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THE EXPOSITORY EXCHANGE: CULTIVATING NEXT  
GENERATION CHRIST FOLLOWERS TO BECOME  
GOSPEL LEADERS THROUGH  
EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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Presented to  
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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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by  
William Blake Ligon  
May 2019

**APPROVAL SHEET**

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EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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I dedicate this project to my faithful wife, Joy, my beautiful daughter, Sawyer,  
my courageous son, Grey, and to all those whom the Lord would  
allow me to preach the Scriptures.

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## PREFACE

I want to thank my wife for the selfless support she has given me the past ten years. This project would not have been completed without her prayers, encouragement, and sacrifice. I want to thank our two wonderful children. I want to thank the faithful Christ-followers at Central Baptist Church. I want to thank Stephanie Ousley for her grammatical insight and editorial mastery. I want to thank The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for its commitment to scholarship and sanctification. I want to thank Dr. Michael E. Pohlman for his wisdom, patience, and support through every step of this process. Above all, I want to thank Jesus. I have never gotten over the day He saved me. May that eternally be true!

Blake Ligon

Jonesboro, Arkansas

May 2019

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The foundation for all gospel ministry is the fact that God loves the nations and God loves the generations. The Bible is saturated with God’s heart to reach the “next” generation. Psalm 145:4 says, “One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty works.”<sup>1</sup> In Psalm 78:6-7 the psalmist writes that “the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in the living God.” Just as it is the parents’ responsibility to teach the next generation in their home, so it is the pastors’ responsibility to preach the gospel to the next generation in local churches. Generational ministry is the intentional discipleship of a younger generation by an older generation of Christ followers through the displaying and teaching God’s Word, God’s character, and God’s mission. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the next generation is crucial to effectively impacting the future for the glory of God. Gospel movements are born from generational ministry—one generation must demonstrate the gospel to the next. Generational leadership is passed most effectively through the local church. Through the hearing and heeding of God’s Word new leaders emerge from the next generation. For the next generation Christ-followers to become gospel leaders they must be exposed to effective expository preaching. For this preaching to be effective, the pastor must be well versed in the worldview, culture, and learning styles of the next generation. Generationally-conscious expository preaching is an essential instrument in cultivating next generation

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.



Christ-followers to be gospel leaders. Simply, the next generation needs truth, and the pastor-teacher must know how to most precisely deliver truth to them.

### **Context**

Central Baptist Church is located in Jonesboro, Arkansas. God has done great things in the life of Central Baptist Church since its humble beginnings. In November 2004, Central relocated to its present facility. Archie Mason was called to be Central's senior pastor in January of 2005. During these years, God has continued to do great things. Central is debt free and has grown to over 8,000 members. Central has launched five campuses since 2010.

Jonesboro is home to Arkansas State University. From 2011, until the fall of 2015, there was no organized college ministry on the campus of Central Baptist Church. In the fall of 2015, the senior pastor of Central Baptist Church, Archie Mason, asked me to start the college ministry on the Central Campus. I was serving as the student pastor at the Central Campus. Through Psalm 78, the Lord confirmed this to be the next step for me and Central Baptist Church. 747 launched as the new college ministry on the Central campus. The first gathering was on Wednesday August 26, 2015, with 131 college students present. Two years later, 540 college students gathered at the first worship service of 747. At the end of the 2017 fall semester, 747 has seen nearly 200 college students baptized at the Central Campus. On August 12, 2018, Central launched its fifth campus in Paragould, Arkansas. I now serve as the teaching pastor of the Central Baptist Church—Paragould Campus. Many of these college students now attend and serve at Central Baptist Church—Paragould Campus.

### **Rationale**

Generation Z is now the largest generation in the United States.<sup>2</sup> They are

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<sup>2</sup> George Barna, *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs, and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (Carol Stream, IL: Barna Group, 2018), 10.

diverse, global-minded, and are deeply shaping culture-defining trends. They are the future and they think differently than the generations before them. Pastors seeking to reach and shepherd this generation need to be students of Generation Z. They must be more generationally-conscious of the culture, worldview, and dynamics of Generation Z so that they may preach generationally-conscious expository sermons. Expository preaching must never change, but it must evolve—it must always be evolving. It must always be rooted in the Scriptures but must be palatable to the culture. When members of Generation Z have been immersed in this type of expository preaching, understand how to identify it in the future, and know how to practice expository ministry, generational gospel leadership is advanced.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to develop a process of cultivating next generation Christ-followers to become gospel leaders through delivering generationally-conscious expository preaching and teaching expository listening.

### **Goals**

The next generation is the most strategic mission fields on the planet. The future of the church and the future of the world is Generation Z. Because of this truth, this project aimed at developing a more generationally-conscious paradigm for expository sermon delivery to Generation Z. To further ensure that these objectives were accomplished, five goals were applied:

1. The first goal was to assess the current level of competence and expectation of expository preaching among the Generation Z leaders of Central Baptist Church Paragould Campus.
2. The second goal was to assess the expository preaching trends to Generation Z by surveying three expository preachers to Generation Z.
3. The third goal was to develop a generationally-conscious paradigm for expository sermon delivery among Generation Z.

## **Research Methodology**

The first goal was to survey the current Generation Z leaders of Central Baptist Paragould Campus.<sup>3</sup> This survey focused on their understanding and expectations of expository preaching. This survey determined their comprehension and cultural trends regarding expository preaching and determined the most effective communication tools to engage their current comprehension abilities. This goal was measured by having the Generation Z leaders of Central Paragould take the Expository Sermon Competence survey. This goal was considered successful when the students completed the survey and the data was analyzed to define the students' competence and expectations of expository preaching. This survey was done in order to help formulate the generationally conscious practices for expository preaching.

The second goal was to conduct a survey among three faithful and experienced expository communicators among Generation Z.<sup>4</sup> This survey further developed the most applicable and generationally-conscious mode of expository preaching among Generation Z. These men lead or have led large college ministries. They are also lead voices in communication to Generation Z. The surveys focused on their insights in effective expository communication. These surveys were conducted in the form of a phone interview or questionnaire. This goal was measured by a survey given to the three Generation Z expository preachers to collect their thoughts on generational trends and applicable insights to Gen Z communication. The responses gathered were then categorized into philosophical and applicable expository preaching practices. This goal was considered successful when the preachers completed the surveys, their responses were analyzed, and the results were combined into applicable data for formulating the generationally conscious paradigm for expository preaching.

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 2.

The third goal was to develop a generationally-conscious paradigm for expository preaching among Generation Z. The paradigm served as a system of guiding principles for expository preaching among Generation Z. The results focused on elements such as length of sermon, use of illustrations, learning style consciousness, and any other insights gained from the research data. To validate the claims of the paradigm, a final survey as given to all participants.<sup>5</sup> This goal was accomplished by analyzing and classifying all research and responses from the project. This goal was measured by a survey given to the Generation Z students and the expository preachers to evaluate the content of the paradigm. The goal was considered successful when 90 percent of the participants agreed with the content of the paradigm and validated that the paradigm is an applicable tool for expository preaching to Generation Z.

### **Definitions**

Specific words and phrases are used in this project that need to be clearly defined to bring further clarity to the overall success of the project. The following terms needed further clarification.

*747.* This term is the name of the college ministry of Central Baptist Church

*Generation Z or Gen Z.* This term is used to define the demographic of people born between 1994 and 2003. Sociologists are somewhat vague on the exact parameters of Generation Z, but for this project 1994-2003 suffices.

*Expository preaching.* This term is used to define the Holy Spirit-driven art and skill of communicating a biblical concept(s) through the contextual study of a passage, applied to the personality and experience of the preacher, and then declared to the hearers in order that they may rightly apply this truth to their lives.

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix 3.

*Generationally-conscious expository preaching.* For this project, this term is defined as the timeless principles of expository preaching interwoven into the generational and cultural make-up of Generation Z.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

There were three limitations. First, this project was limited by the awareness of the students' ability to answer honestly. Misinformation based on false data from the answers of the students could not be verified entirely. Second, this project was limited by the experience and observations of the communicators interviewed. They are in different contexts and their opinions are subject to their contexts, which are not the same as the context in which the project was conducted. Finally, this project was conducted within the confines of a single semester in 2018. While more extensive data could be determined in a broader timeframe, for the purpose of the project one semester sufficed.

This project also contained three delimitations. First, the project boundary encompassed college-age students in northeast Arkansas. No student outside this region was interviewed because no students outside this region were directly affected by this project. Second, the project only included students who fit within the generational confines of Generation Z. The confines include those students who were born between 1994-2003. Third, the students surveyed and equipped must serve at Central Baptist Paragould Campus.

### **Conclusion**

The potential for this project as an effective tool for equipping pastors to be faithful expositors by learning how to deliver generationally-conscious expository sermons is tremendous. The future of the church is Generation Z. Preachers with the greatest potential for impacting the future of the church are those seeking to impact Generation Z. The Holy Spirit often advances the gospel through ministry to the next generation. This project equipped expository preachers to craft an expository evolution.

CHAPTER 2  
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS  
FOR EXPOSITORY PREACHING

**Introduction**

Gospel-centered expository preaching serves as the bedrock to local church health and ministry. However, while expository preaching is foundational to all healthy churches, it also must adapt to new generations. The biblical foundation of expository preaching must never change, but the delivery of expository preaching must at times evolve. The aim of preaching is delivering eternal Scripture to ever-changing societies. However, to fully take hold of this aim, one must start at the foundation. At the bedrock of every sermon is the truth that God speaks. Expository preaching is founded and fueled on the truth that God has spoken. Because God has spoken through the Scriptures, the goal of expository preaching is to declare what God has already spoken. The whole of Scripture is inundated with the calling and command of God to preach His truth. Therefore, the preacher must be well versed in the foundational truths of expository preaching before he will fully grasp the power and purpose of his preaching. However, the preacher must not just exegete the Scriptures but exegete his audience and the greater culture as a whole. The pastor must not only be an archeologist and historian of biblical contexts, but he must also be a contemporary sociologist of modern culture. He must have one foot in the biblical world and one foot in the modern world. One ear must be sensitive to the Spirit through the ancient Scriptures and one ear sensitive to the spirit of the current generation. Generational ministry is the pursuit of contextualizing the gospel to a new generation. The combination of generational ministry and expository preaching aids the local church in faithfully walking forward into the future of gospel ministry.

The Bible contains the foundation for expository preaching. This chapter will provide a theological overview of both the Old and New Testaments to establish a comprehensive foundation for expository preaching and generational ministry. The first major section will focus on how the Old Testament provides the basis for expository preaching. The second major section will show how and the New Testament provides the trajectory for expository preaching. Instead of beginning with a contemporary definition of expository preaching, this section lets the Scriptures speak for themselves.<sup>1</sup> The third section of chapter 2 is a comprehensive overview of generational ministry. The entire canon contains an enormous amount of exhortations to reach the next generation. The second section highlights both Old and New Testament passages on generational ministry by developing an exegetical and historical analysis of each text. The goal of this chapter is to show that Scripture presents expository preaching and generational ministry as vital aspects of faithful gospel ministry. This chapter also examines the necessary connection between expository preaching and generational ministry. The two must be connected for the preacher to expound the ancient Scriptures to a contemporary audience.

### **Biblical Foundations for Expository Preaching from the Old Testament**

The foundation for all expository preaching is the glorious truth that God speaks. The life-giving reality that God has spoken through his Word is in fact the bedrock for all gospel ministry. Mark Dever writes, “The God of the Bible is utterly unique, utterly singular, and utterly worthy of our worship; and one of the most important evidences for that is the fact that God speaks.”<sup>2</sup> God is a speaking God and therefore humanity has the duty and delight to listen and obey him. The fertile soil of expository preaching is rooted

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<sup>1</sup> A definition of expository preaching will be developed more completely in chap. 3 after a biblical overview of preaching/teaching from the pastoral epistles is laid out.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert, *Preach: Theology Meets Practice* (Nashville: B & H, 2001), 13.

in the fact that Scripture reveals God to be a speaking God. Dever continues, “The fundamental basis of any person’s relationship with God is that we hear His Word and respond to it.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the preacher has the unique responsibility to also speak. Expository preaching at its core is the restating of what God has already said in his Word to a new generation. Therefore, the basis for all preaching is that God has spoken through his Word. The first book of the Bible begins to unfold the motivation and means for God’s speaking. The fact that God is a speaking God gives cue to the rest of Scripture that he desires to be in communication with humanity. The following section examines three Old Testament examples of God demonstrating his ability and authority to speak.

### **God Spoke through Creation**

The story of God, revealed through Scripture, declares God to be a life-giving artist. God first displays himself to be a creator. The way in which he displays his creation is through his spoken word. The basis for expository preaching lies in the powerful life-giving speech of God. From his words he is able to create, form, and build. Preaching is founded on the revelation that God’s words are to be delivered in order to bring beauty, formation, and life to creation. The book of Genesis reveals God to be a life-giving God through his spoken word. It was the “life-giving word of God” that created the universe and all that it contains.<sup>4</sup> Genesis 1:3 declares, “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” John Bunyan declares about this moment, “He spake the word, and it was done; all that darkness that before did cover the face of the deep, could not now hinder the being of light.”<sup>5</sup> God’s Word is never hindered or powerless. The expository

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<sup>3</sup> Dever and Gilbert, *Preach*, 19.

<sup>4</sup> K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 145.

<sup>5</sup> John Bunyan, *An Exposition of the First Ten Chapters of Genesis* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2006), 2:419.



preacher stands on the truth and authority of the spoken Word of God. This first moment of God's speaking establishes the bedrock for expository communication. Kenneth A. Matthews brings even more emphasis to this moment and the nature of God when he writes, "The divine word shatters the primal cosmic silence and signals the birth of a new cosmic order."<sup>6</sup> The ability and authority of God to speak, and from his speaking create, is the primary cornerstone for expository preaching. The preacher stands on this authority and ability of God to speak. He can proclaim, "thus says the Lord" because God is a speaking God who commands to be heard, and in his speaking has the power to form new life.

Genesis 1 contains the word אָמַר nine times. The ESV translates אָמַר as "said" nine separate times. Regarding God speaking in this moment, Gordon Wenham writes, "Here God constantly speaks and acts, displaying his power and character."<sup>7</sup> God creating by his spoken word is not only powerful but purposeful. He is revealing a wonderful attribute about himself that sets the stage for the rest of human history: he speaks. Matthews further illustrates this idea: "The Hebrew community understood that God's creative word was the same authoritative word by which he brought about the affairs of human history and the nations."<sup>8</sup> The description of the creation event was not only to explain the origin of humanity but also to explain the character of God. Wenham writes, "Genesis is not interested in events for their own sake but for what they disclose about the nature of God and his purposes."<sup>9</sup> Genesis reveals God to be a speaking God that uses communication to both create and command humanity. This theme carries

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<sup>6</sup> Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 145.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, "Genesis," in *New Bible Commentary*, 21st century ed., ed. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1994), 54.

<sup>8</sup> Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 145.

<sup>9</sup> Wenham, "Genesis," 54.

throughout the biblical metanarrative. Bunyan powerfully makes the connection between both the creation of humanity and the conversion of humanity:

“And God said, Let there be light.” As here, the light of this world; so, in conversion, the light of the New Testament of Christ, it comes by the word of God. No word, no light: therefore, the apostle saith, He “hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim 1:10). And therefore, Paul saith again, That salvation is manifest through preaching, through the expounding or opening of the word of faith.<sup>10</sup>

Bunyan connects the creation of light through the speaking power of God in Genesis 1 with preaching of the light, Jesus, from the Gospels. Genesis reveals God to be a speaking God. This is his character. God’s speaking forms the first footstone in developing a right theology of expository preaching. God’s words having the power to bring life forms the next footstone. In declaring what God has already said, the preacher joins in on the life-giving activity of God. The foundation for creation, calling, covenant, commandment, and conversion are all established by the speaking of God. The preacher’s role is thus to speak what has already been spoken by God through the Scriptures and speak only where God has spoken.

### **God Spoke through Calling**

God not only speaks humanity into being, but speaks directly with humanity. He speaks directly to Adam and Eve in the Garden. He speaks directly to Noah before and after the flood. God thus displays his character and ability to not only create through his spoken word but communicate with his creation through his spoken word. One of the most powerful examples of God’s direct communication with his creation is found in Genesis 12. This chapter further reveals the speaking attributes of God when he calls a man named Abram to leave his family and join in a covenant-making relationship with himself. Genesis 12:1 says, “Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.’” The same Hebrew

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<sup>10</sup> Bunyan, *An Exposition of the First Ten Chapters of Genesis*, 2:419.

word אָמַר is used again in Genesis 12. Here God is not creating verbally but calling verbally. This is the first recorded word of God after the Tower of Babel moment in Genesis 10.<sup>11</sup> Wenham describes this account powerfully: “The God of Genesis is not one of many localized gods of limited knowledge and power but the almighty Creator of the whole universe and Lord and Judge of all. . . . It is this God who spoke to Abraham.”<sup>12</sup> While the creation account was powerful speech, the calling of Abraham was personal speech. The personal speaking of God is also foundational to expository preaching. God not only creates in power through speaking, but God desires to communicate personally to humans. In this personal communication his plans are revealed and established. Abram risked everything to obey God’s call, thus birthing the nation of Israel.<sup>13</sup> Like Abram, the preacher must in faith trust the spoken word of God for not only his own life but the life of those whom he leads. God reveals in this story that his speech can be trusted and valuable in establishing his covenantal plan. The response to God’s spoken word also gives a foundation to preaching. God not only desires to speak personally, but he desires to be heard and obeyed. Preaching is not simply the art of telling what God has said through the Scriptures but is communicating for a response. In this account with Abram, God reveals that his word forms the basis for hearing and obeying. Preaching is thus the art of declaring for others what God has said through the Scriptures so that they also hear clearly and obey. The calling of Abram was a calling to be blessed preceded by a word of command: “Leave.”<sup>14</sup> This story reveals God the character of God to be a calling and commanding God. His spoken word forms the basis for this communication. Thus, God

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<sup>11</sup> K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 105.

<sup>12</sup> Wenham, “Genesis,” 54.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>14</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 105.

reveals that he desires to be a calling, commanding, and covenant-making God all through his speaking with Abram.

Mathews writes, “Just as the word created the universe, the word created the community of Israel.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, the book of Genesis reveals God as a speaking God and that his spoken word can powerfully create and personally call. Genesis shows that God puts great validity in his ability to speak. The creating and calling of God provides the foundation for expository preaching. Preaching is built upon the truth that God speaks, and that speech has the power to create, the power to call, and the power to command. God reveals through these instances in Genesis that he desires to be heard and obeyed. To do this, God spoke in a particular way to a particular man. God reveals that contextualization is important. Expository preaching must never be separated from the character of God to be a powerful, purposeful, and personal speaking God.

