

**EVALUATING THE PREACHING IN THE EMERGING CHURCH IN LIGHT
OF TRADITIONAL EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING:
ARE THE HOMILETICAL MODEL(S) IN THE EMERGING CHURCH
DIFFERENT THAN THAT OF THE TRADITIONAL EXPOSITIONAL
PREACHING IN THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH AND ARE THEY ANY MORE
SUCCESSFUL IN ADDRESSING THE NEED OF POST-MODERN
CHRISTIANS?**

A dissertation presented

by

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to

THE DEPARTMENT OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

for the fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

September 2010

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ABSTRACT

Evaluating the Preaching in the Emerging Church In Light Of Traditional Expository Preaching: Are The Homiletical Model(s) In The Emerging Church Different Than That Of The Traditional Expository Preaching In The Evangelical Church And Are They Any More Successful In Addressing The Need Of Post-Modern Christians?

Many Emerging Church preachers claim the Bible is not viewed the same way it once was. Consequently ministers need to rethink some aspects of how they go about preaching and communicating. Emerging Church preachers argue that Christianity must develop a new way of describing, defining, and defending the gospel. The aim of this study is to answer the question: To what extent, if any, is preaching in the Emerging Church different than that of traditional expository preaching in the Evangelical Church and how does one compare with the other as far as success in addressing the needs of post-modern Christians?

Chapter one gives a brief introduction of the Emerging Church movement by briefly defining and describing the diverse movement (EC movement) that arose within Protestant Christianity due to a reaction to modernism in Western Christianity.

Chapter two provides a literature study where definitions of both preaching styles are considered – emerging style(s) and expository preaching. Included with the emerging preaching style(s) and expository preaching will be characteristics comprising these styles.

Chapter three (methodology) consists of charts, definitions, and descriptions comparing both the modern and postmodern movement through their characteristics and values, purposes for the movements, and homiletics of the movements.

Chapter four, “Findings From of The Comparisons From The Two Models of Preaching” consists of the results found from the research.

Chapter five, “Conclusions Of Preaching For The Two Models Of Preaching” will consist of a critical analysis of the homiletics in both the Emerging Church and the Traditional Evangelical Church.

Chapter six, “Expository Preaching In the Traditional Evangelical Church For Post-Modern Christians” will offer a model as a proposal on how to effectively preach to the postmodern congregation.

Chapter seven contains concluding remarks concerning the effectiveness of the traditional expository preaching compared with the emerging dialogical/storytelling preaching for postmodern Christians.

Ten Word Description – Evaluating preaching: Emerging Church in light of Traditional Expository preaching.

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CHAPTER ONE

(Introduction)

In the book by Stetzer and Putman (2006), *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community*, some interesting and convicting statistics are shared concerning the church and its relation to the emerging culture (postmodern culture). This numerical data helps clarify why the emerging church is concerned about the way church is being conducted. The authors share that “the biggest cultural barrier we face is the emerging ‘global context’” (Stetzer & Putman 2006:5). Stetzer and Putman use the term “to refer to the convergence of the global reality with our local reality. North America has become a global community requiring new strategies for effective ministry” (Stetzer & Putman 2006:5).

Stetzer and Putman seem to think the church was more the focal point for families and gatherings during the early to mid 1990s, therefore being the first choice of spiritual seekers. In the late 1990s, the church became “seeker sensitive,” in an effect to make the church attractive to the culture. Stetzer and Putman believe what is needed now is a more proactive strategy.

Stetzer and Putman share that:

The percentage of Christians in the U. S. population dropped 9 percent from 1990 to 2001. The American Religious Identification Survey 2001, released by the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY) showed that the percentage proportion of Christians in the U.S. has declined from 86 percent in 1990 to 77 percent in 2001. The number of unchurched has almost doubled from 1991 to 2004. The Barna Group study explained, since 1991, the adult population in the United States has grown by fifteen percent. While during that same period, the number of adults who do not attend church has nearly doubled, rising from 39 million to 75 million – a 92% increase. According to *Christianity Today*, ‘The Barna Research Group reports that in the United States about 10 million

self-proclaimed, born-again Christians have not been to church in the last six months, apart from Christmas and Easter” (Stetzer 2006:8-9).

