOM

Jonah 2:1-10

Introduction: He just walked into a closet

***Jonah had a child-sized plan that did not pan out; God was enacting a huge destiny that surprised everyone.

Eugene Peterson, *Leadership*, Vol. 14, no. 1.

I. My Problems Lead Me to Prayer

- Jesus was praying on a mountain before He called His disciples.

A. His Distress

- Jonah was in distress and called out to the Lord from His prayer chapel
- Jonah's prayer is a proclamation of hope.

B. His Direction

- Even though he rebelled, he was in covenant relationship with God. He had a personal God.
- The Lord was his "Father."

C. His Dialogue

- Jonah did not use one original thought or request in this petition.
- He simply prayed the Word of God.
- He quotes Psalms, eight times in the few verses.

(Jonah 2:2)

Psalms 18:6: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him even to His ears."

Psalms 120:1: "In my distress I cried to the Lord, and He heard me."

Psalms 86:13: "For great is Your mercy toward me, and You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol."

***Jonah was standing on the promises and praying the Scriptures.

(Jonah 2:3)

Psalms 88:6: "You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the depths.

Psalms 42:7: "Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; All Your waves and billows have gone over me."

(Jonah 2:4)

Psalm 31:22: “For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes; nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried out to You.”

(Jonah 2:5)

Psalm 69:1-2: “Save me, O God. For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.”

(Jonah 2:6)

Psalm 30:3: “O Lord, You brought my soul up from the grave; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.”

John 15:7: “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”

Illustration: I can't pray. I don't know what to say.

***Why are some of our prayers unanswered? Could it be that too few of us have been alone with God long enough to get a word from Him on which to stand?

II. My Poverty Leads Me to a Priority

A. When He Was Hopeless

“When my soul fainted within me” – When I had lost all hope, when my life was ebbing away.

“I remembered the Lord,” – He was saying, “I came to myself.” The truth dawned on me.

***When Christians run from God, he oftentimes puts you in a place where nothing else in life matters.

B. When He Was Helpless

“Those who regard worthless idols, forsake their own mercy.” - He said that he had forgotten God and listened to the lies of the devil.

******"The worst thing about idols, as the Hebrew scriptures so tirelessly point out, is that they are utterly useless when you need them most."**

***some of us simply have to get to the place where we have nowhere else to turn but to God, to the place where we have lost all hope unless He comes through.

***Jonah looked back, remembered the Lord, and the first thing out of his mouth was, “It wasn't worth it.”

III. My Praise Leads Me to a Person

A. The Lord's Way

***If Jonah could praise the Lord from the belly of a fish, surely you can praise him in the middle of your circumstance.

- Not that Jonah did not ask to be delivered. He just started to give thanks.

Isaiah 61:3: “To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. . . “

***Had Jonah been like some Christians today this verse would read something like this. “While Jonah was in the belly of a great fish, he whimpered, whined, and questioned God and His Ways.”

***Jonah praised the Lord in the middle of his problems, and the Lord set Him free.

B. The Lord’s Will

“Salvation is of the Lord.”

- Jonah was saying, “It’s out of my hands. There is nothing I can do.”

- It will be a happy day when we stop trying to deliver ourselves.

***Jonah got to the place when finally he said, “I can’t, but He can.”

Conclusion: Part of a song by Anointed-
if you say you’re sorry for all the stuff you do
Know that he is ready with a second chance for you
Praise the Lord He’s the God of Second Chances
You’ll be floored how His love in life enhances
You can be restored from your darkest circumstances
Our God is a God of Second Chances
From the Jonah Movie by Big Idea Productions (Veggie Tales)

APPENDIX 12

A SECOND CHANCE IN LIFE

Jonah 3:1-10

Introduction: TOP 10 THINGS TO DO INSIDE A WHALE

- 10) "Can you hear me now?"
- 9) Pray . . . he's bulimic
- 8) Bonfire and fish fry!
- 7) Open a sushi bar
- 6) "Consider it pure joy"
- 5) Floss . . . the whale
- 4) Finally get motivated to read Moby Dick
- 3) Listen to tapes of your preacher's old sermons
- 2) Call your mother
- 1) Run and run and run and run and run . . . until you're all pooped out

I. Jonah Learned from His Mistakes

- It's one thing to be delivered and washed up on shore.
- However, merely being ejected from the fish will not solve all our problems.
- ***God doesn't just deliver us, He gives us a second chance.
- Between Ch. 2 and 3, Jonah lived in a state of wondering if God would ever use him again. God was under no obligation to do so.

Illustration:

The pattern of attitude toward God:

We bailed when God says go. A storm brews. Our shipmates are scared. We admit it's our fault. We are thrown from the boat. We sink. Something big swallows us. We repent. We pray hard. We are called again. We finally do what God asked us to do in the first place

II. Jonah Listened for His Message

- "The Word of the Lord came," – What a comfort it is to realize that the best of God's servants have made foolish mistakes, but were used again.

Illustration: David, Samson, Simon Peter, all took advantage of second chances in life.

***Some of us wonder why we do not obey him and, the truth is, we do not obey him because we do not trust Him.

***If we really trusted Him, we would obey Him.

***If we really knew Him, we would trust Him.

III. Jonah Labored for His Master

Four steps to genuine revival

1. Faithful preaching and Faithful hearing of the Word of God.
2. Belief in Go
3. Action
4. Turning from Specific Sin

IV. Jonah Lived for His Mercy

***Does God repent? Does God change His mind?

James 1:17: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like the shifting shadows."

Malachi 3:6: "I the Lord do not change."

Numbers 23:19: "God is not a man, that he should lie, not the Son of Man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?"