### **God Speaks through the Commandments**

As the Old Testament unfolds, more of the character and plan of God begins to be unveiled. God, throughout the Old Testament, reveals himself as a speaking God. However, God not only desires to reveal himself to speak in creation and calling, but advances the Old Testament reader’s understanding of his speech. In the Ten Commandments God reveals his speaking authority and ability through the written word. Not only does God speak these commands to Moses, but he reveals a new aspect of his speaking character by recording himself on the tablets. Douglas K. Stuart, connects the giving of the Ten Commandments moment with prior Old Testament moments:

All the people were hearing the voice of God just as Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, and the patriarchs had heard it and as Moses had heard it earlier at Mount Sinai when God first called him. And this time the voice of God was accompanied by

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<sup>15</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 145.

such audio and visual displays (19:16–19; 20:18–21) as to leave no doubt in their minds as to both his presence and his uniqueness.<sup>16</sup>

God communicating through the writing of the Ten Commandments cannot be separated from the development of expository preaching. God reveals in this scene on Mount Sinai that the basis for his covenantal relationship with the Israelites is his written speech—the Ten Commandments. Preaching stands upon this characteristic and act of God in Exodus 20. The basis of preaching is founded upon the truth that God is both a speaking God and that his written word drives the relationship with his people. He desires to be heard and obeyed. The Ten Commandments are the only thing God ever wrote himself according to the Bible. The truth that God decides to reveal himself through the speaking and writing of his words cannot be overstated in the definition of expository preaching. The Ten Commandments display that God desires to relate to his people through his written word. God establishes that the source of interacting with and obedience to himself was the written word of the Ten Commandments and the writing of the remaining Torah. The written speech of God predominantly directs the relationship between God and Israel after the death of Moses. Preaching takes its cue from this relationship between God’s written word and God’s people. This theme continues to develop throughout the Old Testament.

The remainder of the Old Testament was founded on the written word of God for the Israelites. As the story of the Old Testament continues to unfold, the establishment of the written Torah forms the basis for Israel’s relationship with God. The foundation for preaching follows the formation of the Old Testament as God continues to reveal his character and ability to communicate. The basis for all biblical preaching is first the fact that the preacher is serving a God who speaks. However, the Old Testament continues to build upon the communication of God. As the Old Testament narrative unfolds, God establishes the written word through the human agent as the basis for communication with humanity. God communicates first through his speaking, second through the writing

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<sup>16</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 445-46.

of the Ten Commandments himself, then the writing of the Torah through human authors, finished by the writing of the Old Testament books through multiple human authors. This development of God's communication is crucial to understanding and developing the basis for expository preaching. God speaks through various means throughout the Old Testament; however, the written word became the predominant communication tool between God and his people. This truth has a prolific impact on the formation of expository preaching. Because God has already spoken, the preacher must now speak what has already been spoken. Just like Joshua, the judges, David, Solomon, and the prophets relied on the written word of God from the Ten Commandments and the Torah to form the basis for their ministry, the preacher must also rely on and relay the communicated word of God.

The preacher's job is not to write or say anything for God, but to communicate what God has written and said through the Scriptures. The role of the preacher is to serve what has already been said through a speaking God. The eternal foundation for expository preaching is first that God is a speaking God. Second, the foundation for expository preaching is that God has spoken through the written Scriptures. Third, the foundation for expository preaching is that man's relationship with God is dependent upon man's understanding and obeying of God through the written Scriptures. Fourth, the foundation for expository preaching is that God spoke and used human authors to fit the cultural context. God communicated in the specific language needed and addressed the specific issues culturally. Therefore, the preacher's role is to explain and apply what God has already said in the Scriptures to a specific audience.

While the Old Testament establishes the theological foundation for God speaking, the New Testament further expounds on the duties of expository preaching. The New Testament builds upon the role and responsibility of the preacher and preaching. While the original foundation for preaching is the communication of God through his spoken and written word, the New Testament reveals the ultimate foundation of God

speaking in the person and work of his son Jesus Christ. Jesus, whom the Gospel of John refers to as “the Word,” is the embodiment and fulfillment of God’s speaking. Jesus’ teachings, his life, death, and resurrection form the cornerstone for all church ministry and preaching. The gospel of Jesus forms the filter through which all preaching must pass through to a contemporary audience. All expository preaching finds its foundation in Jesus. The speaking of God, the Ten Commandments, and the writing of the Old Testament through human authors all have as their foundation the person and work of Jesus. Building upon the foundation of the Old Testament and the Gospels, Paul further defines the job of expository preaching. Specifically, the pastoral epistles give momentum and direction to the job of expository preaching.

### **Biblical Foundations for Expository Preaching from the New Testament**

The pastoral epistles serve as a bedrock for all pastoral preaching and leadership. When defining the role of pastoring and expository preaching, one must not bypass a close investigation of the Pastoral Epistles. The kind of preaching Paul articulates in the following passages forms the marks of faithful expository preaching. Paul defines and directs his young preachers to continue in the preaching that is rooted in both the Old Testament and the Gospels. Paul understands that the written word of God from the Old Testament and the living word of God in Jesus are now the basis for preaching and teaching.

#### **Preaching that Defends (1 Tim 1:3-7)**

At the end of his life, Paul addresses his two young appointed preachers with clear instruction on the office of pastor in 1 and 2 Timothy. David Dockery describes well these letters when he writes that these letters “focus on church organization, the importance of apostolic doctrine, and the refutation of false doctrine. First and Second

Timothy as well as Titus carefully describe the qualifications of Christian leaders.”<sup>17</sup> A large portion of each of these two letters deal with addressing false teaching and the emphasis of teaching sound doctrine. These false teachings were “negatively impacting the young churches.”<sup>18</sup> Paul cuts straight to the heart of his letter in 1 Timothy 1:3: “As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine.” Paul begins his letter with an emphasis on teaching. Preaching and teaching are a vital part of the health of any church and Paul knew the greatest deterrent to sound doctrine was false teaching. Just like in the Old Testament, God’s relationship with man was directed by their understanding and applying of his written word. Therefore, the pastor’s role in the New Testament was to keep the people of God centered on the Word of God. Expository preaching is of God’s people concentrating on God’s Word. Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin explain, “He directed Timothy to remain in Ephesus so that he could warn false teachers not to involve themselves in the spread of false belief and practice (1:3-11).”<sup>19</sup> Paul emotionally urged Timothy to remain in Ephesus with an assignment to “restrain those in the congregation who were teaching false doctrine.”<sup>20</sup> Paul describes these false teachings as “of another kind.”<sup>21</sup> Lea and Griffin state that Paul had “an accepted standard of apostolic teaching he wanted Timothy to follow.”<sup>22</sup> Expository preaching must always stand on what God

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<sup>17</sup> David S. Dockery, *The Pauline Letters*, Holman Concise Bible Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 603.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *I, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 65.

<sup>20</sup> Dockery, *The Pauline Letters*, 604.

<sup>21</sup> Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 9 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 145.

<sup>22</sup> Lea and Griffin, *I, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 66.



has already said. From the beginning, Satan has tried to twist and manipulate the Word of God. Therefore, the role of expository preaching is to center the church back on God-given truth. Specific heresies found their place in Timothy's church and Paul issues an attack on these false teachings through teaching what God states through his word and the work of Jesus. Paul's desire for Timothy was to teach sound doctrine against false teaching. He writes in 1 Timothy 1:5: "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." As Knute Larson suggests, Paul knew that "once truth is asserted, Satan quickly introduces what is false in order to bring confusion, distortion, and misbelief."<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Paul immediately addresses the aim of his letter to Timothy. Preaching and teaching sound doctrine is crucial to the health and vitality of a local church. Expository preaching must not only be rooted in the Word and work of Jesus, but it must be attentive to the culture. The culture of the future generations is always at risk if the preacher does not deliver the Word of God in light of the delusions of the world. The expository preacher must know the Word and the world. The need for expository preaching was just as essential then as it is today. Donald Guthrie writes, "Wrong doctrines were already being circulated at this early stage in the church's life, and this is a reminder that in every age truth is challenged by counterfeits."<sup>24</sup> In understanding the need for expository preaching, one must always heed Paul's warning for its need, to correct false teaching. God desires his preachers to deliver the Word in an ever-changing world.

### **Preaching That Is Skillful (1 Tim 3:2)**

Not only must biblical teaching and preaching be able to defend, but the preacher must be "able" to skillfully and contextually communicate. First Timothy 3:1-7

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<sup>23</sup> Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 145.

<sup>24</sup> Donald Guthrie, "1 Timothy," in Carson et al., *New Bible Commentary*, 1295.

lays out the qualifications for an elder. Paul writes, “Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach” (1 Tim 3:2). The word here in 3:2 is διδακτικός and can be defined as “skillful in teaching.”<sup>25</sup> “Skillful to teach” speaks to the ability of the preacher to deliver the truths of God well to a specific audience in a specific cultural context. Others have translated it as “qualified to teach.”<sup>26</sup> Paul’s words can be further understood by realizing Titus 1:9: “That he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and to rebuke those who contradict it.” Understanding this ability to teach is crucially important to developing a clear grasp of expository preaching. The phrase “able to teach” describes the God-given ability to be taught and then teach what accords with sound doctrine. Hayne Griffin writes,

The appeal to be “able to teach” demands competence and skill in communicating Christian truth. The trait requires intellectual and didactic ability. One who can teach others needs also a willingness to accept teaching. The presence of this requirement shows that an overseer needed the ability both to explain Christian doctrine and to refute or oppose error. He would use this skill in giving instruction to converts, building up the church, and in correcting error.<sup>27</sup>

Paul was not only requiring young Timothy to be a man ready to defend God’s truth before false teachers, but he (along with all elders) must be able to teach effectively. An elder must be able to teach and live within the confines of sound doctrine and effectively teach others to do the same.<sup>28</sup>

An elder must be gifted by the Holy Spirit to effectively and skillfully articulate sound doctrine to those whom the Lord has appointed them an overseer. A

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<sup>25</sup> George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 1992), 159.

<sup>26</sup> William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, New Testament Commentary, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 124.

<sup>27</sup> Lea and Griffin, *I, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 111.

<sup>28</sup> Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 184.

sound definition of expository preaching cannot bypass the qualifications of an elder nor the gifting of God on a man's life to be skillful in practicing and presenting God's Word. To skillfully preach God's truth, the preacher must know how the audience will best accept his message. A keen understanding of the preacher's immediate culture, false beliefs, learning styles, and sin struggles is vital to most skillfully teach. The dynamics of the audience must inform the preacher's delivery style. The Word never changes, but the way it is communicated must evolve with the culture. The preacher who takes seriously God's qualification to be "skillful in teaching" must consider daily the cultural ingredients of the people to which he is preaching. Skillful preaching is preaching that not only exegetes the Word of God, but exegetes the world.

### **Preaching That Sanctifies (1 Tim 4:13-16)**

In keeping with the theme of these epistles, Paul again addresses the importance of teaching and preaching. He writes,

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Tim 4:13-16)

Paul brings further clarity to the role and responsibility of the pastor in this section. Paul knows the Word of God is the foundation for building healthy churches. Regarding this passage, Knute Larson writes, "The Word of God is powerful (Heb. 4:12); creates change (Isa. 55:11); is essential for life (Deut. 8:3)."<sup>29</sup> Paul is keenly aware of this life-altering truth. Therefore, he lays out a more detailed agenda for the preacher and his public ministry to the church. He tells Timothy to devote himself to public reading, exhortation, and teaching. These instructions are given to both edify the church and positively defend

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<sup>29</sup> Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 208.

against false teaching.<sup>30</sup> Nearly twenty-two references to “teaching” and “doctrine” within Paul’s words to Timothy further emphasize this fact.

Reading God’s Word both prepares the minds and hearts of the hearers as well as “hedges the church against error.”<sup>31</sup> Preaching and teaching are to be done in light of the public reading of Scripture and motivated by a desire to see the hearers conform to the will of God. Larson writes, “Preaching deals with encouragement, exhortation, and warnings from which the preacher intends to elicit a response from the hearers. Teaching is regarded as instructional. A teacher explains the principles of Scripture in more intellectual terms.”<sup>32</sup> Paul describes this as a gift given by God through the laying on of elders’ hands and is to be “progressed.” This gift is to be watched closely so that both the preacher and the hearers will benefit. The gift and content of preaching is something that should be, according to Paul, monitored and developed. Paul is stressing that Timothy and future pastors must be students of Scripture to develop faithful pulpits. Not only must Scripture shape the progress of preaching, but also society. Paul says that “all may see your progress.” Progressive preaching is preaching that appeals and connects to “all” of the audience. One cannot progress in preaching without taking in the cultural, relational, spiritual, and emotional state of the people to whom he is preaching. If preaching was only intended to say what God has said, then Paul does not need to add this thought about all seeing Timothy’s progress. Preaching is progressed not only by a deeper understanding of what God has said in the Scriptures, but what people are saying in the streets. The preacher must listen to both intently. Progress in preaching is meant to benefit the people. One must know the people to most faithfully preach the Word.

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<sup>30</sup> Lea and Griffin, *I, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 138.

<sup>31</sup> Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 208.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

A clear definition of expository preaching must include the centrality of the Word of God and the character of the preacher. A heart for the Lord and the Lord's people must remain a personal cornerstone to any pulpit. A "close watch" on one's heart and one's teaching is essential to the development and deployment of healthy gospel churches. The "saving" Paul refers to in verse 16 is promised to preachers who do so and sanctification for all involved is the result.

### **Preaching That Rewards (1 Tim 5:17)**

Paul's last exhortation to be observed regarding the role of preaching and teaching is 1 Timothy 5:17. Paul is nearing the close of this letter and gives Timothy an exhortation to communicate to all the other elders surrounding Ephesus, including himself. He writes, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching." The word "rule" here refers to "guide, direct, or lead."<sup>33</sup> Paul is referring to pastors who guide and lead the church who should be worthy of double honor. Many commentators disagree on the exact meaning of "double honor," but the overall consensus from multiple commentators is that those who rule well should be given a double portion of honor both privately, publically, and financially. Lea and Griffin explain that this reference probably "consisted of the twin benefits of honor or respect and financial remuneration."<sup>34</sup> Paul adds to this exhortation, "especially those who labor in preaching and teaching." The Greek word *κοπιαω* is translated "labor," but can also be rendered as "work hard or toil,"<sup>35</sup> as well as "to grow weary, tired, exhausted,

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<sup>33</sup> Daniel C. Arichea and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to Timothy and to Titus*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 125.

<sup>34</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 155.

<sup>35</sup> Arichea and Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul's Letters*, 126.

or to labor with wearisome effort.”<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the teaching and preaching of sound doctrine must be understood, in light of this passage, to be both a wearisome labor and rewarding honor. The labor of preaching is not just in interpreting the Word but interpreting the world to which he is delivering the message. The work rewards. When the preacher exegetes the coming generation, the reward is not only the private, public, and financial honor, but seeing the work of God advance into the future. The preacher must labor at understanding the culture and delivering generationally-conscious sermons so that he may have the honor of seeing the future of gospel ministry advance. From this passage, a clearer definition of expository preaching emerges as a labor-intensive venture both in the preparation and presentation.

### **A Biblical Foundation for Expository Preaching from 2 Timothy**

#### **Preaching That God Approves (2 Tim 2:15)**

Paul’s second letter to young Timothy provides even more clarity in defining expository preaching. In Paul’s second letter, the emphasis on sound doctrine and teaching continue to remain a theme for Timothy’s ministry. Heretical opposition and healthy church members were at the forefront of Paul’s intentions for this letter. In 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul writes, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” Paul gives Timothy the right motivation for approval before God. He steers Timothy to “do your best” in presenting himself an approved worker of God. Timothy was to take every measure to make it his ultimate ambition to “obtain God’s approval.”<sup>37</sup> Paul is indicating that there is both an effective and ineffective way to gain God’s approval as a pastor.

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<sup>36</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 7:86.

<sup>37</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 215.

Paul describes the one who is approved as a “workman” with no shame. Lea and Griffin write, “The term workman was frequently used in reference to an agricultural laborer.”<sup>38</sup> This definition is most appropriate since Paul uses a very specific descriptive verb following this term. Paul further states that the one who is approved is the worker who is “rightly handling” the word of truth. Marvin Vincent writes regarding this term: “This term is from ὀρθός straight and τέμνειν to cut. Hence to cut straight, as paths; to hold a straight course; generally, to make straight; to handle rightly.”<sup>39</sup> Again, the words ὀρθός and τέμνειν together carry an agrarian tone referring to soughing straight with a plough.<sup>40</sup> Paul is trying to remind Timothy of the image of the worker who sows straight rows laboriously. This worker is to labor in cutting straight paths to God’s people from the “word of truth.” As Lea and Griffin explain, he was to be “accurate in delivering the message of truth. The truth is the gospel.”<sup>41</sup> Gospel preaching can go straight to the people of God when the preacher spends his time comprehending the audience. The preacher should labor at creating the straightest line between biblical truth and the lives of the people. The preacher must also look ahead to the coming generation to create the straightest lines into the future. Vincent articulates well the emphasis of Paul’s exhortation when he writes that Timothy should commit “to *divide* the word of truth, giving to each hearer what he needs: or, to separate it into its proper parts: or, to separate it from error: or, to cut straight through it, so that its inmost contents may be laid bare.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Lea and Griffin, *I, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 215.

<sup>39</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 4:302.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Lea and Griffin, *I, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 215.

<sup>42</sup> Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 4:302.

Paul states to Timothy that God allots his approval on the pastor/worker who, as Larson writes, “exhibits truth, love, and godliness in daily living, and who correctly handles the word of truth.”<sup>43</sup> In summarizing Paul’s exhortation for contemporary application, the pastor must frequently engulf himself in the Scriptures to understand the historical, contextual, and literary background of a text. This must be done in the preparation and presentation of an expository sermon. The preacher is an historian, an archeologist, and an artist. He must be an excavator in God’s Word. He must dig deep into the historical and theological mines of Scripture in order to present the timeless treasures of God’s truth. He must examine the contextual landscape of the Bible and then paint those truths on the souls of men. However, to paint those truths onto the souls of men, the preacher must first find the sociological and cultural canvas of his audience. Faithful expository preaching is a labor of love. The preacher must have a love for God’s Word and God’s people. This is the preaching that God approves.

### **Preaching That Equips (2 Tim 3:16-4:2)**

Paul’s final plea for Timothy regarding his preaching and teaching is the most extensive and clear. Second Timothy 3:16-4:2 were among Paul’s final words to Timothy while he was awaiting his own death. However, he does not leave Timothy uncertain regarding the calling and command on his life to preach the Word. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2,

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

Paul did not leave much for Timothy to ponder regarding the inspiration, effectiveness, and preaching of God’s Word. Paul picks up in verse 16 to reinforce a familiar truth.

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<sup>43</sup> Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 286.



Paul reminds Timothy of the “inspiration and usefulness of Scripture.”<sup>44</sup> The Scripture Paul is referring to is contextually the Old Testament. Paul is reminding Timothy that Old Testament Scripture has its source and distinctiveness in God himself.<sup>45</sup> Paul is declaring that all Scripture is inspired and empowered by God himself.