Stetzer and Putman share other shifts (such as ethnic diversity, people groups, population segments, and cultural environments) that need to be considered in reaching the emerging culture with the gospel.

The culture has shifted. The emerging culture sometimes called postmodern is described by Stetzer and Putman as “a rejection of the modern view of life and the embracing of something new.” The authors state that “churches need to decide whether they will be outposts of modernity in a new age or embrace the challenge of breaking a new cultural code” (Stetzer & Putman 2006:8).

Taylor (Taylor 2005) in his book *The Out Of Bounds Church* states “I sit on the fault lines of a cultural shift. In my right hand, I hold a video remote. In my left hand, I hold the gospel of Jesus. I am born for such a time as this. So are you. Ours is the task of communicating this gospel in an age of change. Ours is the task of following Jesus into the future of this cultural shift” (Taylor 2005:19). Taylor continues by claiming, “This is our world. It is the world of the emerging church. It is in this world that we sit, video remote in one hand and gospel in the other. It is in this world that Jesus walks. And in the explosive mix of sound and text and image, new expressions of church and worship are emerging. Christianity in the West is in decline” (Taylor 2005:30).

Most would agree that Christianity in the West is in decline. What is the problem though? Most emerging leaders would claim it is the traditional church of the modern era that never changed with a shifting culture. The emerging leaders would state that the way church has been done during the 20th century doesn’t work in the 21st century. Culture

has changed, therefore, the church needs to change the way it operates. One way that the emerging movement believes that the church needs to change is in the area of worship. Preaching, being one of the areas of worship, needs change according to the emerging church. This work will deal the preaching and its effectiveness with this shifting culture both in the traditional evangelical church and the emerging church. To better understand the preaching of both groups one first needs to be introduced to some descriptions of both movements.

1.1 The Emerging Church Movement

Some definitions of the Emerging Church Movement:

The Emerging Church is a diverse movement within Protestant Christianity that arose as a reaction to the influence of modernism in Western Christianity. The movement is usually called a “conversation” by its proponents to emphasize its diffuse nature. . . The emerging church seeks to deconstruct and reconstruct Christianity as its mainly Western members live in a postmodern culture (www.brainyencyclopedia.com/e/em/emerging_church.html 2007).

The Emerging Church movement consists of a diverse group of people who identify with Christianity, but who feel that reaching the postmodern world requires us to radically reshape the church’s beliefs and practices to conform to postmodernism (Kowalski 2007).

The Emerging Church Movement (or the Emergent Church Movement) is described by its own proponents as, “a growing generative friendship among

missional Christian leaders seeking to love our world in the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Emergent Village 2007).

The Emerging Church Movement has been described as an amorphous composition that has embodied certain claims which are expressed in its theological, polemical, and ecclesiological structures.

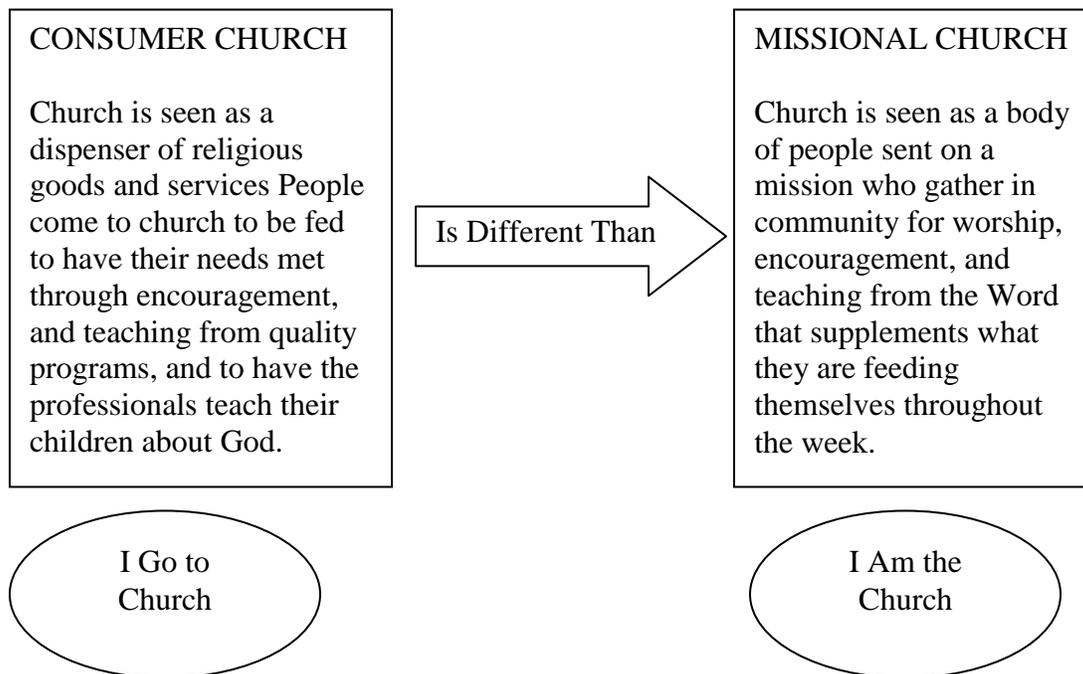
The claims that are expressed and most consistently described in the Emerging Church Movement are recognized by the following values (www.brainyencyclopedia.com/e/em/emerging_church.html 2007):