Exodus 32:14: "Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened."

***The answer is no and yes.

- In His character, the answer is no, for He is holy and just and unchangeable.

- In His mercy, the answer is yes, for He turns his face to any seeking sinners asking for repentance.

***God repented of the punishment He said He would bring to Nineveh when they repented of the evil they had done.

Illustration: Fishing in the wind and then turning around and the wind helped me.

- When we are out of his will, the wind of the Holy Spirit blows against us. We repent, turn around, change directions and then the wind of the Holy Spirit helps us along. God never changes. What happens is that we change in our relationship to him.

***Revival came to Nineveh because revival first came to Jonah.

APPENDIX 13

THE SPIRIT OF RESENTMENT

Jonah 4:1-11

Introduction: In his book, *None of These Diseases*, Dr. S.I. McMillan says, "Medical science recognizes that emotions such as fear, sorrow, envy, resentment and hatred are responsible for the majority of our sicknesses. Estimates vary from 60 to 100 percent." One patient was told by his doctor, "If you don't cut out your resentments, I may have to cut out your intestinal tract."

- It would have been easy to end the book of Jonah after chapter three.
- Great Revival came and glory fell.
- Jonah adds the fourth chapter to tell us what he was really like.

1. Not everyone wants revival – Revival will change people and some people don't want to be changed. Revival will change churches and some people don't want their church to change.
2. God's work will produce salvation and excitement, but will cause others to move further away from God.
3. If you want to find out what is really inside of a man, see how he responds when things do not go his way.

I. Destroys an Attitude of Quietness

- One would think that Jonah would have offered up a sacrifice of praise for the mighty outpouring of revival in Nineveh.

“angry” – burn. Jonah was fuming.

***Resentment destroys an attitude of quietness.

***A grumpy Christian is no commendation for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 32:17: “The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.”

1 Peter 3:3-4: “Do not let your adornment be merely outward – arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel – rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

Colossians 3:15: “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

*****If Jesus has quieted your soul, there is nothing in this world that will disrupt your soul, except sin.**

(vs. 2) Jonah knew what it was to obey God, but he had no joy in that obedience

II. Declares an Action of Quitting

“It is better for me to die than to live.”

- His pride was hurt because he felt his ministry had been discredited.
- His resentment was causing him to make decisions on a what’s best for me basis.

“sat down” – Jonah had just preached in the whole city of Nineveh, now we see him sitting, half hoping Nineveh will fall so he can say, “I told you so.”

“He went out of the city.” – If ever there was a time Jonah needed to be in Nineveh, it was during the days following the revival.

- Thousands had repented and needed guidance and teaching.
- Instead, they were left like sheep without a shepherd.

*****Many Christians have “gone out” of the city, when they should have “gone in.”**
Some went out to escape the burdens and heartaches of others when they should have gone in to put an arm around them.

*****Why did Jonah sit there? He wanted to see if God was going to destroy Nineveh.**

- The city was rejoicing in the blessing of salvation and revival, but one person would not join in that rejoicing.

Those who are filled with resentment will take on an action of quitting.

- *They become touchy and quick to take offense.*
- *They find themselves somewhere outside the city, and instead of rejoicing with the men and women who have been set free, they focus on themselves.*
- *Those who are filled with resentment are the ones who are always talking about their rights, and seldom, if ever, do they talk about their responsibilities.*

III. Delivers an Ability of Quenching

1 Thessalonians 5:19: “Do not quench the Spirit of God.”

- Jonah was complaining about a vine and couldn’t have cared less about the thousands of souls who had just repented of sin.

*****A resentful person loses their sense of proportion and begins to pick at little things.**

(vs. 6) Jonah was not at all happy when thousands were saved, but he was “very grateful” for the vine.

*****Some Christians rejoice superficially when others are saved and are very happy when their personal needs are met.**

***Jonah's happiness was determined by the changing conditions and circumstances of his life instead of by the unchanging God who controlled those conditions and circumstances.

Jonah did not care about the people of Nineveh because he was obsessed with his own comfort.

Jonah was "grateful" – first time in the book that we find him happy.

Your happiness should not come from blessings, instead it should come from a relationship with the blessing.

Watch out, because the Lord will send a worm to get the focus back on Him.

Conclusion: A preacher named Ron Rose told a woman who came into his office complaining that his sermons always being about forgiveness and grace. She said he needed to come down harder on the sinners and in her words, "nail them."

After her rant, Ron asked, "So, you've got forgiveness and grace all worked out in your own life?"

"Well, Ron" she replied, "there are some things you can't turn loose of, things that don't deserve grace, or forgiveness. That's just the way it is. I know it's that way in my family."

She leaned over my desk and revealed a heart hardened by resentment and bitterness, "No, forgiveness is not an option. I've been hurt too much."

The grudge was too embedded. And her spiritual life was powerless and trapped in the wilderness. Lack of forgiveness had turned her into a critical, judgmental woman. Then the preacher went on to say "She wanted me to make everyone else as miserable as she was."

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ABSTRACT

IMPROVING SERMON CONCLUSIONS IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING AT HOLLY BAPTIST CHURCH, CORINTH, MISSISSIPPI

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013
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This ministry project details how to improve conclusions in expository preaching. Chapter 1 states the introductory matters of the project.

Chapter 2 discusses the conviction of teaching God's Word. This chapter provides biblical accounts of people who were convicted to teach the Word of God.

Chapter 3 examines guidelines for improving conclusions in expository sermons. This chapter explains how to conclude sermons.

Chapter 4 involves a practical project of improving conclusions in expository messages at Holly Baptist Church. This chapter includes sermon evaluations, teaching on expository preaching, and expository preaching surveys.

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