The first benefit of the breathed-out Word of God is teaching sound Christian doctrine.<sup>46</sup> Teaching denotes a positive aspect to Christian sanctification. On the other hand, the next benefit to Scripture is somewhat negative. Paul says Scripture is profitable for reproof. Lea writes, “Scripture can show sinners their failures, clarify the point of the mistake, and lead them to a new sense of peace and wholeness.”<sup>47</sup> While teaching instructs, reproof exposes. It is a refutation or a “convicting the erring of their error.”<sup>48</sup> The third benefit to Scripture is correcting. This term is only used once in the New Testament and implies Scripture aids individuals in altering their doctrine or personal lives to a right relationship with God.<sup>49</sup> The last benefit to Scripture is training. This term is used often in Scripture to describe the training a child gets from their parent to develop a skill or character trait.<sup>50</sup> Because Scripture is the universal tool in the sanctification process of a believer, preaching and teaching Scripture is essential.

With the benefits of Scripture laid out, Paul completes his exhortation in verse 17 by explaining that all four of these benefits cause the man of God to be fully equipped

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<sup>44</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 234-35.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>48</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 2:427.

<sup>49</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 237.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

for every good work. Paul addresses the benefits of Scripture for Timothy personally then shifts his focus to Timothy's ministry publically in chapter 4. Paul charges Timothy to preach the Word. The word "preach" refers to "herald." In Paul's day, a ruler had a special herald who made announcements to the people on behalf of the king or ruler. The "Word" Paul is referring to here is more than likely the gospel.<sup>51</sup> However, in light of the preceding verses, a clearer understanding for Paul's instruction was to preach both the message of salvation along with the moral and social commands that accompany it.<sup>52</sup> Paul then lays out what the ministry of preaching the word entails. To "be ready in season and out of season" is the requirement of the pastor, as Larson writes, "to view ministry as full-time, all the time, because faith involves all of life."<sup>53</sup> He then says to Timothy that preaching the Word will include reproofing, rebuking, and exhorting. Reproofing deals with correcting false teaching. Rebuking deals with correcting false living. Exhorting deals with encouragement. Timothy was to therefore preach the Word first to himself and then to his people. The pattern for expository preaching remains the same. Expository preaching must be rooted in the original text, personally applied first to the preacher, and then preached faithfully to a contemporary audience. Expository preaching impacts the current culture by not only addressing the false truths of the day among the hearers' lives but equips them to address the current issues of the day. Each generation has a set of specific theological and cultural issues that attack the church. Expository preaching that God approves seeks to understand and then apply biblical truth to these issues. To most faithfully accomplish expository preaching, a keen knowledge of the cultural and generational trends must be a consistent goal of the expositor. A major goal of the church

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<sup>51</sup> Lea and Griffin, *I, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 242-43.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 319.

is to contextualize the Gospel to the current and future generation. This type of pursuit is at the heart of God’s global mission for the world to know him.

### **Biblical Foundations for Generational Ministry**

To step faithfully into the future of Gospel ministry, the expository preacher must hold both the hand of expository preaching and the hand of generational ministry. Exegeting Scripture must always remain a non-negotiable element of faithful expository preaching. However, exegeting society must always remain the other side of the expository preaching coin. More specifically, carrying the message of God to the coming generation has always had its place in the metanarrative of Scripture.

### **Generational Ministry in Deuteronomy 6**

Generational ministry is most revealed clearly in Deuteronomy 6. The final sermon of Moses, found in Deuteronomy, sets the biblical precedent for generational ministry. Moses declares in Deuteronomy 6:1-9,

Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

In this exhortation, Moses is establishing a clear plea to transfer a love for God and for his commands to the next generation. Specifically, in verse 2 and 7, Moses is identifying the “sons and son’s son” and “your children” as the primary recipients of the Shema. Moses is connecting the commands of God to the coming generation. God is revealing a clear command through Moses, distinctly, that he is concerned about the next generations

knowing him. The image Moses uses for “teaching them diligently” is that of a sculptor with a chisel. Eugene Merrill urges, “It is the generations of the Israelites to come must receive and transmit the words of the Lord’s everlasting covenant revelation.”<sup>54</sup> God establishes in Deuteronomy 6 a clear command for the present generation to display in word and deed his glory and truth to the coming generation. It was “for all future generations” to whom Moses was writing.<sup>55</sup> While the emphasis of this passage is on the families of Israel teaching their children the purposes of God, a clear focus of God’s desire to impact a new generation is clear. God’s heart for spiritual transformation of a generation is spiritual transmitting to the coming generation. The emphasis of Deuteronomy 6 is not just on the command of God but on the coming generations. God is both immanent and transcendent. He sees eternity past and eternity future at the same time. He seeks to always impact a present generation so that they will impact the future generations. He chooses to operate within each generation and decrees that one generation make him known to another. Expository preaching must operate under a Deuteronomy 6 umbrella. The coming generations must have a place in the heart of the expository preacher because the coming generation is on the heart of God.

### **Generational Ministry in Psalm 78**

The theme of generational ministry and preaching continue throughout the Old Testament. The Psalms contain a clear emphasis on God’s heart to be known within each generation. Psalm 78 in articulating the importance of generational ministry. Psalm 78 is a retelling of Israel’s history up until David’s reign:

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he

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<sup>54</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 167.

<sup>55</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 136.

commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. (vv. 4-6)

In this Psalm, Asaph is not only retelling Israel's history, but defines the reason for which recalling God's faithfulness to Israel is important. According to Asaph, the "coming generation" and the "next generation" must know the deeds, wonders, and might of the Lord. Psalm 78 unveils the mission of God for reaching the coming generation. This passage reveals God's zeal for displaying his awesomeness to a new generation. Again, like Deuteronomy 6, the way in which the author describes generational ministry is through audible communication. The "telling" and "teaching" of God's actions and words impact the future generations. Generational awareness cannot be overstated in defining the role and responsibility of the expository preacher. The means by which the coming generation will know the Lord is through telling. The next generation would know the Lord through the communication of the character and commands of God. Expository preaching has a footstone in this passage. Preaching is telling what God has done and said. Of utmost importance, preaching must have an emphasis on telling the coming generations. Moreover, generational contextualization is vital to rightly applying this passage. According to J. A. Motyer, the "duty" (of God's people) is for each generation to pass on God's deeds and truth to the next generation according to the will of God in order that that the coming generations 'would trust in *God* and avoid the errors of the past.'<sup>56</sup> This was a tradition that the former generations had done for Asaph's generation. This was done so that "the psalmist's generation will tell the story of the great deeds of the Lord to the coming generation."<sup>57</sup> Generational ministry, empowered by the Spirit, was the catalyst for Asaph writing Psalm 78. The Old Testament over and over reveals that the heartbeat of God is for the advancement of his kingdom throughout all nations and all

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<sup>56</sup> J. A. Motyer, "The Psalms," in Carson et al., *New Bible Commentary*, 535.

<sup>57</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reyburn, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 681.

generations. Generational ministry has an essential place in the role of expository preaching. Cracking the communication code to the coming generation is a necessary part of expository preaching. The preacher must know how they communicate, what they are communicating, and who is communicating to them in order to deliver clear expository content. The expository preacher must possess a heart for the coming generation and the mind to grasp the coming generation. He must long to tell, and tell in the clearest ways, the goodness and glory of God.

### **Generational Ministry in the Practices of Jesus**

The gospels give clear evidence of Jesus' desire to impact each generation with his glorious gospel. Jesus personally demonstrated this desire with his openness to young people.<sup>58</sup> It is recorded multiple times in the Gospels where Jesus heals young people, incorporates young people to perform miracles, and uses the examples of their lives to teach older people. In Matthew 19:13-15 Jesus expresses his love and fondness of children:

Then children were brought to Him that He might lay His hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belong the kingdom of heaven." And He lay His hands on them and went away.

According to Craig Blomberg, this passage may in fact not mean children at all and these "children" could have been as old as thirteen years old. He writes, "One rabbinic tradition describes the custom of bringing a thirteen-year-old boy to the elders in Jerusalem at festival time 'to bless him and pray for him that he may be worthy to study the Torah and engage in good deeds.'"<sup>59</sup> This explanation seems to fit the historical

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<sup>58</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1992), 486.

<sup>59</sup> Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 295.

context of the biblical period. Even if the recipients were infants, the truth remains that Jesus is concerned for them. With that in mind, Jesus is making a powerful statement in his teaching: young people matter. Leon Morris writes, “Jesus is asserting that children are important. The attitude of the disciples toward them was all wrong.”<sup>60</sup> Jesus rebukes the disciples for their lack of ministerial concern for the young people and then blesses them before proceeding on his journey. Jesus thus ultimately declares His salvation is open to all ages and all generations.<sup>61</sup> In this short yet powerful account, Jesus sets a clear example for His people. Blomberg strongly emphasizes this truth about young people:

Jesus’ special concern for these children suggests that Christians should highly prize their young people. Child evangelism should remain a priority, especially in light of children’s particular openness to the gospel. Believers ought to treat their children as special recipients of God’s love even prior to their conscious commitment to Christ rather than emphasizing their lostness.<sup>62</sup>

Jesus embraced and communicated with these younger people. He prizes them. The expository preacher must seek to do the same. He must embrace them relationally and seek to understand how to most clearly communicate to them. The church must also embody the same attitude toward coming generations that Jesus did for these young people. His concern is for all ages and all generations to know Him. The heart of Jesus for the coming generation must become the heart of the expository preacher. He must craft generationally-conscious sermons so that he may eternally impact them, and seek to equip those in authority over them to do the same. His church must then exhibit a vibrant desire to see young people faithfully reached with the gospel in both generational ministry and expository preaching.

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<sup>60</sup> Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 487.

<sup>61</sup> William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew*, New Testament Commentary, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953-2001), 720.

<sup>62</sup> Blomberg, *Matthew*, 295-96.

## **Conclusion**

Expository preaching and generational mindfulness remain biblically inseparable. Expository preaching must be generationally contextualized. Both the Scriptures and the culture must be exegeted. When God's truth is proclaimed accurately and authentically to a coming generation, eternity can be impacted. Expository preaching and generational ministry bring momentum expository movements. God reveals Himself as a God who speaks. He reveals himself as a God who speaks through his written Word. He reveals himself as a God who uses humans to communicate on his behalf through the written Word. He has spoken through the Scriptures. He has spoken through the person and work of Jesus. Furthermore, He commands preachers to declare what he has already said and done through His Word and the work of his son. He commands that this preaching be done with the coming generations as one of the most targeted audiences. To most faithfully glorify God, the pastor must become a specialist in both preaching God's word as well as understanding and equipping the next-generation. He must know the timeless tools of expository preaching as well as the ever-shifting cultural make-up of the next generation. His preaching must remain biblically-grounded but evolve in delivery. The message must never change, but as the culture changes, the method must evolve. This process is called the expository evolution.



## CHAPTER 3

### CRAFTING THE EXPOSITORY EXCHANGE

#### **Introduction**

Preaching is art. With all great art, multiple components must be combined to create a masterpiece. Painting requires colors. Music requires notes. Poetry requires words. The preacher's task must be the same as that of any great artist. As a matter of fact, the preacher must have an even higher standard for excellence, artisanship, passion, and creativity. The preacher is both an historian and a newscaster. He is both an artist and a shepherd. The preacher must be able to take the colors of God's Word and paint them on canvas of people's souls. He must do his art with passion, love, creativity, preciseness, and skill. He must be able to craft a moment, inspired by the Holy Spirit, incased by the Word of God, and in sync with the current culture's makeup. Simply, he must take the ageless truth of God's Word and serve it passionately to God's people. Therefore, the preacher must know how to define and deliver expository sermons with passion and preciseness. However, preparing expository sermons is only one piece of a multifaceted ministry. The preacher must know to whom he is preaching. He must exegete both the Scriptures and society. He must know and love the people to which he is preaching. The truths of expository preaching remain timeless, but the trends of a certain generation are always time bound. Learning how to deliver expository sermons to a specific culture is an art the preacher must spend his lifetime crafting. Expository preaching must evolve to meet the needs of a new generation. That generation is Generation Z. Exposition and generational consciousness must be present to craft the expository evolution.

## A Contemporary Overview of Expository Preaching

### Defining Expository Preaching

Expository preaching begins with a simple yet profound truth: God speaks. Because God speaks, He also desires and deserves to be heard. J. I. Packer states, “The Bible shows God the Creator to be a communicator.”<sup>1</sup> God’s nature is such that he is committed to communicating with his creation. God’s most predominant and clear means by which he has communicated is Scripture. Mark Dever declares this truth by stating, “God must reveal himself. That’s the point of the Bible.”<sup>2</sup> Timothy Ward powerfully articulates the essence of God’s nature and God’s Word: “Throughout Christian history, the overwhelming predominant view of the Bible has been that it is itself the living and active Word of God. To say that the Bible is the Word of God is to say . . . that what the Bible says, God says.”<sup>3</sup>

The job of the expository preacher is to proclaim God’s written Word to God’s people. Packer wisely states, “The Bible text is the real preacher, and the role of the man in the pulpit . . . is simply to let the passages say their piece through him.”<sup>4</sup> In *Preach*, Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert share the clear motivation of preaching: “He speaks, and therefore we preach.”<sup>5</sup> Preaching is imperative to the health and life of the church. If God has chosen to speak to his people through his Word, then the preacher and his responsibility are vital. In *Expository Ministry*, Dan Dumas records John Stott’s words

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<sup>1</sup> J. I. Packer, “Introduction: Why Preach?” in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art*, ed. Samuel T. Logan, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Dever, *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 53.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2009), 122.

<sup>4</sup> Packer, “Introduction: Why Preach?,” 17.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert, *Preach: Theology Meets Practice* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 22.

regarding preaching: “Preaching is indispensable to Christianity.”<sup>6</sup> The Word of God must be heralded, heard, and heeded for a church to thrive. Dan Dumas wisely declares, “Expository preaching is a call to deliver from the pulpit what has already been delivered in the Scriptures.”<sup>7</sup> Bryan Chapell writes, “The meaning of the passage is message of the sermon.”<sup>8</sup> The importance of this ministry cannot be understated. According to Dever, preaching “is not only the first mark; it is far and away the most important of them all, because if you get this one right, all of the others should follow.”<sup>9</sup> Regarding his personal ministry of preaching, Dever goes on to say, “My main role, and the main role of any pastor, is expositional preaching.”<sup>10</sup>

Since God has spoken through his Word, the preacher must know his work. He must be able to define and deliver expository sermons. According to Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddox, *exposition* is “the process of laying open a biblical text in such a way that its original meaning is brought to bear on the lives of contemporary listeners.”<sup>11</sup> Augustine defined the preacher’s task as “to teach, to delight, to influence. To touch the mind, the heart, and the will.”<sup>12</sup> A clear articulation for expository preaching is the art of delivering what God has declared through Scriptures. However, to gather a more

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<sup>6</sup> R. Albert Mohler, “Expository Preaching,” in *A Guide to Expository Ministry*, ed. Dan Dumas (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2012), 18.

<sup>7</sup> Dan Dumas, “Expository Ministry,” in Dumas, *A Guide to Expository Ministry*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 32.

<sup>9</sup> Dever, *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*, 42.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>11</sup> Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddox, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 28.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Galli and Craig Brian Larson, *Preaching that Connects: Using Journalistic Techniques to Add Impact* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 19.

complete understanding of this ministry, several definitions in this grand venture need to be examined. *Expository preaching* has been defined numerous ways by numerous gospel leaders. To develop the clearest and most comprehensive definition of expository preaching one must examine multiple definitions from multiple expository leaders.

Phillips Brooks describes *preaching* as “truth poured through personality.”<sup>13</sup> According to Brooks, preaching and personality are inseparable. Dumas defines *expository preaching* by stating, “Expository preaching happens when a preacher lays open a biblical text so that its original meaning is brought to bear on the lives of contemporary listeners.”<sup>14</sup> Vines and Shaddox define *preaching* as “the oral communication of biblical truth by the Holy Spirit through a human personality to a given audience with the intent of enabling a positive response.”<sup>15</sup> They later define *expository sermons* as “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.”<sup>16</sup> Dever defines *expositional preaching* as “preaching takes for the point of a sermon the point of a particular passage of Scripture. . . . The preacher opens the Word and unfolds it for the people.”<sup>17</sup> Ward also strongly highlights the importance of context in expository preaching when he defines *preaching* as “a key function of good expository preaching is to explain the meaning and force of a passage when properly interpreted in light of its different contexts.”<sup>18</sup> In light of all these

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<sup>13</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 25.

<sup>14</sup> Dumas, “Expository Ministry,” 10.

<sup>15</sup> Vines and Shaddox, *Power in the Pulpit*, 27.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>17</sup> Dever, *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*, 44.

<sup>18</sup> Ward, *Words of Life*, 122.

definitions, Haddon Robinson seems to capture the complete essence of expository preaching in his definition. Robinson describes this ministry as

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.<sup>19</sup>

This definition encompasses a more comprehensive description of expository preaching. In conclusion, expository preaching is the Holy Spirit driven art of contextually discovering, personally applying, and accurately delivering the central truth(s) of a biblical passage to hearers in order that by the power of the Holy Spirit they may rightly apply this truth to their lives. This type of preaching unleashes the message of God by the might of God through the mouth of men. Preachers bring the faithfulness and the Spirit brings fruitfulness. Of this type of preaching, Martin Luther wisely said, “I simply taught, preached, and wrote God’s Word: otherwise I did nothing. . . . The Word did it all.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Defining Expository Preachers**

The faithful preaching of God’s Word demands the fruitful preparation of God’s man. Developing and delivering expository sermons is only half of the process of expository preaching. As previously stated, the “personally digesting” piece of expository preaching is inseparable from the rest of the process. Dumas wisely states, “The fruitfulness of a man’s ministry will never exceed that of his life.”<sup>21</sup> Credentials will never outrun character. Murray McCheyne explains, “A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hands of a holy God.”<sup>22</sup> The expository preacher must be a man of holiness, hungry for God’s Word, and humbly seeking God in prayer.

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<sup>19</sup> Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 21.

<sup>20</sup> Dever, *9 Marks of Healthy Church*, 54.

<sup>21</sup> Dumas, “Expository Ministry,” 12.

<sup>22</sup> Murray McCheyne, quoted in Packer, “Introduction: Why Preach?,” 13.

## **The Expository Preacher Must Be Holy**

One of the preacher's most powerful contributions to the health and life of his church is his personal holiness. Dumas simply states, "A noble calling requires noble character."<sup>23</sup> The highest calling of God demands the highest character of man. When Paul describes the qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3, all the qualifications regard the elder's character, except that he is "able to teach." Character matters. Chapell writes, "Character oozes out of us in our messages."<sup>24</sup> Preachers cannot separate their private heart from their public heralding for long. Biblical eldership is faithfully accomplished when Godly character and expository proclamation are aligned. Chappel continues, "A life of Godliness combined with clear explanations of Scripture's saving and sanctifying grace will engage the power of the Spirit for the glory of God."<sup>25</sup> Holy hands and pure hearts are lethal weapons in the pulpit. The pastor's holiness and unified devotion to Christ also seems to bear great fruit in the receptivity of the hearers. Chappel supports this claim by stating, "No truth calls louder for pastoral holiness than the link between a preacher's character and a sermon's reception."<sup>26</sup> Vines and Shaddox make this same point when they write, "Effective delivery and reception of the Word are tied to the related concepts of character and integrity."<sup>27</sup> Not only is the immediate receptivity of the hearers directly influenced by a preacher's holiness, but his long-term legacy is greatly defined by his holiness. The preacher's devotion to Christ, his love for this family, and for his people will most fully define his legacy. The preacher's life, as Chapell explains,

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<sup>23</sup> Dumas, "Expository Preaching," 12.