- *Missional living*: Christians go out into the world to serve God rather than isolate themselves within communities of like-minded individuals.
- *Narrative theology*: Teaching focuses on narrative presentations of faith and the Bible rather than systematic theology or biblical deductionism.
- *Christ-likeness*: While not neglecting the study of scripture or the love of the church, Christians focus their lives on worship and emulation of the person of Jesus Christ.
- *Authenticity*: People in the postmodern culture seek real and authentic experiences in preference over scripted or superficial experiences. Emerging churches strive to be relevant to today’s culture and daily life, whether it be through worship or service opportunities. The core Christian message is unchanged, but emerging churches attempt, as the church has throughout the

centuries, to find ways to reach God’s people where they are to hear God’s message of unconditional love.

Carson, in his book *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, states that “the Emerging Church movement honestly tries to read the culture in which we find ourselves and to think through the implications of such a reading for our witness, our grasp of theology, our churchmanship, even our self-understanding” (Carson 2005:45).

In his book, *The Emerging Church*, Kimball clearly points out the differences between the “Consumer Church” and the “Missional Church” of the Emerging Movement in (Kimball 2003:95):



1.2 Understanding the Emerging Culture

In order to understand to what extent, if any, preaching in the Emerging Church differs from that of expositional preaching in the traditional Evangelical Church as well as the effect the models are having on the post-modern culture, one needs to be familiar with the major players of the Emerging Church and those of the traditional Evangelical Church where expositional preaching is practiced. This involves both preachers and recipients. Since the postmodern generation is the generation in which the church has its setting today it will be the primary group referred to and dealt with in this research. In other words, the postmodern generation is the generation that the emerging church and traditional church are presently trying to reach and minister to. Who comprises the postmodern generation? According to Kimball's chart, located in the article "Vintage Faith: Exploring the Emerging Church and Vintage Christianity," postmodern generations include: the next/young generations, which include generation X, or the baby busters who follow the baby boomers (Table below).

<i>Factors</i>	Builders	Boomers	Busters
<i>Ages</i>	52+years	33-51 years old	14-32 years old
<i>Formative years</i>	1920s, 30s, 40s	1950s, 60s, 70s	1980s, 90s, 2000s

(Kimball, 2007:3)

According to Kimball (2007) and McQuilkin (2005), some of the characteristics of the emerging generations with regard to homiletics are:

- The amazing story needs to be told again because people in the emerging culture don't know the story.
- The storybook isn't viewed the same anymore.
- Authenticity is a paramount virtue. The emerging leaders state that we need to gain our voice and trust back before speaking into the lives of others.
- Reality must be experienced. The emerging culture is not interested in propositional truth. They prefer to learn experientially.
- Celebrate diversity (Different starting points for different worldviews).
- The sermon is only one part of the worship gathering.
- The preacher teaches ancient wisdom of Scripture and how it applies to kingdom living.
- Emphasizes the explanation and experience of who truth is. The emerging culture has a new hunger for depth and theology.
- The starting point is the Garden of Eden and the retelling of the story of creation and sin.
- Biblical terms like *gospel* and *Armageddon* need to be deconstructed and redefined.
- The message is communicated through a mix of words, visuals, art, silence, testimony, and story.
- Preaching in worship is a motivator to encourage people to learn from the Scripture throughout the week. Preaching must cultivate a culture that allows dialogue.