<sup>24</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 37.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>27</sup> Vines and Shaddox, *Power in the Pulpit*, 71.

will “give credence to the message”<sup>28</sup> Jerry Vines wisely states that the loudest sermon a preacher will preach is “the silent sermon of a godly life.”<sup>29</sup> The life of the messenger will be remembered more than the lines of the messages.

### **The Expository Preacher Must Be Hungry**

The greatest contribution to a preacher’s holiness and public faithfulness in the pulpit is his private hunger for God’s Word. A preacher must possess a child-like wonder for the Scriptures.<sup>30</sup> The powerful preaching of the Word of God is the result of private pruning from the Word of God. Dever wisely states, “A preacher should have his mind increasingly shaped by Scripture. He shouldn’t use Scripture as an excuse for what he already knows he wants to say.”<sup>31</sup> The mind and heart of the preacher must constantly be chiseled by the Holy Spirit’s application of Scripture. The commitment to daily intake the Word of God requires both devotion and discipline. The ministry of the Word requires worship and work, adoration and action. Robinson states, “True preaching comes when the loving heart and the disciplined mind are laid at the disposal of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>32</sup> This not only must happen in preparation for Sunday but preparation for every day. Robinson sums up the preacher’s sanctification: “Ultimately, God is more interested in developing messengers than messages, and because the Holy Spirit confronts us primarily through the Bible, we must learn to listen to God before speaking for God.”<sup>33</sup> The preacher must hear before he heralds. He must never get over the Word of God.

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<sup>28</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 38.

<sup>29</sup> Vines and Shaddox, *Power in the Pulpit*, 72.

<sup>30</sup> Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 22.

<sup>31</sup> Dever, *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*, 45.

<sup>32</sup> Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 27.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

## **The Expository Preacher Must Be Humble**

Every word of prayer is a private confession to God that the Christ-follower is limited. Christ-followers cannot fix their problems, they cannot change a circumstance, they are not the ones in control, they are not God. Thus, the preacher must lead out in prayer. He must be a man of humility; a man of prayer. Chapell declares, “Public ministry true to God’s purposes requires devoted private prayer.”<sup>34</sup> It has been said that Spurgeon would often say that he would rather teach one man to pray than ten men to preach. Vines writes, “The expositor can ensure the Spirit’s involvement in his preaching by means of his ongoing personal communion with the Father. Nurture your personal worship of the One on behalf of whom you speak.”<sup>35</sup> The preacher and prayer are undividable components of faithful expository ministry. Prayerless preaching is powerless preaching. In the development of the expository preacher, Robinson offers, “Preaching is the art of making a preacher and delivering that! A commitment to expository preaching should develop the preacher into a mature Christian. As we study our Bibles, the Holy Spirit studies us. As we prepare expository sermons, God prepares us.”<sup>36</sup> Holiness, hunger, and humility are foundational practices for expository preaching.

### **Delivering Expository Sermons**

#### **The Precision of Preaching**

Expository preaching must be precise. Chapell states, “The preacher’s mission and calling is to explain to God’s people what the Bible says.”<sup>37</sup> This type of preaching

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<sup>34</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centred Preaching*, 33.

<sup>35</sup> Vines and Shaddox, *Power in the Pulpit*, 39.

<sup>36</sup> Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 26.

<sup>37</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 30.



takes precision. For preaching to be precise, the preparation must be precise. Preachers must wade deep into the river waters of biblical contexts and return with the original meaning and central idea of the passage. Of this entire process, Robinson declares, “Expositors exegete, we struggle with the meaning of the biblical writer. Then, as people of God, we wrestle with how God wants to change us. Finally, as preachers, we ponder what God wants to say to the congregation through us.”<sup>38</sup> The preacher must work his way back into the biblical world as a historian. He must smell and hear the biblical city in which the author is writing to and from.<sup>39</sup> The preachers tools are exegesis, hermeneutics, and homiletics.<sup>40</sup> Robinson describes accurately the preacher’s role in precise preparation: “A sermon should be a bullet, not buckshot.”<sup>41</sup> Not only must the preacher mine the central theme, but he must be able to, according to Haddon Robinson, “express its theme in a short, pregnant sentence as clear as crystal.”<sup>42</sup> Preaching precision is one of the most telling attributes of preaching preparation.

### **The Passion of Preaching**

Passion and preaching should be inseparable. The Scriptures reveal a God who is passionate about his own glory, his Word, His church, and His world. Preachers, therefore, must possess passion. Preaching must be prepared, personally applied, and proclaimed with passion. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, passion in the pulpit has the greatest potential to ignite passion in the pews. Passion is the universally preferred method for all public speaking. According to Ted Talk expert Carmine Gallo, passion is the most

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<sup>38</sup> Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 27.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>40</sup> Vines and Shaddox, *Power in the Pulpit*, 27.

<sup>41</sup> Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 35.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

influential characteristic of all public speakers.<sup>43</sup> Logan strongly urges that the preacher must “not to talk for the text, but let the text talk through him.”<sup>44</sup> Passion-filled expository preaching will always have a place in world changing ministry.

### **The Purpose of Preaching**

Application is one of the primary purposes of exposition. Packer declares, “Preaching is essentially teaching plus application.”<sup>45</sup> The Scriptures were supplied to be applied.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the final stage of sermon delivery is sermon application. The preparation can be precise, and the passion can be present, but without application the expository sermon loses its purpose. Dever describes this purpose: “We preach with two main aims, to edify and to evangelize.”<sup>47</sup> Preachers are called to rightly apply the Scriptures to the hearers by first edifying the saints and then secondly evangelizing the lost. Timothy Keller writes, “Sound preaching arises out of two loves—love of the Word of God and love of people—and from them both a desire to show people God’s glorious grace.”<sup>48</sup> Biblically-centered and culturally-relevant application is a primary goal in expository preaching. If culturally-relevant application is a primary goal in expository preaching, then the preacher has a second responsibility. The preacher must know the culture to which he preaches. The preacher must exegete Scripture and exegete society. The preacher’s occupation has roots in both biblical history and contemporary sociology. Furthermore, the preacher needs to study the coming culture. For it is the coming

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<sup>43</sup> Carmine Gallo, *Talk like Ted: The 9 Public-Speaking Tips of the World’s Top Minds* (New York: St. Martins, 2014), 22.

<sup>44</sup> Packer, “Introduction: Why Preach?,” 8.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 27.

<sup>47</sup> Dever and Gilbert, *Preach*, 52.

<sup>48</sup> Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 14.

generation that will shape the future of society and the church. The expository preacher who wants to have an ongoing gospel influence on the culture must pursue a working knowledge of the future generations.

## **A Contemporary Overview of Generation Z**

### **Understanding Generation Z**

Solomon wrote, “A generation goes and a generation comes” (Eccl 1:4). Every generation is marked with overarching principles, characteristics, and creates a certain impact on the current culture. Understanding the next generation is crucial to any entity seeking to influence the future. The next generation is Generation Z. James Avery White wisely writes, “Drop everything and start paying attention to Generation Z, which now constitutes 25.9 percent of the US population.”<sup>49</sup> Gen Z consists of nearly 69 million students.<sup>50</sup> Sociologists slightly disagree with their age range, but commonly anyone born between 1994-2010 constitutes Generation Z. Gen Z is currently in anywhere from the third grade to grad school. This is a pretty wide range, however, because of some undeniable similarities, sociologists agree on this age range. To engage and influence Gen Z, one must first understand them.

To understand Gen Z, one must ask the question: what is shaping them? What shapes a generation now defines a generation later. Barna has identified six forces influencing this generation and how they are shaping them.

Technology is the first force and is by far the most prevalent.<sup>51</sup> According to multiple sources, Generation Z is “hyper-connected.” They have never known a world

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<sup>49</sup> James Avery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 37.

<sup>50</sup> George Barna, *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs, and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (Carroll Stream, IL: Barna Group, 2018), 13.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

that is not at their fingertips. Barna researchers exclaim, “The internet is at the core of Gen Z’s development, a uniquely powerful influence on their worldview, mental health, daily schedule, sleep patterns, relationships, and more.”<sup>52</sup> They are often referred to as “screen agers” because nearly 94 percent of them spend anywhere from two to eight hours a day staring at a screen.<sup>53</sup> Because of constant access to the internet, they are the first generation that does not need a leader to inform them on a topic.<sup>54</sup> Also, because of the internet, they are communicating with each other constantly. However, because of the lack of face-to-face connection, many feel disconnected emotionally and relationally. They are hyper-connected to each other but still feel emotionally disconnected from significant relationships. Generation Z is communicating with each other but not connecting with each other.

The second force shaping Gen Z is their cumulative worldview—what they believe about the world. Barna explains, “The worldview (and in turn their moral code) is highly inclusive and individualistic. This diverse, open-minded group of young people is sensitive to others’ feelings and experiences, and wary of asserting any one view as right or wrong.”<sup>55</sup> In essence, their worldview is post-Christian. According to Barna research, “the percentage of Gen Z that identifies as atheist is double that of U.S. adults.”<sup>56</sup> In fact, Barna states, “The younger the generation, the more post-Christian it is.”<sup>57</sup> It is not simply that Gen Z has rejected Christianity, but they do not know much about it.

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<sup>52</sup> Barna, *Gen Z*, 12.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>54</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 21.

<sup>55</sup> Barna, *Gen Z*, 12.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>57</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 49.

White declares, “The degree of spiritual illiteracy is simply stunning.”<sup>58</sup> They are not simply leaving Christianity, they do not know much about the Christ they are leaving. White goes on to say, “They do not know what the Bible says. They do not know what the cross is about . . . they don’t have a memory of the Gospel.”<sup>59</sup> According to White, 21.3 percent of Harvard’s 2019 class identified as agnostic<sup>60</sup> Researchers are describing Gen Z as the “nones,” “they are religiously unaffiliated.”<sup>61</sup> They are replacing Christianity with a pursuit of happiness. According to Barna, “Half of Gen Z agree that happiness is my ultimate goal in life.”<sup>62</sup> Although they are becoming less and less Christian, they are becoming more and more social-justice minded.<sup>63</sup> They intend to change the world.<sup>64</sup> Seemiller and Grace write, “Given that we found the vast majority of Generation Z students are liberal or moderate in their views on social issues, it would not be unexpected if Gen Z opts out of organized religion to reconcile their faith and social beliefs.”<sup>65</sup> They see the church as too closely connected to conservative politics and cannot reconcile their social stances with organized religion.

The third force shaping Gen Z is their identity—what they believe about themselves. According to Seemiller and Grace, they describe themselves as loyal, thoughtful, compassionate, open-minded, responsible, determined, not conservative,

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<sup>58</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 64.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Barna, *Gen Z*, 14.

<sup>63</sup> Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace, *Generation Z Goes to College* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 45.

<sup>64</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 21.

<sup>65</sup> Seemiller and Grace, *Generation Z Goes to College*, 43.

interactive but not physically active, and unified.<sup>66</sup> They also have a significant case of fear. Fear seems to be the loudest wrecking force in their lives. They fear being rejected and have FOMO (fear of missing out). Regarding sexual orientation, 33 percent of Gen Z believes gender identity is how a person feels.<sup>67</sup> They are also an overwhelmed generation. Because the content they consume on a consistent basis from the internet, 94 percent feel overwhelmed by lifestyle, 44 percent say they struggle with depression, and 10 percent have considered suicide.<sup>68</sup>

The fourth force shaping Gen Z is security—what they believe will make them happy. Gen Z, as previously stated, is seeking happiness as their ultimate goal in life. Moreover, they believe that financial security, brought about by wealth, will provide true happiness. Gen Z possess an entrepreneur spirit.<sup>69</sup> According to Barna, they have “come of age in a post 9/11 nation reeling from the 2008 recession and they are anxious about their future.”<sup>70</sup> According to White, they are growing up to believe financial success will provide personal security.<sup>71</sup> Security is seen as financial security built by an entrepreneurial career.

The fifth force shaping Gen Z is diversity—what they believe about others. They are diverse for two prominent reasons. First, the internet has made their world small. They have grown up in a world with immediate access to web cams streaming live footage of Calcutta. Gen Z has grown up in a world where they can communicate with someone in Australia faster than they can make their bed. Their social circles are

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<sup>66</sup> Seemiller and Grace, *Generation Z Goes to College*, 45.

<sup>67</sup> Barna, *Gen Z*, 13.

<sup>68</sup> Tim Elmore, *Generation iY* (Atlanta: Poet Gardener, 2010), 19.

<sup>69</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 21.

<sup>70</sup> Barna, *Gen Z*, 12.

<sup>71</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 21.

global.<sup>72</sup> Second, the US demographic is rapidly changing. Gen Z is represented by 63 percent white, the Hispanic population of Gen Z is 21 percent, 17 percent is black, and 9 percent is Asian.<sup>73</sup> The demographic of Gen Z is more racially diverse than any other generation. There is less white people and more minorities in their generation than in any of the other generations. They seem to respect, appreciate, accept, and celebrate people of different races more than many of the generations that have come before them.

The sixth force shaping Gen Z is their parents—who they belong to. Fifty percent of Gen Z say their parents are their primary role model.<sup>74</sup> However, with most of their parents being a part of Gen X, the dynamic is not always healthy. Gen X parents traditionally fall into one of two categories: overprotective parents or under protective parents. They are either described as helicopter parents or free-range parents.<sup>75</sup> Devastatingly, Gen Z’s parents are actually a bad blend of both, under protective in some areas and overprotective in others. Gen Z’s parents will not let them walk to school but will give them an Apple device at age seven. These parents are afraid of the perceived predators at Walmart but not concerned about the predators on the web. This style of parenting seems to foster the fear-based culture of Gen Z. Barna writes that Gen Z describes this type of parenting as “double-minded”.<sup>76</sup> Whatever the parenting style they are under, Gen Z is still being heavily influenced by their parents.

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<sup>72</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 21.

<sup>73</sup> Barna, *Gen Z*, 30.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

## **Impacting Generation Z**

Gen Z will propose new challenges for gospel ministry, but all is not lost. The church must get intentionally creative to reach and teach them. William E. Horden said, “Every generation must translate the gospel into its unique cultural context.”<sup>77</sup> Ronnie Floyd believes the pastor has three biblical responsibilities, “to feed, lead, and intercede.”<sup>78</sup> The pastor to Gen Z must rethink how he will feed, lead, and intercede for this coming generation. To impact Gen Z, the church will need to first and foremost pray. The church will need to pray that new messengers will preach an old message in new ways to reach a new generation.

**The messenger to Gen Z.** To effectively lead and preach to Gen Z, certain characteristics must define the messenger. While a multitude of characteristics make effective gospel leaders, three stand out from multiple sources that must mark the Gen Z messenger.

First, the messenger must be trustworthy. Gen Z does not trust preachers. They have grown up in a digital age where horror stories of pastors’ moral failures are daily news. Seemiller explains, “Only 8 percent of Generation Z identified religious leaders as their first choice of all role models.”<sup>79</sup> They also do not trust the church. White argues that Gen Z sees the church as “too concerned with money and power, too involved in politics and too focused on rules.”<sup>80</sup>

Instead, they want to be a part of organizations and follow leaders who are trustworthy. To gain trustworthiness, Tim Elmore suggests, “The more in your face your

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<sup>77</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 95.

<sup>78</sup> Ronnie Floyd, *10 Things Every Minister Needs to Know* (Green Forrest, AR: New Leaf Press, 2006), 37.

<sup>79</sup> Seemiller and Grace, *Generation Z Goes to College*, 162.

<sup>80</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 74.



words are, the more trust you will earn . . . be blunt, truthful, and straightforward.”<sup>81</sup>

They are seeking leaders who are honest and holy. To accomplish trustworthiness the messenger must also be transparent. Seemiller says, “They appreciate honesty and authenticity from those who lead them.”<sup>82</sup> Simply, they want real leaders they can trust.

Second, the messenger must be trained. Gen Z has access to a myriad of topics within seconds is unlike any generation before. They value education because they believe education is key to financial security. They are educated on topics that seem to stand in contrast to Christianity, such as evolution, sexuality, and social issues. Therefore, the messenger must be educationally sharp. He must be a constant learner. Not only is theological training vital to the future church, it is vital to reach Gen Z. However, it goes further than the seminary walls. Gospel messengers to Gen Z must maintain a constant diet of new content. Because their world is ever-changing, the messenger’s wisdom must be ever-growing. One of the fastest ways for Gen Z to disregard a leader is to believe that the leader is less knowledgeable about a topic than they are. They are the first generation that does not need leaders to gain information and training. If the messenger is not informed, Gen Z will bypass them. It has been said that interested people are interesting people. If the messenger ceases to be interested in culture, theology, art, social issues, literature, technology, etc., then the messenger will cease to be interesting to Gen Z.

Third, the messenger must be passionate. According to one Gen Z student, “My ideal learning environment is with an instructor who is both highly knowledgeable of the subject and deeply passionate for teaching students.”<sup>83</sup> Prepared and passionate leaders will be the ones at the forefront of reaching Gen Z. Passion is the single most

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<sup>81</sup> Elmore, *Generation iY*, 185.

<sup>82</sup> Seemiller and Grace, *Generation Z Goes to College*, 193.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

influential factor in public speaking. In a hyper-connected and over-entertained world, if the messenger is not passionate about the gospel then Gen Z will struggle to hear them.

**The message to Gen Z.** Generation Z must see the surpassing worth and beauty of Jesus! Gen Z will not come to the church. The church must take the riches of knowing Jesus to them. Expository preaching can be a powerful tool to engage Gen Z. However, expository preaching must evolve. Gen Z talks and learns in different ways than previous generations. Therefore, a new style of expository preaching must emerge. Certain principles and practices must help guide the expositor to craft expository sermons to Gen Z. Antoine De Saint-Exupery says, “If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.”<sup>84</sup> The responsibility of the messenger is to show Gen Z the eternal immensity of Jesus, but he must understand how to best communicate to Gen Z. The following is a list of helps based on Gen Z research that appears to create pathways of communication to Gen Z.

The first help in expository preaching to Gen Z is conciseness. When a missionary goes to a foreign field, their first job is simple: learn to communicate with the people. Missionaries have the immediate responsibility of determining the culture and communication style by which they will engage their people. Preaching to Gen Z requires an “under the hood” look at how they learn and communicate. Because of social media, Gen Z processes information fast. They do not want blogs, they want the summarizing title of the blog. They do not want books, they want blurbs. They do not want to read someone’s life story, they want to see someone’s Instagram story. Consequently, the message to Gen Z must be concise. Conciseness does not necessarily mean short, it means simple. The message to Gen Z needs to be an arrow and not an arsenal. They long for

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<sup>84</sup> Thomas Koulopoulos and Dan Keldsen, *The Gen Z Effect: The Six Forces Shaping the Future of Business* (New York: Bibliomotion, 2014), 193.

simplicity again because 94 percent of them feel overwhelmed by life.<sup>85</sup> The expository sermon to Gen Z must be a laser. The central point of the sermon must be simple and stunning. They are truly the less-is-more generation. To impact Gen Z, one must be concise.

The second help in expository preaching to Gen Z is creativity. Not only must the expository sermon be simple to understand, but it must be stunning to behold. Preaching must be an “experience that captures their imagination” and the preacher must ask the question of every sermon, “how can I say it creatively?”<sup>86</sup> Being creative in expository preaching means to be “predictably unpredictable.” Tim Elmore suggests that this means one must get “try to engage different learning styles in a single message”<sup>87</sup> It calls for visual engagement. The overwhelming majority of Gen Z is visually oriented. Because of technology, they have been conditioned to think in pictures, videos, and colors. White explains, “They are visually oriented and informed.”<sup>88</sup> Consequently, to reach them spiritually one must engage them visually. This is not a new concept; it is an ancient truth. Socrates wisely stated, “The soul does not think without a picture.”<sup>89</sup> However, the way in which the communicator engages Gen Z visually is unique and specific because of the hyper-tech world in which they live. This not only must happen during the sermon, but it must happen immediately into the sermon. Elmore says, “As communicators, we have to grab their attention up front, demonstrating swiftly that our content is relevant.”<sup>90</sup> To impact their eternity, the message must impact them immediately. Dan Schawbel,

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<sup>85</sup> Elmore, *Generation iY*, 19.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>88</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 118.

<sup>89</sup> Elmore, *Generation iY*, 174.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

managing partner of Millennial Branding of New York, prophetically says of Gen Z, “If marketing firms don’t communicate in five words and a big picture, they will not reach this generation.”<sup>91</sup> The central theme of the message must engage both their creative right brain and their logical left brain. Elmore writes, “Give them a point for their left brain and a picture for their right brain.”<sup>92</sup> The students of Gen Z are creatives. Another way to cultivate creativity in preaching is to create a sermon study environment before the preaching moment. Gen Z wants to be taught with, not at. Seemiller and Grace write that Gen Z “wants to be involved in the learning process with the instructor and not just be recipients of knowledge.”<sup>93</sup> Seemiller and Grace further explain that they are “self-reliant learners”<sup>94</sup> and interpersonal learning is one of the most preferred study styles. Consequently, one can have members of Gen Z look up facts about context, culture, and content of a specific biblical text and then bring what have gathered together in a pre-sermon study session. This style of learning is called “reverse mentoring.”<sup>95</sup> In conclusion, they are artists, musicians, dreamers, and entrepreneurs. Preaching that is creative has great potential to engage Gen Z.

The third help in expository preaching to Gen Z is apologetic. As previously described, Gen Z is moderate to liberal. They cannot reconcile their political views with conservative Christianity. Therefore, preaching must abide in a world of modern-day apologetics. Frequently, generationally conscious expository preaching must answer with the question, “What is up with . . .”<sup>96</sup> Gen Z is asking, “What is up with church’s stance

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<sup>91</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 117.

<sup>92</sup> Elmore, *Generation iY*, 185.

<sup>93</sup> Seemiller and Grace, *Generation Z Goes to College*, 204.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>95</sup> Koulopoulos and Keldsen, *The Gen Z Effect*, 195.

<sup>96</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 130.

on homosexuality, gender identification, social justice, abortion, etc.?” Subsequently, the message must frequently address these issues with God’s truth. The message to Gen Z must be the biblical call to repent of their sins, not their views. The church is creating a chasm between themselves and Gen Z by preaching a moralistic mind shift and not an eternal life change. To Gen Z the church is preaching “change your views and we will accept you.” The church is preaching government and not gospel. The church must create a culture of including people. Elmore explains, “If you hope to get them to embrace an idea—embrace them first.”<sup>97</sup> If the church desires to engage them, then the church must embrace them. However, the church must also preach the Word. White exclaims, “If we teach the Bible as the very Word of God, then we have unleashed revelation itself.”<sup>98</sup> Another aspect of being contemporary is being practical. Seemiller and Grace highlight the importance of contemporary relevance by connecting influence with practicality. They explain that for Gen Z, “Practical makes perfect . . . useful and relevant.”<sup>99</sup> Another component of being contemporary is igniting cause. Gen Z needs to be exposed to a cause to ignite passion for a course.<sup>100</sup> The cumulative work of preaching must create a culture of mission and purpose. To be contemporary, one must connect Gen Z to God’s big story. They need vision. If they can see it, they will be it. Elmore defines this purpose as “igniting a vision for their future, based on what is inside of them.”<sup>101</sup> Gen Z wants to feel called not driven.<sup>102</sup> In conclusion, to be an effective expositor to Gen Z, one must engage Gen Z using conciseness, creativity, and apologetics.

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<sup>97</sup> Elmore, *Generation iY*, 50.

<sup>98</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 97.

<sup>99</sup> Seemiller and Grace, *Generation Z Goes to College*, 176.

<sup>100</sup> Elmore, *Generation iY*, 159.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

## CHAPTER 4

### PHILOSOPHICAL AND PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS FOR CRAFTING GENERATIONALLY-CONSCIOUS EXPOSITORY SERMONS FOR GENERATION Z

#### **Expository Preaching Competence of Generation Z**

Preachers have to know their people. Exegeting an audience is often a neglected step in expository preaching. The Expository Preaching Competence survey was vitally important to understand the current level of expository sermon competence and comprehension of the Gen Z students at the Paragould campus.<sup>1</sup> The criteria for the project was that the participants had to be born after 1994 and were a part of the Paragould Campus. Thirteen students fit the criteria and took the survey. I needed to know how much they knew about and what they expect from expository preaching. The insights gleaned from this survey were revealing and rich. They proved extremely helpful in formulating the later paradigm for generationally-conscious expository sermons to Gen Z.

The results of the competence survey were fascinating. In this survey, I asked the students fifteen questions regarding expository preaching, their experience with it, and their expectation of it. The results from the survey were clarifying and brought great selectivity to the project. To display the data from the surveys, I gathered all the answers and then formulated the overall results. This section explains the averaged or comprehensive results of the answers from each question.

The first question was, “How long have you listened to sermons?” With this question, I wanted to gain an understanding of their experience with listening to sermons. This length of time helps give credibility to their insights. The results varied from seven

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1 for the survey.

years to their entire life. This group's average length of time listening to sermons was thirteen years.

The second question was, "What has been your all-time favorite sermon and why?" I asked this question because I wanted to see if there would be similarities in their "why" explanations. Interestingly, their responses concluded that two themes emerged from this question: fear and passion. Nearly half of the students indicated a sermon on overcoming fear as their favorite. They referenced different sermons, but all had to do with fear. This discovery was a fascinating. The second most apparent theme was the preacher's passion. The topics may have varied but what made it their favorite sermon was because the preacher preached with passion.

The third question was, "Do you have any type of spiritual routine before you hear a sermon?" I asked this question because I wanted to know how prepared they were before hearing a sermon, and if they had any type of spiritual process with which to hear a sermon. The overwhelming response was that they pray and sing. I believe this answer was alluding to the public praying and public singing done before the sermon. None of the students had a pre-sermon routine.

The fourth question was, "How long is too long for a sermon?" I asked this question to see if there was a common window of time they at which they began to mentally "check out" The answers ranged from thirty minutes to an hour and a half. However, the average length time for a "too long" sermon was 58 minutes. After an hour, most of students are mentally done and ready for the preacher to be verbally done.

The fifth question was, "What distracts you during a sermon often?" "What is drawing their attention away from the sermon?" The responses were people, phone, to do lists, kids, and life thoughts. However, nearly 70 percent said people were the most distracting.

The sixth question was, "What is the most important factor in evaluating a sermon?" I wanted to know how they evaluate each sermon, as well as the basis for their

receptivity to a sermon. The responses were all similar. Three themes emerged from their responses: authority, passion, and application. Every response dealt with one of these three themes. Regarding authority, they wanted to know what the Bible preached. One even wrote, “I want the Word over stories.” Regarding passion, they wanted to see the preacher passionate about the passage. The phrases “passion,” “keep my attention,” and “spirit-filled” were used often. Regarding application, they wanted to know at the end of the sermon did this apply to their life. Application was the most referenced response. Over half the participants put this on their responses. Phrases like “present day application,” “my life application,” “validity,” and “relatable and applicable” were used for their evaluations.

The seventh question was, “What is the most important characteristic of a preacher?” The results on this question were the most varied of all the responses. The responses were “emotional investment, humility, obedience and passion, energy and passion, integrity, genuine, intense, not predictable three-point sermon, relatability, effective communicator, vulnerable, simple, and connectivity.” The responses indicated what students value most in a preacher: that he is passionate, holy, transparent, simple, and loving.

The eighth item on the survey was a series of Likert scale questions. On a scale of 1-6, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = indifferent, 4 = agree, 5 = somewhat agree, and 6 = strongly agree they had to personally rate each question. The following are the questions with their average answers listed on the right side of the questions.

- a. I’m excited when I sit down to hear a sermon – 5.46
- b. I get the same out of a sermon online as I do sitting in a service – 2.15
- c. I love when the preacher tells stories – 5.6
- d. I leave most sermons not sure how I’m supposed to apply the text – 2
- e. I pray before I walk into a service to hear a sermon – 3.7



- f. Sermons are boring to me – 1.6
- g. I'm not sure how to evaluate whether a sermon was Biblical or not – 2.2
- h. I talk about the sermon with others after the service – 3.8
- i. I consistently apply the sermon in a real tangible way weekly – 3
- j. It's very hard for me to focus during a sermon – 1.8
- k. I trust the preacher and believe he is delivering a Biblical sermon – 5.7
- l. I trust most preachers – 3.4
- m. A sermon that has multiple points is hard to comprehend – 2.3
- n. A sermon with one major point is easy to comprehend – 4
- o. Most of the preachers I listen to lack passion – 2
- p. Hearing a weekly sermon is a vital part of my week – 5.9

The average of all these scores shows a consistency with their previous responses. Overall, question 8 shows that they value passionate applicable preaching.

Statement 9 was probably the most fascinating of all the competence questions. The statement was, "I love when the preacher uses the following types of illustrations (or active learning approaches) (circle top 3)." The following are the examples of illustrations and how many times this was marked as a "top 3" choice by one of the students.

- a. Stories about themselves – 13
- b. Stories about historical figures – 5
- c. Videos – 7
- d. Asks rhetorical questions – 1
- e. Reads from a quote from a book – 3
- f. Tells stories about people my age – 8
- g. Shows pictures – 1
- h. Gets us in small groups after the sermon – 0
- i. Asks us to get up during or after the sermon to "do" something – 1

Every student surveyed said that they love when preachers tell stories about themselves. This further supports the overwhelming data and research that says that Gen

Z wants transparent leaders. They want to know their leaders. They want to hear their successes, failures, struggles, fears, and victories. They want to know how they relate to the man on the platform. They are a “me too” generation. They want to be able to say while listening to a communicator, “that’s me too.” The second most recorded answer was stories about people their own age. This generation, like all generations, love stories, and according to this survey, they prefer simple stories about real people over any other illustration types. The third answer was videos. This makes sense since a video is typically telling a story of something or someone. Also, this make sense because social media is the primary information intake vehicle for Gen Z. They are constantly watching YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat. They are constantly watching stories through videos. Society has trained them to access information through videos.

Statements 10 through 15 were “I perceive” questions based on personal observations. With each of these questions they marked either strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, disagree, strongly disagree. Statement 10 was, “I don’t think preaching is as relevant to my generation as in previous generations.” The overwhelming response to this statement was strongly disagree. One student marked somewhat agree and two marked disagree. When asked to explain, 10 students said something to the extent of, “My generation needs preaching more than ever.” These students do not perceive that preaching has lost its impact on this generation.

Statement 11 was, “I receive relevant truth from the sermons I hear and know how to rightly apply it to my life.” All of the students on this statement marked agree, somewhat agree, or strongly agree. It seems the students feel strongly that sermons have a relevant place in their lives and are eager to rightly apply it to their lives.

Statement 12 was, “In general, do you trust preachers and if so explain?.” I asked this question because I wanted to see their real perception of preachers and what they base their preacher trust on. Trusting the communicator is an essential leadership principle for any organization, but is especially true of preaching. They all responded

again with either agree or strongly agree. However, their explanations were intriguing. They articulated two major factors for preacher trust: biblical truth and knowability. The students said that if the preacher “preaches truth and not just his opinion” then their trust is fortified in the preacher. Biblical content earned trust. If he preaches what the Bible says, these Gen Z students were more than likely to trust the preacher. The second basis for preacher trust was that they are able to know the preacher “off the platform.” When the knowability of the preacher was met, the trust level rose exponentially according to these students.

Questions 13, 14, and 15 dealt with listening to sermons. Question 13 was, “Do you feel you listen adequately to sermons?” Again, the overwhelming response was either strongly agree or agree. Question 14 was, “Do you feel you know how to effectively listen to sermons?” The response was a little less strong and most marked somewhat agree. Question 15 was, “Have you ever been taught how to listen to sermons?” While the answers to 13 and 14 were strong, on question 15, all thirteen students said they have never been taught how to listen to sermons. This is important since the other side of the expository preaching coin is expository listening. To more faithfully reach Generation Z, the communicator must train them on how to practice expository listening.

### **Concluding Observations**

Overall, the Expository Sermon Competence surveys proved effective in painting a picture of these students’ sermon competence, sermon style preference, and sermon receptivity. The survey revealed timeless trends in expository preaching, but it also revealed several unique generational trends. The themes can be divided into two categories: the preacher and the sermon. These Generation Z students had unifying opinions and preferences on both categories.

First, regarding the preacher, five themes seem to rise to the surface. These students seemed to agree that they desire a pastor who is passionate, transparent, personable, connected, and holy. Passionate seemed to show up in every response in

some form or fashion. Literally, the word “passion” and “passionate” were consistent responses to multiple questions. One student even wrote “intense” in their description of the most important characteristic of their preacher. These students prized passion. Second, regarding transparency, the students stressed that they want to hear the inner workings of the preacher’s life. They wanted to know his stories, his faults, and the real him. Words like “genuine,” “vulnerable,” and “real” were peppered throughout the responses. Third, regarding personable, these students wanted a leader they knew or at least felt like they knew. The word “relatable” and the phrase “emotional investment” were two of the most descriptive words regarding being personable. These students wanted to know their leader. They valued a relationship with their leader. Fourth, regarding connected, the students desired a preacher who connected with them. Multiple times the word “connectivity” was used. While they want the timeless truth of the Word, they want a pastor who understands them, their world, and knows how to connect to them. They realize the pastor is not their age, so when a pastor puts forth the effort to connect to them on their level it communicates love. It shows that the pastor loves them enough to understand them and ultimately connect to them. Last, regarding holiness, the students wanted a man of character. They did not want a fake, a hypocrite, or a preacher who is harboring secret sin. They have seen too many high-profile preachers fall, and they dearly value the prize of a holy pastor. This theme was somewhat surprising since they value authenticity and transparency but also holiness. They want their pastor to be real and the real deal. They want him to be honest and holy. They want to know his faults, but they do not want him to fall. Words like “humility” and “Spirit-filled” found their place in these responses.

Not only did the students articulate themes for the preacher but also for the sermon. Concerning the sermon, three themes emerged: applicability, authoritative, and simplicity. First, the overwhelmingly predominant theme for sermons were applicable. Words like “applicable” and “practical” were everywhere in the survey responses. One student wrote regarding what is most important in a sermon, “I need to know how this

applies to my life!” Gen Z wants to do something with the sermon. The second theme for the sermon was authoritative. They want bold truth. I believe this is a reaction to post-modernity. They want to be “hit with the truth” as one of them wrote. Many believe what is most important is that “the Word was preached.” They do not want what a preacher suggests but what the Bible says. The third predominant sermon theme was simplicity. These students value simplicity. They are an Apple generation. They want the Twitter version of the sermon. “Simplicity” was used multiple times for the most important characteristic of a sermon evaluation. While simplicity may be defined by some people as “dumbed-down,” for the students in this survey, “simple” means laser-focused. They want profound truth but summarized in a profound statement.

### **Expository Preaching Insight for Generation Z**

To better understand how to effectively and faithfully expound the Scriptures to a new generation, other voices on this venture had to be heard. To develop a generationally-conscious paradigm for expository preaching, one must carefully examine the lives and teachings of expository preachers whom God is using to reach Generation Z. The credentials for this part of the project were as follows: First, the person must be an expository preacher as previously articulated in chapter 3. Second, the person must have had at least ten years of experience working with this generation. Third, they must be from different areas of the country to more diversify the project. Last, they must have led growing and fruitful ministries of Generation Z students. For this project, Brian Mills, Noe Garcia, and Mark Vance were selected and interviewed. All three of these men have extensive knowledge and experience with teaching and preaching to Generation Z. Each of these men fit all four criteria for the project. Each one has preached to this generation for nearly ten years and has keen insight into their culture, receptivity, and learning styles. They are not only students of the Word, but they are students of the world—specifically, the world of Generation Z. Next, I offer a brief introduction each of one of these men.

The first interviewee currently serves as the College Pastor at Cross Church, Fayetteville, Arkansas, near the University of Arkansas campus. The name of the college ministry is C3. He has served in this role for nearly four years. During his tenure, C3 has grown tremendously. He preaches each week to nearly 1,400 college students. Prior to serving in this role, he was one of the leading voices in the country for student ministry dynamics. He served as the Lead Student Pastor at Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tennessee for seven years. He is a leading expert in Generation Z culture. He watched Gen Z grow up and is still being used by the Lord in a powerful way to impact this generation.

The second interviewee currently serves as the Senior Pastor at NPHX Church in Phoenix, Arizona. Prior to coming to Phoenix, Garcia was the College Pastor at Cross Church as well. He actually started C3, and by the power of God was able to lead C3 to go from 0 to nearly 1,000 students each week. Three years ago, he accepted the call to serve in Phoenix. He still speaks often to Generation Z not only on Sundays, but throughout the year at conferences, weekly worship gatherings, and small group settings.

The third interviewee currently serves as the Lead Pastor for Cornerstone Church in Ames, Iowa. Ames is home to Iowa State University. Cornerstone is home to one of the largest college ministries in the country—The Salt Company. The Salt Company has nearly 2,000 college students who gather each week at Cornerstone. He served as the director of the Salt Company for nearly seven years. During that time, he became one of the leading voices in expository ministry to Gen Z. He is still very active in preaching and teaching to this generation.

For this stage of the project, I interviewed each man for approximately forty minutes. The insights I gained for this project were incredibly helpful in the development of the paradigm. The content of those interviews, although conducted separately, is compiled in the following pages. What was fascinating about conducting these interviews is that each man, although in different states and with different cultures, all said relatively

the same thing regarding this generation within each question. As I conducted the interviews, these themes were repeated often by the interviewees. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z are commonly linked culturally regardless of demographic, race, region of the country, and socioeconomic class. The third interviewee also observed this trend:

It doesn't matter what college you go to; the students will be the same. That's because of the internet. They are all being disciplined by the same forces of social media and the internet. They aren't defined by region or culture. They are universally defined by the internet.<sup>2</sup>

Each interviewee, when talking about their students' cultural DNA, articulated the same cultural trends. It was as though they were serving in ministries in the same town. Emerging from the interviews, eight communication themes were frequently suggested. I sought to clarify and define these rhythms regarding both the communication and receptivity of expository preaching. I defined these eight themes as the eight communication themes to Gen Z: transparency, authority, passion, simplicity, love, practical, and wonder.