- A great deal of preaching takes place outside the church building in the context of community and relationship.
- The emerging culture wants a church that revolves around Scripture and not a personality (the preacher).
- The emerging culture wants a shepherd and fellow journeyer instead of a message giver or problem solver.

(Kimball 2007:175; McQuilkin 2005:174).

This thesis will attempt to answer the following question: To what extent, if any, is preaching in the emerging church different from that of traditional expositional preaching in the evangelical church? The research question deals with whether traditional expository preaching is antiquated and non-productive for the postmodern culture as many in the emerging movement claim. This study will provide information and evidence to the contrary. It will also provide a traditional expository model that can be used in a number of different forms, successfully reaching postmodern Christians. In this work both models will be compared and contrasted with one another as to characteristics of the different models and to what success they have had in addressing the needs of the post-modern Christians and culture. There will be four chapters involving this topic. Chapter two will be comprised of literature study. In chapter two, a literary study, books, internet articles, journals, sermons, thesis and dissertations, newspapers and magazines will be consulted, commented upon, and recorded. The chapter will consist of the following information: definitions and analysis from books and articles by scholars, lay people, and key players of the emerging movement as well as some who are in opposition. A brief history of the movement will be provided. Another section will include comments from

different players as to why the movement began. A section on preaching will present definitions of both styles considered in this work - emerging style(s) and expository preaching. Also mentioned with the emerging style(s) of preaching and the expositional preaching will be characteristics consisting within the styles. Chapter three (Methodology) will consist of charts, definitions, and descriptions, comparing both the modern and postmodern movement with their characteristics and values, purposes for the movements; and homiletics of the movements. Three emerging leaders will be used as primary examples of the movement referred to in this chapter (and throughout the work). These ministers will later be compared and contrasted to three ministers in the traditional expositional preaching camp. Doug Pagitt of Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Dan Kimball of Vintage Faith in Santa Cruz, California, and Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington will be the three leaders of the Emerging church compared and contrasted to Chuck Swindoll of Stonebriar Community Church in Dallas, Texas, Haddon W. Robinson homiletics professor of Gordon-Conwell Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts, and John MacArthur of Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, are all considered main players of the traditional expository preaching model. Material recorded, both from oral messages and written material (articles and books), will be used, as well as material from others written about them. Chapter four (Findings of the Comparison of the two Models of Preaching) will consist of results of the research, along with discussion of the following questions: To what extent, if any, is preaching in the emerging church different from that of the traditional expositional preaching in the evangelical church, and what success are both having in reaching the postmodern culture? There will be a report on the findings from the different

models of preaching in the modern (propositional/expository) and the postmodern (dialogue/storytelling) era. The report will begin by testing the two styles of preaching from the two periods against what is needed for ministering to this postmodern period. The six models of preachers used in this study will be examined against the characteristics and values of the postmodern culture to see which model of homiletics described in this research is more successful in reaching the emerging culture. Chapter Five (The Conclusion about the two Models of Preaching) will be the concluding chapter consisting of a critical analysis of the homiletics in both the emerging church and the traditional evangelical church. Chapter Six (A Model for Expository Preaching in the Traditional Evangelical Church for Postmodern Christians) will offer suggestions for implementing the traditional Evangelical preaching discussed within this study for postmodern Christians. The chapter will contain an explanation of a model of expository preaching as a proposal on how to effectively preach to postmodern Christians. Chapter Seven (conclusion: a model for expository preaching in post-modern context), will discuss the two styles of preaching (traditional expository – emerging dialogical/storytelling) in relation to their effectiveness to the Postmodern Christians. A model for expository preaching in post-modern context will be developed.

CHAPTER TWO

(Review of Literature)

Chapter two is comprised of material such as books, internet articles, journals, sermons, thesis and dissertations, newspapers and magazines consisting of research information: definitions and analysis from books and articles by scholars, lay people, and main players of the emerging movement as well as some who are in opposition. A brief history of the emerging movement and comments from different players about the emerging movement and why it began are provided. Finally, there is a section on preaching which includes definitions and characteristics of the two styles of preaching.