*Transparency* was the most referenced word and theme in all three interviews. Concerning transparency, each interviewee described this generation as wanting to know the flaws of the speaker or that the speaker at least has flaws. The third interviewee called them "fail stories": "I often tell stories about myself, but they are almost always humorously self-deprecating because that grabs their attention the most." They long for their leaders to be real and to admit their faults. He went on to explain that they are an "anti-fluff" generation: "They want superheroes with flaws." He put an exclamation mark on this idea by stating, "Authenticity trumps all!" The second interviewee also described

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<sup>2</sup> The third interviewee, Teaching Pastor at Cornerstone Church in Ames, Iowa, phone interview by author, November 19, 2018. All quotes and paraphrasing in this chapter, from interviewee 3, are from this interview.

this often as “unauthentic.”<sup>3</sup> He explained that they do not want a fake. Gen Z can sniff out a fake faster than any other generation. While earlier generations might have accepted a cookie cutter version of Adrian Rogers in their local pulpit, Gen Z wants someone who is not always polished and put together. They want to know if this leader is a real human being or just putting on an act. To a certain extent, Gen Z will develop more trust for leaders, the more transparent they are. The third interviewee laughed about this idea as he was explaining it and said, “They want flaws from their leaders, but not from themselves.” Social media has made Gen Z increasingly aware that they have flaws. Therefore, they want to know that they are not alone—that their leaders also battle with identity issues, pride, fear, and sometimes a lack of faith. The first interviewee explained that his students want to know if he is real or not.<sup>4</sup> “Real” was a term each interviewee used often in the interviews. The second interviewee made a profound statement when he said toward the end of his interview, “They don’t want cool. They want real.” Gen Z will listen to transparent preachers.

Surprisingly, the second most mentioned theme during these interviews was *authority*. I coined that phrase after filing through the interview content and kept seeing the words “bold,” “straight forward,” “right at them,” “Scripture-centered,” and “truth.” These ideas were in every single answer the men gave. The second interviewee said, “Gen Z wants the truth, they are tired of opinions and suggestions. They want the Word . . . as a matter of fact, I’ve observed that they like being punched by the truth.” The second interviewee also said of his preaching, “I want my preaching to be text-focused.” The third interviewee spoke often of this idea: “They want the preacher to take

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<sup>3</sup> The second interviewee, Senior Pastor at NPHX Church in Phoenix, Arizona, phone interview by author, November 19, 2018. All quotes and paraphrasing in this chapter, from interviewee 2, are from this interview.

<sup>4</sup> The first interviewee, College Pastor at Cross Church—Fayetteville Arkansas, phone interview by author, November 19, 2018. All quotes and paraphrasing in this chapter, from interviewee 3, are from this interview.



the text seriously and for him to stand on the authority of Scripture.” They want boldness. There is both a reaction to and an embracing of post-modernism. They want to accept everyone regardless of their views, but they are also tired of hearing “whatever is truth for you is cool.” They want to know what the Bible says. They are the most biblically-illiterate generation of all living generations and grew up in households of biblically-illiterate parents. The first interviewee observes that this generation is over the entertainment and that they want the truth: “They want truth and transparency.” The third interviewee further clarified this issue by stating that Gen Z asks every time they hear a sermon, “Does he really believe God’s Word and has it changed his life?” Each of them said, “They want the truth and they don’t want it sugarcoated.” Gen Z desires authoritative truth delivered in an authoritative way.

Third, each pastor clearly articulated this generation wants *passion*. The church is boring to them, so to faithfully reach them the preacher must be passionate! The second interviewee said, “This generation wants passionate preaching. . . . I try to preach every sermon as through it were my last one, and it seems like the people that appreciate that the most are Gen Z.” He ended that explanation of passion by saying, “At the end of my life I want to be known as a passionate expositor of God’s Word.” Vance explained that he preaches with passion by structuring his sermons to start slow and build. He wanted his passion for the text to come to a climax at the end of the sermon, so that the hearers leave with a passionate application. The first interviewee spoke often about believing the passage first for yourself. “If I’m not passionate about it,” the first interviewee remarked, “they won’t be either.” Gen Z desires passionate preaching not passive suggestions.

The fourth theme was *simplicity*. The third interviewee had the most to say about this: “Gen Z wants clarity over complexity. I don’t use ten dollar words in my sermons. I’m constantly asking myself while I’m preparing my sermon, ‘Is this clear?’ I am always wanting to show the ‘why’ behind the text because in the ‘why’ you will find simplicity.” The third interviewee coined his preaching goal as “sophisticated and simple.”

Each preacher described simplicity as simple language and simple yet profound truth. All interviewees were quick to point out that simplicity does not mean silly, watered down, or insignificant. Gen Z is the “get to the point” generation. They view elaboration or excess as unnecessary. If they want to know something, they will just google it right then. They look at a picture on Instagram for .02 seconds unless it interests them. Simplicity means clear. Garcia said, “Look at the guys that are the most listened to preachers, they just simply preach the text.” The first interviewee explained, “They want concise real truth from a real preacher.” The preacher who fights for simplicity will potentially be the preacher Gen Z will hear the loudest.

The fifth communication theme was *love*. Gen Z wants to know that the preacher loves them. Each preacher had much to say about the role of love in their preaching. The third interviewee declared, “I always want to preach to people I love. . . . Gen Z is lonely, unhappy, depressed, overwhelmed, and superficial. They want love. They want to hear about a loving God from a loving preacher.” All were quick to point out that love does not mean tolerant or soft. Love for each man meant relational proximity to Gen Z. The first interviewee said, “I have them over at our house all the time. I want those students to know that me and my family love them.” The second interviewee emphasized this idea by saying often, “Be among the sheep. This is the way to reach Gen Z. Be among them.” The second interviewee summed it up best when he ended his interview with, “Bro, to Gen Z, love is the coolest.” The leaders who will reach them are the leaders who will love them.

The sixth communication theme was *practical*. Gen Z is described by almost every secular sociologist as “entrepreneurial.” Gen Z wants to do something. This description is also very true in listening to a sermon. They do not just want truth; they want to know how it applies to their lives that day. The second interviewee explained, “They want preaching to be centered on Scripture, but they want it to apply to their today.” The third interviewee also said, “They, more than any other generation, want to do

something in light of a passage of Scripture. They want to know the ‘why’ from the passage, but once they do they want to know the ‘what do I do now’ from the preacher.” The first interviewee explained, “This generation is hungry to do something after each sermon. If we are to do our job faithfully, we will give them the application of the text.” Preaching that will most faithfully connect to Gen Z is preaching that communicates the practical application.

The eighth communication theme was *wonder*. Each interviewee articulated a sense of wonder for the Holy Spirit’s work, the Word, their own salvation, and the gospel. They each expressed a leaning toward this idea of wonder. The first interviewee said, “It’s all the work of God. I’m amazed at all the Spirit is doing among our students. It’s not me, it’s all Him. We can’t ever forget that.” The second interviewee said, “It’s all about desperation. I want to be led by the Spirit. It’s the Spirit that is doing the work and I’m so excited I get to be a part of it. I never want to get over that.” The third interviewee tearfully said at the end of his interview, “If Jesus is not glorious to you, He won’t be glorious to them. Never get over your own salvation, never lose the wonder of grace, and never lose your wonder of the cross.” Wonder will be one of the most universal descriptions of the most influential preachers of history. The preachers who never get over Jesus will be the ones that lead generations to Jesus.

Although these eight themes dominated the interviews, each preacher brought a few insights that were unique. Each had a unique way of learning the culture of Gen Z. Vance said Netflix was a profound way in which he watches Gen Z trends. He argued that Netflix shows the story lines students are being shaped by and can help the preacher craft story structured sermons. The third interviewee was actually not even on any social media platform. However, both the first and second interviewee said that social media was the major platform for them in keeping a cultural pulse on this generation. Although, all three men agreed that proximity to these students was the best way to understand them. Second, regarding sermon delivery, the third interviewee preached with a story-board

type approach. He challenges himself in his study to “find the story.” He explained that is how his mind thinks and he also believes Gen Z thinks in a similar way. For him, it helps him get to the “why” of a passage. The third interviewee also uses a manuscript approach to preaching. The first and second interviewee taught a more point-by-point preaching style; yet, they all agreed strongly that the text must drive the content and not personal style of the preacher. The first interviewee was probably the most structured in his approach, while Garcia stressed that to reach Gen Z one cannot be a “cookie cutter preacher” every week. Their delivery styles were similar to their individual personalities. Pertaining to sermon length they had different opinions. The third interviewee believed that anything over thirty-five minutes is too long: “If someone preaches longer than that to Gen Z, they either have not mastered the text or they over-value themselves.” The third interviewee believed one of the most faithful ways to impact Gen Z is to preach concise expository sermons. However, the first and second interviewee both said forty-five minutes was the goal of their preaching. Forty minutes can be the agreed upon average. Overall, wisdom was gained from these men. They validated much of the data gained from secular research as well as the results from the student interviews. These pastor interviews further shaped the dynamics of the paradigm.

### **Generationally-Conscious Expository Preaching Paradigm for Generation Z**

This paradigm is the beginning, not the end. The following paradigm will not give the reader all the answers to reaching Gen Z. This paradigm will not give the reader a way to deliver knock-out expository sermons to Gen Z. This paradigm will, however, give the reader conversations starters. It will give the reader a new or maybe revised understanding of preaching. It will highlight cultural pieces of Gen Z based on the research, which will help shape expository sermons. It will hopefully cause the preacher to ask questions of his preaching, use of technology, use of illustrations, future sermon series, and spur on a more intense personal growth plan. This paradigm can serve as a

comb for the expository preacher. With this paradigm, he can sift through his present practices so that he sharpens, changes, or stops certain practices for sermon development and delivery. Most of the pieces to the paradigm are not necessarily new. However, the many of the pieces of the paradigm can be applied distinctly to Gen Z.

Expository ministry is not just about preaching. Based on all the historical, contemporary, and sociological research it became astoundingly clear that, while the content of the sermon is essential, the character of the servant is even more crucial to delivering expository sermons to Gen Z. Based on the research, just as much was said about the leader as about the sermon. Character matters to Generation Z, which is somewhat contradictory. The paradigm will be separated into both a personal focus and a preaching focus. It is one paradigm with two sections; two sides of the same coin. To most faithfully reach Gen Z, the expository preacher must embody both sections of the paradigm. It is important to note that many, if not all of, the following pieces of the paradigm are not exclusive to Gen Z. Most of these pieces are timeless. However, the way in which many of these pieces is expressed or executed are in many ways unique to Gen Z. The expository preacher not only needs to embody these timeless truths personally but also needs to know how to express these truths to Generation Z contextually.

### **The Expository Preacher for Generation Z**

The first aspect of the paradigm is delivering expository preachers. There were three pieces to this section of the paradigm: holiness, learning, and love. These themes were condensed and combined from the research and responses. They are not necessarily unique to Gen Z expository ministry; however, these three pieces can be uniquely expressed through the preacher among Gen Z.

**Be Holy(ing).** The first piece of the paradigm is growing in personal holiness. Holiness is timeless. This is not a new concept. God had the same idea when He used Paul to pen 1 Timothy 3. Thirteen qualifications had to deal with the elder's character and

one had to do with his credentials, his ability to teach. Secular research points to the same idea. Corey Seemiller states that Generation Z “appreciates honesty and authenticity from those who lead them.”<sup>5</sup> Even in a post-modern, everything is morally accepted culture, character still matters to Generation Z. They have seen too many politicians, principals, and preachers fall morally. They do not trust the church. They do not trust preachers. The research and responses from this project were overwhelmingly clear that Gen Z longs for leaders who are holy—separate from the world. Gen Z deserves leaders who are passionately committed to holiness. The unique way in which the preacher can display holiness is through being open and honest about past fails. The preacher who has the greatest opportunity to impact Generation Z will be the preacher who publicly articulates a growing relationship with Jesus in holiness. Mark Vance said, “They don’t need to think you are perfect. They need to know you are being perfected.” Honest preachers will have a great impact on Gen Z. In generations past, holiness was seen as sinlessness, a super hero in the pulpit. This is not so with Gen Z. They want fallen heroes. They want preachers who are holy now, but who are honest about their pasts. Fallen heroes can have a great impact on Gen Z. Holiness matters to Generation Z.

**Be learning.** Interested people are interesting people. Gen Z gravitates toward interesting leaders. Gen Z can get smart quick. They do not need to read books, blogs, or listen to lectures to gain knowledge. They can hit the Safari button on their phone. Their access to information is the most powerful of any generation in human history. They do not need leaders to teach them knowledge and if they sense the leader is not intellectually sharp they will disconnect. Therefore, the expository preacher to Gen Z must be continuously learning. They need to keep growing intellectually and spiritually. A completed seminary degree is not enough to intellectually engage Gen Z. The preacher

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<sup>5</sup> Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace, *Generation Z Goes to College* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 193.

to Gen Z needs to be intellectually sharp. Haddon Robinson writes, “Ultimately, God is more interested in developing messengers than messages, and because the Holy Spirit confronts us primarily through the Bible, we must learn to listen to God before speaking for God.”<sup>6</sup> Scripture intake is the ultimate tool for the preacher, to any generation, to stay sharp for the purposes of God. However, learning that will impact Gen Z must also come through a myriad of avenues. Sermons, podcasts, books, articles, conferences, and mentor relationships all must be a healthy part of any preacher’s diet, but especially the communicator to Gen Z. If they think the preacher is out of touch with them intellectually, then the preacher will be out of touch with them spiritually. If they detect a preacher or leader does not understand or is not interested in their world, new advances in culture, new concepts in education, then Gen Z will move on. Constant learning produces ethos. Preachers must keep learning. Another practical way to carry this piece out is to include Gen Z students in the sermon prep process. In the education world, this is called reverse learning environments. The preacher can create a group of Gen Z students and have them google the sermon topic or passage. He can give them a deadline and have them present their findings. This will benefit the preacher as well as the Gen Zers in a context. Learning matters to Generation Z.

**Be loving.** Gen Z is both hyper-connected and disconnected. Because of social media, they know about everyone because of social media, but they really do not know anyone. They are lonely. Therefore, love was a universal theme in all the research and responses. Love was resounding and redundant. Over and over again, the Scriptures point to love as the common response to a dying world as well as saved saints. Gen Z is no different. They believe the most important aspect of preachers is, as one student wrote, “emotional investment” in their lives. This aspect was defined previously as “connected” and “personable” by the student surveys. All three expositors interviewed could hardly

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<sup>6</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 27.

get away from this theme as a vital piece to generationally conscious expository ministry. Vance exclaimed, “I always want to preach to people I love. . . .vThey want to hear about a loving God from a loving preacher.” Garcia said, “Love is the coolest!” To Gen Z, love is expressed through proximity. They want to know their pastor. Gen Z wants relational proximity to them, their families, and their care. Relationships equal love. They want love from leaders. The expository communicator who makes his life and love available to Gen Z has great potential to make a massive impact on Gen Z. Love matters to Generation Z.

### **The Expository Sermon to Generation Z**

The second side of the paradigm is the delivery of expository sermons. There were nine pieces to this section of the paradigm. These themes were condensed and combined from the research and responses. The sermon delivery piece of the paradigm is more specific to Gen Z than the previous section. In this section, there are unique ways in which these nine pieces can be understood, expressed, and executed among Gen Z. While these pieces seem to be incredibly necessary in reaching Generation Z, the ultimate work belongs to the Spirit of God. Faithfully fulfilling the entire paradigm does not guarantee any type of “success” in reaching Gen Z. Ultimately, the work of drawing, converting, and sanctifying Gen Z is a work of the Spirit. However, knowing how to best communicate to Gen Z is crucial to creating an expository evolution and allowing for a partnership with the work of the Spirit.

**Be Expository.** The job has not changed . . . much. The timeless truths of expository preaching are still the guiding factors of delivering expository sermons to Gen Z. The truth that God spoke in the Scriptures is still foundational to expository preaching. The truth that the preacher’s job is to exegete the historical, contextual, and spiritual concepts from a given text is still foundational to expository preaching. The truth that the preacher’s job is to accurately apply the text to his hearer’s lives is still foundational to expository preaching. In developing a paradigm for delivering expository sermons to



Gen Z, it must be understood by the preacher that all rules still apply. There is no new development in the foundations of expository preaching. Preaching the text is still the job. For a preacher seeking to develop generationally-conscious expository sermons to Gen Z, he cannot skip the ancient practices of expository preaching (see chaps. 2 and 3). However, the ways in which he expresses language, understands contemporary culture, harnesses time, delivers illustrations, utilizes technology, engages the issues, and proclaims the truth must evolve. Generation Z needs evolved expository preaching.

**Be passionate.** What Generation Z seems to desire most in the pulpit is passion. Carmine Gallo said of Ted Talks, “Passion is the most influential characteristic of public speakers.”<sup>7</sup> While passion is a universally powerful component of public speaking, it appears like Gen Z values it more than other generations. The word “passion” showed up in every phase of this project. I could not get away from it. From dead authors of expository preaching books to 19-year-old college kids who still have not decided their major, passion was everywhere. However, it did seem that as I worked from historical research to contemporary surveys the cry for passion became louder. Gen Z is so drawn to passion, over other generations, because they desire to “change the world.”<sup>8</sup> Also, they have access to the most creative and beautiful things in human history. They are over entertained. They are the Disney generation. For the expository preacher to faithfully reach Gen Z, he must be passionate. One secular Gen Z student said it best, “My ideal learning environment is with an instructor who is both highly knowledgeable of the subject and deeply passionate for teaching students.”<sup>9</sup> A high level of knowledge (be learning) and a high level of passion (be passionate) for not only the subject but for

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<sup>7</sup> Carmine Gallo, *Talk like Ted: The 9 Public-Speaking Tips of the World's Top Minds* (New York: St. Martins, 2014), 22.

<sup>8</sup> James Avery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 21.

<sup>9</sup> Seemiller and Grace, *Generation Z Goes to College*, 178.

teaching “them” (be loving). Passion paves the way for impact. In the Expository Sermon Competence survey, the word most used to define faithful preaching was *passion*. One student, describing the most important characteristic of preaching, wrote in all caps, “PASSION and KNOWLEDGE.” Genuine passion seems to be the communication line to Gen Z. Preachers cannot fake it anymore. If the preacher is not authentically passionate about the Word of God, the glory of God, the Son of God, and the people of God then Gen Z will spiritually scroll down. Many of the other following pieces of this paradigm can be uniquely expressed to Gen Z. However, according to the research, the ability to uniquely exhibit passion in sermon delivery among Gen Z was somewhat vague. It seems passion is best formulated when the expositor allows the text to first personally impact their own life. Passion seems to be a result of the preacher allowing the Holy Spirit to let the text first change him. A unique way to express passion to Gen Z is to be transparent about his struggle with the text or the concept being personally applied. After expressing how the struggle was real for the preacher, the preacher can then share with passion what God is doing in his life because of the passage. Gen Z loves a passionate story of personal struggle and triumph. Passion is an essential piece of delivering generationally-conscious expository sermons. The calling from Gen Z for authentically passionate preachers is a wakeup call to preachers. Garcia said, “I try to preach every sermon as though it were my last one, and it seems like the people that appreciate that the most are Generation Z.” When delivering sermons to Gen Z, expository preachers must have passion. Passion matters to Generation Z.