DEFINITIONS, COMMENTARIES, HISTORY AND PREACHING OF THE EMERGING CHURCH FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES.

2.1 Definitions Concerning the Emerging Movement

2.1.1 The Emerging Movement as Defined by Encyclopedias

The Emerging Church Movement

The emerging or emergent church movement in the US is a controversial, 21st century Christian movement seeking to engage people, especially unchurched, and living in the postmodern or postcolonial cultures. Proponents call the movement an emerging “conversation” to emphasize its development and decentralized nature. One characteristic is the focus on missional living where Christians are sent out into the world to be a blessing wherever they are. Narrative presentations of the faith and the Bible as well as the use of multimedia, the Internet and blogs are popular with the predominantly younger generation of Christians. An emphasis on dialogue allows for a generous openness to a

plurality of biblical interpretation with an avoidance of a dogmatic approach to theology found in historical Christianity. Many of the members of the emerging church do not identify with the label “emergent” which they associate with theological positions attributed to Brian McLaren and the organization Emergent Village. This is particularly true of the UK, Australia, and New Zealand which are collectively recognized as the birth place of the ‘western’ emerging church.

Values and Characteristics:

- *Missional Living:* All believers are missionaries who are sent to be a blessing to the culture around them through a lifestyle that mimics God’s kingdom here on earth.
- *Ecclesiology:* The emerging church movement is highly decentralized with little institutional coordination, choosing instead to communicate through fluid and open networks. Participants avoid formulaic assumptions about the role and nature of the church ecclesiology.
- *Postmodern:* To some extent, the movement arose as a response to the perceived influence of modernism on Western Christianity. Critics began to challenge the church, believing it was culture bound to modernism and all its trimmings. Proponents of the emerging church embrace postmodern epistemology and values. They seek to deconstruct and reconstruct Christianity in order to meaningfully engage with Western society which is now predominately post-Christian. (Wikipedia, “The Emerging Movement 2007:1)

The Emerging Church or Emergent Church

The emerging church or emergent church is a diverse movement within Protestant Christianity that arose in the late 20th century as a reaction to the influence of modernism on Western Christianity. The movement is usually called a “conversation” by its proponents to emphasize its diffuse nature with contributions from many people and no explicitly defined leadership or direction. The emerging church seeks to deconstruct and reconstruct Christianity as its mainly Western members live in a postmodern culture.

Most Emergents can be recognized by the following values:

- *Missional living:* Christians go out into the world to live their faith rather than isolate themselves within communities of faith.
- *Narrative theology:* Teaching focuses on narrative presentations of faith rather than biblical reductionalism.
- *Christ-likeness:* Christians focus their lives on the worship and emulation of the person of Jesus Christ while studying the Word of God.
- *Authenticity:* Postmodern generations seek real and authentic experiences as opposed to scripted or superficial experiences. Emergents strive to be relevant to today’s culture trying to find ways to reach the culture with God’s message of unconditional love.

(Brainy Encyclopedia 2007:2)

2.1.2 The Emerging Movement as Defined by Articles

Baptist scholar

John Hammett (Hammett 2006), professor of theology at Southeastern Baptist Seminary, described the movement this way, “This movement should be praised for thinking seriously about reaching young, culturally literate people with the Gospel. But at the same time some of the leaders within the emerging church movement must take care that they are not shaped by a culture that has often forsaken truth and God.” Hammett goes on to explain in the article that their passion for reaching a postmodern culture that basically denies absolute truth could easily override their so called commitment to the truth. They need first to properly critique the postmodern culture; otherwise they are in danger of appropriating elements of postmodern thought that cannot be integrated into a genuinely evangelical Christian worldview. Hammett asserts that the emerging church’s desire to engage a lost culture is very admirable, but that desire needs to be clothed with caution (Hammett 2006:15).

Journalist and author

Marcia Ford (2007), a journalist and author, tells of returning home from an International annual convention and trade show held in Atlanta. Ford talks about how disenchanted the author had become with practice, not doctrine, of the evangelical church. This disenchantment changed when Ford noticed the influence that a group was making in our society. This postmodern-friendly movement is known as the “emerging church.”