**Be transparent.** Transparency is the love language of Generation Z. They want leaders who are real. They are constantly bombarded with images of perfect people, perfect dates, perfect vacations, perfect bodies, perfect boyfriends and girlfriends, and perfect lives through social media. This type of intake makes them overwhelmingly aware of their own faults, sins, and imperfections. They want to hear from a leader who is fallen, who is not perfect. Seemiller and Grace wisely observe that they “appreciate honesty and

authenticity from those who lead them.”<sup>10</sup> According to Gen Z, “real” trumps “relevant” every time. Actually, it seems that “real” is the best way to be “relevant.” Vance said, “They want fallen heroes.” Vance was keenly aware of this and said that they want “fail stories.” One of the most generationally specific aspects of Gen Z is that they long for leader transparency. Every single student interviewed said they want to hear stories about the preacher. The words “genuine,” “vulnerable,” and “real” were constant adjectives of the preacher they desire. The word “real” was one of the most used words in my interviews with the expository preachers. Gen Z wants to know that the preacher does not have it all together. They want holy leaders now, but also those who are honest about their past fails. Garcia said, “They don’t want cool. They want real.” Previous generations have not valued pulpit transparency like Gen Z. The depth of desire for expository transparency among Gen Z is truly unprecedented in expository communication. The preacher must tell “fail” stories. They must weave real stories about themselves into the fabric of each sermon. Transparency matters to Generation Z.

**Be bold.** Generation Z wants bold biblical truth. They do not want spiritual suggestions. Based on the research and responses, Gen Z craves the authority of the Word. This is not necessarily an “only Gen Z thing,” but the way in which boldness is executed can be defined for Gen Z. In previous generations, boldness simply meant “get up there and just let them have it.” It was a take it or leave style of preaching. Gen Z seems to still desire bold preaching, but it must be packaged differently. They need what I define as “why boldness.” This is preaching with bold assurance that explains the “why.” Contrary to popular opinion that Gen Z wants conversational style preaching or even further that the church should do away with expository monologue, the research revealed that the opposite is true. They do not simply need “this is what God said,” they need, “this *what* God said and this is *why* God said it.” They need the “why” behind the “what” and they

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<sup>10</sup> Seemiller and Grace, *Generation Z Goes to College*, 193.

need it boldly preached to them. They are agnostic and atheist not because they are rejecting biblical truth, but because they do not know biblical truth. In fact, they do not understand it. Gen Z does not understand what the Bible says about sexual purity, gender identity, or gospel exclusivity. Preachers who practice “why boldness” will be the preachers more clearly heard by Generation Z. Boldness matters to Generation Z.

**Be contextual.** This piece of the paradigm is probably the most Gen Z specific. *Cultural* seemed to be the best word to define contemporary, connected, and relevant. Gen Z’s culture is different from other generations. They operate differently. Therefore, the preacher must communicate culturally to them. I mined four applications from this project that dealt specifically with cultural components of Gen Z. These four applications are probably the most practical of the whole project for the expository preacher.

First, preach with technology. Utilize technology in multiple ways. Put fifteen second clips of the sermon on social media with texts. Post graphics on social media of the preaching moment with an engaging quote underneath the picture. He can utilize the “live” features of social media and talk about what was preached the week before or what will be preached the coming week. Put the sermons on YouTube. Recruit members of Gen Z within his church to be a part of the “media team.” Let them come up with creative ideas to engage their peer audience. Send them the graphics and videos each week and let them post on their social media bases. Gen Z is constantly on technology, so the preacher must communicate constantly through technology.

Second, preach against conservatism. Gen Z is leaving the church not because they do not believe in God but because they see the church as too conservative and political. The sad truth is they are right. Preachers have too long utilized their pulpits to push political ideals, political candidates, and conservatism. I am not arguing the church go liberal, quite the opposite. I am arguing the church go biblical. The American church needs to break up with American politics because this relationship is pushing away American students. Gen Z seems to be leery of political agendas within churches.

Preachers who help them understand Christianity and the whys behind conservatism can have a massive impact on this generation.

Third, preach on fear. Paul preached to the felt needs of his readers. He knew their culture and their struggles. Gen Z is a fear-filled generation. Based on the research, Gen Z is a fear-based culture for numerous reasons. They have grown up with helicopter parents; they live in a post-9/11 world; they daily see the horrible evil of the world through social media; they fear cyber-bullying; and they battle with a social anxiety they call FOMO (fear of missing out). More than half of the students I surveyed expressed their favorite sermon they have ever heard was one on fear. Preachers who biblically address fear in their sermons and sermon series will have the ear of Generation Z.

Fourth, preach a global gospel. Gen Z gets global. James Avery White reminded his readers regarding Gen Z that, “Their circles are global.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the preacher to Gen Z must always preach a global gospel. He must preach that the gospel is for all nations and the great adventure of their lives is preaching the gospel to the nations. The preacher who connects Gen Z’s ultimate personal happiness to the mission of taking the gospel to the nations has great potential to make a profound impact. Every generation must know that the gospel is global, but Gen Z has great potential to impact the globe with the gospel. Thinking globally is how they think and It is what they want to do.

**Be concentrated.** Think laser beam. *Concentrated* was the word that encapsulated both “simple” and “concise.” Both aspects proved to be powerful techniques of preaching to Generation Z. Regarding simple, think tweetable. Gen Z thinks in 144 characters or less, which means multiple things for the preacher. First, the preacher must immediately grab their attention. This generation will give an image on social media a .02 second glance before they go to the next image if it is not interesting. The immediacy of attention grabbing presents a new challenge for preachers. With other generations, the

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<sup>11</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 112.

preacher had a larger window to grab their attention, but not with Gen Z. Second, the preacher must artfully craft his overall point or points simply. It has been researched that 94 percent of Gen Z feels overwhelmed.<sup>12</sup> They crave simplicity like a drug. Dan Schawbel, an expert in branding, said, “If they (marketing firms) don’t communicate in five words and a big picture, they will not reach this generation.”<sup>13</sup> Simple, as stated earlier, does not mean uneducated or dumbed down. Simple means a laser beam, powerful and direct. The sermon must be full of truth but easy to understand. Vance said, “I don’t use \$10 words.” However, that does not mean preach superficial or fluffy theology, but a marriage between robust theology and clear orality. Whether the preacher preaches one major truth or multiple points, he must fight for artful simplicity. The preacher must use common language to communicate an uncommon gospel. Simply put, get their attention and get to the point.

Regarding concise; be brief. The average accepted sermon length of all surveyed was forty minutes or under. The preacher that seems to have the greatest impact on Gen Z will be the concentrated preacher with a concentrated sermon. Concentration matters to Generation Z.

**Be creative.** Generation Z values art and artistic expression. They are statistically right brain thinkers.<sup>14</sup> Creative preaching engages multiple learning styles. On a practical level, different types of illustrations will engage different learners. Sermons need to be peppered with varied creative illustrations throughout the expository moment. Based on the research, the most impactful creative elements of a sermon are videos or pictures specifically from the preacher’s life. Gen Z longs to know the preacher, but they

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<sup>12</sup> Tim Elmore, *Generation iY* (Atlanta: Poet Gardener, 2010), 19.

<sup>13</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 117.

<sup>14</sup> George Barna, *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs, and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (Carol Stream, IL: Barna Group, 2018), 37.

also filter information through images and videos. This type of illustration seems to have the greatest potential for sticking the point with Gen Z listeners. Creativity is married to change. Therefore, the preacher needs to change the types of illustrations and sometimes the style of his sermon. Outside the sermon moment, the church as a whole needs to foster more creativity. Churches that become epicenters of creativity, art, and culture will attract Gen Z. God first revealed Himself as Creator. The church and preacher should embrace this truth more practically. Creativity matters to Generation Z.

**Be practical.** Generation Z seeks to do something. Secular sociologists describe them as “entrepreneurial.” Gen Z wants to change the world. Research supports this idea strongly. Many of them are deserting the traditional route of college and formal schooling. They are going straight to trade schools or starting their own careers. They are over intellectual lectures if there are no practical solutions or next steps. As previously stated, the goal of every sermon is application. No generation seems to crave application more than Gen Z. The students interviewed resoundingly verified this claim. They wanted preaching that was practical. Many articulated that the most important factor of evaluating a sermon was “real life application.” Mills states, “This generation is hungry to do something after each sermon. If we are to do our job faithfully, we will give them the application of the text.” Throughout every generation, the preacher has had the task of rightly applying the text. However, for Gen Z, application is vital. A powerful way to be both transparent and practical is to share how the preacher is going to specifically apply the passage to his life or how he has failed to apply the passage in the past. Practical is greater than philosophical. Practical matters to Generation Z.

**Be wonder-full.** Of all the pieces to this paradigm, none were more evident than wonder. While the word *wonder* was probably only used once or twice, the theme of wonder permeated the entire project. When I say wonder, I mean an authentic awe for the power, beauty, love, truth, majesty, and glory of God. Wonder is an authentic awe for

God's Word. Wonder is an authentic awe for the work of God in the lives of people. Wonder fueled Paul's preaching and instruction to Timothy. Wonder drove countless men to write books on biblical expository preaching. Wonder filled each interview with the expository communicators. It was wonder that drove Vance to tears as he spoke simply about the grace of God on his life. Gen Z seems to be chasing wonder. According to the research and results, wonder must be present in the preacher's personal life and public preaching. Wonder is a childlike astonishment at the beauty of God displayed in the gospel. Wonder of God's creation fuels creative art. Wonder of God's love ignites passion. Wonder of God's grace inspires transparency in one's life. Wonder is also the hardest to capture. Wonder is not tangible, measurable, or easily defined. Wonder is not learned or leveraged. Wonder is crafted in a person's soul when they meditate on the Word of God and the work of God. Wonder is fueled when a person grows increasingly aware of their inability to save themselves and increasingly aware of God's ability to save others. Wonder grows when preachers realize it is not about them, but all about God. Preachers full of this kind of wonder can be the preachers who have churches full of Generation Z. Again, the preachers who never get over Jesus will be the ones that lead generations to Jesus. Wonder matters to Generation Z.

### **Conclusion**

A paradigm is defined as a typical pattern of something. If this is an accurate definition, then the paradigm I have constructed is a pattern for preaching to Generation Z. It is not the only way to preach to Gen Z, nor does it guarantee any type of ministerial "success." Based on all the historical, sociological, and personal research, this paradigm presents a faithful pattern to approach expository communication to Gen Z. Ultimately, preaching that reaches a generation is the work of the Spirit. However, the twelve pieces to this paradigm capture what a generation deeply craves. The data and research suggest that Gen Z is much like every generation before them, but they also have very unique traits. They have a cultural language. They think of the world in a distinct way. They



have a definite worldview. The role of the expository preacher is to understand and to execute the timeless principles of expository preaching. Furthermore, he is also called to understand and to engage the ever-changing culture of Generation Z. The message of Scripture will never change; but the method of preaching it must at times evolve. Generation Z can be reached. Expository preaching has a place in reaching Generation Z. This project's data sheds light on this generation. This paradigm contributes to, constructs, and effects an expository evolution.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Evaluation is a key component of any venture. The purpose of this project was to develop a paradigm for delivering generationally-conscious expository sermons to Generation Z. This project was based on multiple truths. God is a speaking God. God has spoken through the Scriptures. The preacher's job is to speak where God has spoken through the Scriptures to a specific audience. Generation Z is a specific audience. The contemporary preacher must study what God has spoken through the Scriptures and study Generation Z to deliver generationally-conscious expository sermons to Gen Z. Therefore, this project intended to both understand Generation Z and to develop a paradigm to be best understood by Generation Z. The following is an evaluation of this project's overall effectiveness in accomplishing the purpose and goals.

#### **Results of the Paradigm**

The paradigm needed to be confirmed as an effective tool in preaching to Gen Z. To further analyze and confirm the paradigm, I gave the students and preachers a final survey called the Generation Z Expository Preaching Paradigm Survey. The purpose of this survey was to determine whether the paradigm was successful in defining a clear paradigm for expository preaching to Gen Z. If the students or preachers did not agree with or felt the paradigm was lacking in any part, the project would have been considered a failure to a certain extent. The results of the survey were both encouraging as well as clarifying.

The first two questions on the survey were simply introductory in nature. The first question was, "Have you read the content of the paradigm completely?" Both the

preachers and the students indicated that they had read the content of the paradigm in full. The second question was to list all the pieces of the paradigm, and everyone did so.

The third question was, “Which piece of the paradigm seemed most accurate to you personally?” First, according to the preachers, the responses varied, and none said the same thing. I believe this disparity occurred because each preacher had a personal and specific pull toward one of the pieces since much of the paradigm was based on their original responses. Second, according to the students, transparency was the most given answer. Over half the participants put transparency as their answer. One student wrote, “If a preacher is open and real with me, I am more apt to trust his teachings because he is not pretending to be someone that he isn’t.” The second most given answer was “passion.” Nearly half of the students marked passion as the most accurate. One student wrote, “This is huge for me, because when my pastor is passionate, I desire to be passionate too.”

The fourth question was, “Which piece of the paradigm seemed to be the most immediately applicable?” Two of the interviewees wrote, “Be expository” and “be holy.” The other interviewee wrote, “Be expository,” also. The students’ responses varied, but most put passion. It was the most given answer for question 4.

The fifth question was, “Did you agree with each of the specific ways in which the pieces could be applied to the sermon delivery process to Gen Z?” The preachers agreed with the pieces of the paradigm. The third interviewee added a note on the holiness piece: “I am concerned that people see me repenting in the present-tense. I want to show how God is at work in me presently. I would call that—be visibly growing in holiness. They want fallen heroes. No one follows a person who can fly.” I agreed with his point and added it into the original content. According to the students, all agreed with pieces of the paradigm. One student added, “Each of these specific ways would most definitely aid in the effective deliverance of the Word.”

The sixth question was, “Was there a piece(s) of the paradigm that you didn’t agree with?” The first and second interviewee did not have any pieces with which they disagreed. However, the third interviewee was not completely convinced the technology piece was necessary. He barely uses technology and does not believe it is a valuable tool in reaching Gen Z. He wrote, “I almost use no technology intentionally, but I am informed by technology.” He went on to say about the technology/cultural piece that “the conclusion seems to be since they can’t concentrate then you need to play to that weakness. That feels like giving in to something we might need to fight against.” While I agree with his statement that we do not need to “give in” to short attention spans, I do not believe one can deny it. One must get their attention soon and one cannot disregard technology completely in trying to impact Gen Z. However, the ministry leader to Gen Z cannot put all of his emphasis on a social media presence, which is why I put technology as a sub-category and not its own piece of the paradigm.

The seventh question was, “Do you believe your specific contribution to the project was heard and further developed?” All the preachers and students wrote that they did believe their contribution was heard and developed.

The eighth question was, “Do any of the pieces need more development?” Vance referenced his above statement about technology and culture. The first and second interviewee did not believe any of the pieces needed to be more fully developed. According to the students, no part of the paradigm needed to be further developed.

The ninth question was, “To your knowledge, are there any concepts that are essential to Gen Z preaching that were not represented in the project?” All the preachers and students said that there were not any concepts not represented in the project.

The tenth question was, “Does this paradigm help the expository preacher more skillfully craft generationally-conscious expository sermons to Gen Z? The preachers all agreed that the project did help the preacher. The third interviewee wrote, “Engaging in the conversation of what makes exposition applicable will always help the preacher. This

paper addresses the complexities of the craft at this moment well.” The first interviewee wrote that the project was “clear and practical.” The second interviewee expressed his appreciation for the project while also warning the reader to not be “too culturally relevant that we become Biblically irrelevant.” I agree with the second interviewee’s comment and hope that the reader never neglects the timeless truths of expository preaching while trying to be culturally relevant. The students’ responses were encouraging and insightful. According to all the students, the paradigm will help the preacher preach to their generation. The students commented,

The needs of Gen Z were taken into deep consideration and if the preacher uses this paradigm Gen Z will definitely be more faithfully reached.

I believe being willing to preach differently for a new generation is a strong quality.

The number 1 way to effectively preach to Gen Z is to research and study both the Bible and Gen Z. This paradigm has explained greatly Gen Z and can be used to reach Gen Z.

As someone who is part of Generation Z, I felt that this paradigm was extremely accurate and each part was carefully put together. Any preacher would benefit from reading it.

This was spot on for my generation. When reading it, I felt like I was reading something that someone my own age wrote. I related to every piece of it. This paradigm helps the reader to truly understand how Gen Z thinks and what they value most.

[Relating to Gen Z itself] People want to hear what you have to say, but they will not be able to fully relate to you until you know how to connect with them.

Gen Z is different than other generations. Because of this, a slight different approach to preaching needs to be done and this paradigm can help craft that approach.

Overall, the results of the survey were encouraging and insightful. Some pieces of the paradigm could use further development, but 100 percent of the survey participants agreed with the pieces of the paradigm.

### **Evaluation of Project’s Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to develop a paradigm for delivering generationally-conscious expository sermons to Generation Z. The motivation for this project was derived from a necessity to become a better expository preacher to a new generation. For the expository preacher, this type of project is vital both biblically and

practically. First, I believe in the biblical motivation for expository preaching rooted in the purpose of this project. Expository preaching is a vital piece to the health of any local church. The need for the preacher to continue growing in his understanding and application of expository preaching, both from the biblical and practical standpoints, must never be neglected. The Word of God is filled with exhortations to faithfully expound from the Scriptures what God has declared through Scriptures. Simply, the preacher must constantly be growing as a preacher. This project greatly benefited and advanced my own preaching ministry. It served as both a reminder of important expository preaching principles as well as a catalyst for further learning in expository preaching. Any preacher seeking to gain a deeper understanding of expository preaching would benefit from the content of this project.

Second, I believe in the biblical motivation for generational ministry rooted in the purpose of this project. Moreover, the need for the preacher to contextualize the sermon to the cultural context of the day is just as vital. The biblical mandate for generational ministry is clear in both the Old and New Testaments. Therefore, the expository preacher must consistently be growing both in his preaching and in his preparing. To faithfully prepare to preach, one must not only exegete the Word of God, but must also exegete the world to which he is preaching. Generation Z is the largest generation in our country. The life-long audience of the contemporary preacher is Generation Z. Generation Z, like all generations, operates from a specific communication code. Therefore, the purpose of this project aimed at both comprehending and communicating to Gen Z. The research done in this project helps to build a working framework for comprehending the trends of Generation Z. The paradigm serves the preacher and local church in crafting generationally-conscious expository sermons and is a helpful tool in creating generational ministry to Gen Z. Overall, I believe in the purpose of the project and that the project can be a beneficial instrument in expository ministry to Gen Z. Furthermore, the project's purpose was accomplished.

## **Evaluation of Project's Goals**

The purpose of this project was to create a paradigm for crafting expository sermons to Generation Z. To accomplish this goal, the project set out to succeed in three major goals. The completion of the goals was a vital step in the overall accomplishment of this project.

The first goal was to assess the level of competence and expectation of expository preaching among the Generation Z leaders of Central Baptist Church Paragould Campus. This goal was measured by having the Generation Z leaders of Central Paragould take the Expository Sermon Competence survey. The survey was taken by thirteen Gen Z students who fit the criteria. The survey took approximately twenty minutes to complete by all the students. This goal was considered successful when the students completed the survey and the data was analyzed to define the students' competence and expectations of expository preaching. This survey was done in order to help formulate the generationally-conscious practices for expository preaching. The data collected from this survey proved to be a vital tool in crafting the paradigm. The students' insights were incredibly helpful in Gen Z comprehension and complemented the contemporary Gen Z research. Although I personally knew the students who participated in this survey and had done ministry among them for nearly four years, I was truly surprised by many of their responses. The purpose of this goal was necessary to the overall completion of the paradigm. Furthermore, the results of this goal were crucial to crafting the paradigm, especially within my own context.

The second goal was to assess the expository preaching trends to Generation Z by surveying three expository preachers to Generation Z. This goal was measured by a survey given to the three Generation Z expository preachers in order to collect their thoughts on generational trends and applicable insights to Gen Z communication. The responses to the surveys were fascinating. Each of these men brought biblical, philosophical, and practical weight to this project in ways that no preaching book or seminar could have. They know Generation Z. The responses gathered were categorized

into philosophical and applicable expository preaching practices. The data collected from these interviews were an extraordinary piece to the overall success of this project. This goal was considered successful because the preachers completed the surveys and their responses were analyzed. Then, their responses were combined into applicable data for formulating the generationally-conscious paradigm for expository preaching. The insights gathered from these men proved to absolutely necessary to the overall accomplishment of the project. This goal was an irreplaceable component to this project.

The third goal was to develop a generationally-conscious paradigm for expository sermon delivery among Generation Z. This goal was accomplished by analyzing and classifying all the data from the project and developing a twelve-piece paradigm for generationally conscious expository sermons to Gen Z. To further ensure that this goal was accomplished a ten-question survey was given to the Gen Z students and Gen Z preachers. This survey was given to evaluate the content of the paradigm. The goal was considered successful because more than 99 percent of the participants agreed with the content of the paradigm and validated that the paradigm is an applicable tool for expository preaching to Generation Z. This goal was both necessary to the overall purpose of the project and was accomplished.

### **Strengths of the Project**

Hindsight is always 20/20. I loved and was grateful for certain components of this project. Some components of this project I also felt were under-developed or just did not accomplish what I wanted them to. This project has several strengths and weaknesses. There are six major strengths to this project. These were not only strengths of the project but also personally benefiting to me as a preacher to Gen Z.

The first strength of this project was the expository preaching content of chapter 2. The biblical content laid out in this section was helpful for me personally as well as for any preacher seeking to sharpen his understanding of expository preaching. Although, I understand more content could have been added, I felt that the expository



preaching section of chapter 2 comprised an adequate amount of biblical content for the reader to formulate a comprehensive biblical understanding of expository preaching. This section covered both Old and New Testament content that was both clear and applicable. Specifically, the work done in the Pauline Epistles was clarifying and helpful. This section was the most thorough of all the content in chapter 2 and I felt that it also was the most useful in formulating a working definition of expository preaching later developed in chapter 3. The content of expository preaching in chapter 2 laid a strong philosophical foundation for the preaching component of this project.

The second strength of this project was the expository preaching content of chapter 3. This section was the most impactful and applicable to my immediate context. The variety of authors used in this section served to be beneficial in formulating a working definition of expository preaching. This section of chapter 3 formed a solid theological and philosophical base for the emphasis on the expository preaching emphasis of this project. This section of chapter 3 helped contextualize the biblical preaching content of chapter 2 and further solidified a clear definition of expository preaching. Each of the authors and resources used in this section of chapter 3 had a grand extent of knowledge and experience. Furthermore, the variety of resources used helped build a comprehensive understanding of expository preaching. I benefited greatly from their works and the work of channeling all their insights into this section.

The third strength of this project was the Generation Z content in chapter 3. This content was the most researched of all the sections in this project. Both secular and faith-based resources were used to formulate this section. This section provides widely researched material to gain an understanding of Gen Z. Furthermore, reading this section would prove helpful for anyone seeking to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural makeup of Gen Z. After conducting the surveys of the Gen Z students and preachers, this section became even more valid. After conducting the surveys, the tenets of the Gen Z content of chapter 3 were further solidified and proved to be accurate. I

gained a great deal of understanding regarding Generation Z because of this section and it is a useful tool in contextualizing Gen Z.

The fourth strength of this project was the data collected from the Expository Preaching Competence Survey given to the Gen Z students. The overall effectiveness of this survey cannot be overstated for the accomplishment of this project. This survey proved beneficial in multiple ways. First, this survey provided necessary insights to the Gen Z audience. The students provided paradigm-shaping insight from this survey. From length of sermon to the most impactful use of illustrations, this survey gave both me and a future reader clear insight into the expectations of expository preaching from Gen Z. Many of their insights were incredibly surprising and provided extensive material for crafting expository sermons that most faithfully communicate to them.

The fifth strength of this project was the Expository Preacher Survey. This survey fit like a puzzle piece to the rest of the project. The insights gathered from these surveys coincided with the secular research of Gen Z found in chapter 3 as well as connected to the responses of the Gen Z students in chapter 4. It was as though this survey served as a bridge between both the secular research and the Gen Z students. Analyzing and categorizing their content was both one of the most difficult yet most necessary elements of this project. Garcia, Mills, and Vance were crucial components to this project, and the content of their surveys were both personally and practically beneficial. The work done in this section proved to be extremely beneficial to the overall success of this project.

The sixth strength of the project was the generationally-conscious expository preaching paradigm for Generation Z. The pursuit of the project was developing this paradigm and this goal was accomplished. This paradigm was the result of nearly a year and a half of research and encompassed a vast amount of content pertaining to Gen Z and expository preaching. Not only did the paradigm encompass all the content pertaining to Gen Z and expository preaching, but it was validated by both the Gen Z students and the preachers. The Generation Z Expository Preaching Paradigm Survey brought solidarity

and completion to the project. This paradigm was personally beneficial to my own preaching ministry and will continue to be a guide in helping me craft generationally-conscious expository sermons to Gen Z. It will help the preacher seeking to understand and communicate more faithfully to Gen Z.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

While there were many strengths of this project, there were also multiple weaknesses. In my evaluation of this project, I identified four major weaknesses. The first perceived weakness is the generational ministry content of chapter 2. This section of the chapter was vital, but overall, it was under-developed. More content could have gone into this section to further solidify the necessity of generational ministry.

The second perceived weakness of this project was the Expository Preaching Competence Survey. While the content gathered from the survey was a great strength in the project, the number of students surveyed could have been broader to further strengthen the results. The number of students surveyed could have been larger to bring even more validity to the overall strength of the project.

The third perceived weakness of this project was the Expository Preacher Survey. Again, while the content of the surveys was a great strength, the number of preachers surveyed could have been higher. Ideally, I would have liked to interview more preachers who fit the criteria to further advance the results. Finding preachers who fit the criteria was quite a project in itself. Interviewing only three preachers were somewhat of a weakness to this project. While the content provided by the interviewed preachers was crucial and valuable, it would have been beneficial to have interviewed more preachers.

The fourth perceived weakness of this project was the paradigm application. While the paradigm can be useful in crafting generationally conscious expository sermons to Gen Z, there needs to be even more practical ways to apply the content of the paradigm. Making the paradigm extremely applicable was not the overall point of the project; but the paradigm, in a few pieces, lacked overall application to a Gen Z context specifically.

## **What I Would Do Differently**

I enjoyed this project. I have become a better preacher and pastor because of the work done in completing this paradigm. However, if I were to do this project again, I would do multiple things differently. First, I would incorporate more Gen Z students in the project. I would have brought in more Gen Z students at the Paragould Campus, but I would want them to be both junior high and senior high students. Gen Z encompasses students born from 1994 to 2004. These students not yet in college would have created an even broader foundation for the research and results. The junior and senior high students would have benefited the content in chapter 4 as well as broadened the reach of the project. Many students fit the criteria of the project that were not in college yet (or above 18) that are a part of the Paragould Campus. However, because the campus launched after the project had already begun, those students could not be grafted in. Second, I would have surveyed students who were not involved in the campus. I would have liked to craft a fourth survey that could have been given to Gen Z students in the area but were not Christians or were not currently a part of a church. This survey would have helped the Gen Z section of chapter 3. This survey would have provided contextual data that coincided with the national data comprised from books, articles, and national surveys. More Gen Z students would have brought more depth and strength to the overall effectiveness of the project.

The second aspect of this project I would do differently would be to incorporate more experts. First, I would have brought in more expository preachers to Gen Z. While Mark Vance, Brian Mills, and Noe Garcia did a phenomenal job in furthering this project, more preachers that fit the criteria would have even further solidified the project. Having more preachers who fit the criteria would have also provided a more extensive research base. Second, while these three men were in different contexts, they all are Southern Baptist. Having more preachers, from different denominational backgrounds, would have brought more cultural breadth to the project and potentially provided a unique perspective that would have further clarified the project. Third, I would have liked to

survey secular college professors in the region and around the country on communication effectiveness and cultural make up of Gen Z. Bringing in secular voices would have provided a more solid foundation for understanding Gen Z in chapter 3.

The third aspect of this project I would do differently would be to further broaden the expository preaching content of chapter 3 by interviewing current expository preachers. Interviewing men who have faithfully preached the Scriptures for decades would have brought even more solidarity to the expository preaching content of chapter 3. I would have also had them weigh in on the definition of expository preaching that took up multiple pages in chapter 3. Bringing an interview piece to the expository preaching section of chapter 3 would have brought more personality and contemporary quality to this section.

The fourth aspect of this project I would do differently would be to include a gospel section in the expository preaching section in chapter 2. There was an adequate amount of work done in both the Old Testament and the Pauline Epistles, but there was a void of Jesus' expository preaching principles. Including a section on Jesus as an expositor would have brought even more depth to chapter 2 and made the preaching section even more comprehensive.

The fifth aspect of this project I would do differently would be to make the paradigm even more practical. While the goal of the paradigm was accomplished, in hindsight I would have liked to make the paradigm even more applicable. Specifically, I would have spent even more time developing the "how to" of each individual piece of the paradigm. I would do this for the purpose of future readers so that they would have a practical means by which to apply each of the pieces to the paradigm. While the paradigm can be applied in different ways in different contexts, it would have been helpful to have clear steps to incorporate some of the paradigm pieces.

## **Theological Reflections**

Theologically, this project brought both new insight as well as further solidified previously learned material. First, regarding new material, I learned a great deal of biblical insight on generational ministry. The heart of God, revealed in Scripture, for crafting and contextualizing generational ministry is evident. I do not believe I ever fully understood the need to contextualize preaching practices until I embarked on this project. I had heard to just exegete the Word and then to preach the Word. These two truths are irreplaceable to faithful expository preaching. However, I had never heard anyone connect the exegesis of Scripture with the exegesis of society. I did not understand the biblical need for the preacher to exegete his audience. I never understood that understanding the coming generation was a vital piece of expository preaching. I also never saw the biblical need for an expository evolution. By studying generational ministry from Scripture, I came to realize that understanding Gen Z is a biblical mandate to me as a preacher. Once I began to grasp the biblical calling to reach the coming generation, this paradigm became a labor of love for me. Because of the need for generational consciousness, I wanted to craft a paradigm that would not only help me more faithfully preach the Scriptures to Gen Z, but would also benefit any reader after me. I will be preaching to Gen Z the rest of my life, Lord willing; therefore, I need to know Generation Z. I, and the preachers standing beside me, need to understand Gen Z and know how to best communicate to them. We need to understand the ancient art of expository preaching amidst the current culture of Gen Z.

Second, regarding solidifying previously learned material, studying the historical tenets of expository preaching were life-giving. Reading the words of expository preaching authorities further developed my knowledge and application of exposition. Many of the resources used were books previously read. However, reading them again nearly a decade later proved to be just as applicable now as when I first read them. It was like falling in love with my wife all over again. I was reminded over and over why I preach and how I should preach. Expository preaching is a timeless art that will always remain a vital piece of faithful and fruitful local churches.

## **Conclusion**

This project begins and ends with the truth that God loves this coming generation. Scripture reveals the heart of God for preaching the Word and reaching the next generations. This project sought to combine these two biblical mandates. Gospel-centered expository preaching has and must continue to be an irreplaceable foundation of healthy local church ministry. However, while the tenants of expository preaching are timeless, the practices of expository preaching must evolve. Generations and cultures communicate uniquely. Faithful expository ministry must not only seek to understand the coming generation but also to speak to and be understood by the coming generation. With the coming of each new generation, an expository evolution must take place among expository preachers. The preacher must have his ear to the culture and decide how to most faithfully communicate with them. Exegeting Scripture is a labor of love. Exegeting Gen Z is also a labor of love. For me, this journey to understand Gen Z and seek to develop a paradigm for preaching to this generation was life-altering. I am grateful for this project and hopeful that this work will help craft an expository evolution.

## APPENDIX 1

### EXPOSITORY PREACHING COMPETENCE

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to evaluate the current level of preaching comprehension. This research is being conducted by William Blake Ligon for purposes of evaluating the current level of preaching comprehension. In this research, you will answer the question honestly. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

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

The purpose of this survey is to analyze the current level of competence regarding an expository sermon.

1. How long have you listened to sermons?
2. What has been your all-time favorite sermon and why?
3. Do you have any type of spiritual routine before you hear a sermon?
4. How long is too long for a sermon length?
5. What distracts you during a sermon often?
6. What is the most important factor in evaluating a sermon?
7. What is the most important characteristic of a preacher?

On a scale of 1-6, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = Indifferent, 4 = agree, 5 = somewhat agree, and 6 = strongly agree rate the following:

- a. I'm excited when I sit down to hear a sermon –
- b. I get the same out of a sermon online as I do sitting in a service –
- c. I love when the preacher tells stories –
- d. I leave most sermons not sure how I'm supposed to apply the text –
- e. I pray before I walk into a service to hear a sermon –
- f. Sermons are boring to me –
- g. I'm not sure how to evaluate whether a sermon was Biblical or not –
- h. I talk about the sermon with others after the service –
- i. I consistently apply the sermon in a real tangible weekly –



- j. It's very hard for me to focus during a sermon –
  - k. I trust the preacher and believe he is delivering a Biblical sermon –
  - l. I trust most preachers –
  - m. A sermon that has multiple points is hard to comprehend –
  - n. A sermon with one major point is easy to comprehend –
  - o. Most of the preachers I listen to lack passion –
  - p. Hearing a weekly sermon is a vital part of my week –
8. I love when the preacher uses the following types of illustrations (circle your top 3):
- a. Stories about themselves
  - b. Stories about historical figures
  - c. Videos
  - d. Asks rhetorical questions
  - e. Reads from a quote from a book
  - f. Tells stories about people my age
  - g. Shows pictures
  - h. Gets us in small groups after the sermon
  - i. Asks us to get up during or after the sermon to “do” something (ex. Sign the big R)
9. I don't think preaching is as relevant to my generation as in previous generations.
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Somewhat agree
  - d. Somewhat disagree
  - e. Disagree
  - f. Strongly disagree
- Explain:
10. I receive relevant truth from the sermons I hear and know how to rightly apply it to my life.
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Somewhat agree
  - d. Somewhat Disagree
  - e. Disagree
  - f. Strongly disagree
- Explain:
11. In general, do you trust preachers?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Somewhat agree
  - d. Somewhat disagree
  - e. Disagree
  - f. Strongly disagree
- Explain:

12. Do you feel you listen adequately to sermons?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Somewhat agree
  - d. Somewhat disagree
  - e. Disagree
  - f. Strongly disagree

Explain:

13. Do you feel you know how to effectively listen to sermons?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Somewhat agree
  - d. Somewhat disagree
  - e. Disagree
  - f. Strongly disagree

14. Have you ever been taught how to listen to sermons?

## APPENDIX 2

### EXPOSITORY PREACHER INTERVIEW

The purpose of this questionnaire is to use as a template for interviews conducted over the phone. These interviews will be done with men who are considered by their peers as effective expository preachers to college-age Christ-followers.

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to craft generationally conscious expository sermons for Generation Z. This research is being conducted Blake Ligon for the purpose of as project research. In this research, you will answer the questions as honestly as possible. You may be quoted in this research project for the purpose of further support the project purpose.

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

1. Where do you currently serve as pastor and how long have you been there?
2. How long have you been preaching to college-age Christ-followers?
3. What generational trends do you see in the current college-age student regarding learning styles and preaching receptivity?
4. What cross-generational principles do you see as effective in preaching expository sermons to college-age people?
5. How do you continue to remain effective at communicating with college-age Christ-followers?
6. What resources are important for you to remain a relevant voice in the lives of your current students?
7. What length of time do you typically preach?
8. Do you preach points? Do you have one point?
9. How would you describe your style of expository preaching?
10. What is the single-most effective tool in communicating Biblical truth to college-age people?

## APPENDIX 3

### GENERATION Z EXPOSITORY PREACHING PARADIGM SURVEY

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Generation Z Expository Preaching Paradigm. This research is being conducted by William Blake Ligon for purposes of evaluating the overall effectiveness of the Gen Z Expository Preaching Paradigm. In this research, you will answer the question honestly. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

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

1. Have you read the content of the Gen Z paradigm entirely?  
Yes                      No
2. List each piece of the paradigm.
3. Which piece of the paradigm seemed most accurate to you personally?
4. Which piece of the paradigm seemed to be the most immediately applicable?
5. Did you agree with each of the specific ways in which the pieces could be applied to the sermon delivery process to Gen Z?
6. Was there a piece(s) of the paradigm that you did not agree with?
7. Do you believe that your specific contribution to the project was heard and further developed?
8. Do any of the pieces of the paradigm need more development?
9. To your knowledge, are there any concepts that are essential to Gen Z preaching to that were not represented in the project?

Does this paradigm help the expository preacher more skillfully craft generationally conscious expository sermons to Gen Z? Why?

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## ABSTRACT

### THE EXPOSITORY EXCHANGE: CULTIVATING NEXT GENERATION CHRIST FOLLOWERS TO BECOME GOSPEL LEADERS THROUGH EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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Chapter 1 is an overview of the project. Chapter 2 forms the theological basis for expository preaching and generational ministry. The two sections of chapter 2 focus on a comprehensive overview of both the Old and New Testaments to form the theological foundation for this project. Chapter 3 forms the contemporary basis for expository preaching and Generation Z. The first section of chapter 3 reveals a comprehensive overview of contemporary expository preaching philosophies, and the second section covers a broad range of secular and spiritual sociological work on Generation Z. Chapter 4 contains the work of developing a paradigm for preaching generationally-conscious expository sermons to Generation Z. Chapter 4 contains the data from the surveys done throughout the project. Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the project and the results of a post-project interview with the preachers and students.

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