Ford describes the movement by telling what it is not first:

- It is not an organization or an association of churches.

- It is not an entity with a single doctrinal stance.
- It is not another regimented program for the church to follow.

Ford continues by describing what it is:

- The emerging church offers and encourages a new way of *doing* church and *being* church.
 - It resonates with not just the 18-34 year-old-demographic but with any other age group who thinks like they do. The journalist compares the Jesus movement to the emerging movement with the main difference being the emerging movement is accomplishing its goal of being church whereas the Jesus movement never did.
 - It is communal and missional.
 - The faith of the emerging church movement is a journey rather than a destination. In this journey each individual needs to find his/her own way.
- (Ford 2007:1-4)

Seminary president and scholar

Mohler (2006), president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky states, “The idea of an emerging church—whether understood as a movement or a ‘conversation’ is based in the conviction that changes in the culture signal that a new church is ‘emerging’” (Mohler 2006:1). The seminary president comments that “the emerging church leaders are trying to recover a primitive sense of Christian community, while keenly aware of contemporary culture and deeply engaged with the culture, avoids the consumerism, entertainment-centeredness, and superficiality of mainstream evangelical churches.” Although many motives for the movement are good, Mohler

warns the emerging leaders to be alert that while acknowledging truth as more than propositional, it is never less than propositional. The emerging leaders need to affirm that a core of non-negotiable doctrines constitutes a necessary set of boundaries to authentic faith. In essence Mohler is calling for the emerging movement to embrace an understanding of Christianity that reforms the evangelical movement without denying its virtues (Mohler 2006:1-4).

Professor - North Park Theological Seminary

Scot McKnight (2007) considers himself to be a part of this movement or “conversation.” The professor states that the emerging church is:

The collective term for individuals who are emerging from this process of deconstruction and reconstruction of Christianity, or those who have joined groups being led by such individuals. The movement can be analyzed theologically, and theological analysis will uncover some of its genius. But, I maintain that the emerging movement, especially when you grasp its world-wide dimensions, is not a theological confession nor an epistemological movement but an ecclesiological movement. It is about ‘how to do church’ in our age. Or in the words of Gibbs-Bolger: ‘how to practice the way of Jesus in postmodernity’ (McKnight 2006:29).

McKnight comments that the Emerging Church may be seen as both a reaction to, and a continuation of the Saddleback/Willow Creek movement which achieved such great success in the 1990s using a “seeker-friendly” approach. The difference between the “seeker-friendly” approach and the emerging church approach is the “seeker-friendly” approach practiced a “come-to-church” evangelism while the emerging church thesis is “come-to-Jesus.” The emerging generation is concerned with the character of the church. The emerging generation believes that far too many church goers are more concerned about going to church than following God in the way of Jesus.

McKnight (2007) describes the emerging movement with a metaphor. He uses four rivers that flow into Lake Emerging which characterize it in the following manner:

- *FIRST STREAM - PROPHETIC OR PROVOCATIVE RHETORIC.*

The “prophetic or provocative rhetoric stream” is where the emerging church believes the church today needs to change; therefore they are making an effort to live as if that change already occurred. In so doing, the emerging church at times becomes very provocative with their language. For example, McKnight gives an example from the Bible in comparison to that of an emerging movement leader. In Hosea 6:6, McKnight shares how Hosea engages in deliberate overstatement, “For I desire loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings” (NAS). McKnight then gives an overstatement by Brian McLaren from his book *Generous Orthodoxy*: “Often I don’t think Jesus would be caught dead as a Christian, were he physically here today. Generally I don’t think Christians would like Jesus if he showed up today as he did 2,000 years ago. In fact, I think we’d call him a heretic and plot to kill him, too.” He clarifies it by stating that McLaren on the very next page calls his statement an exaggeration.

- *SECOND STREAM - POSTMODERNITY*

McKnight (2007) believes postmodernity cannot be reduced to the denial of truth. He believes it to be the collapse of inherited metanarratives like those of science and Marxism. The reason McKnight gives for the metanarratives collapsing is the impossibility of getting outside their assumptions.

McKnight offers two categories in which the emerging movement sees itself dealing with postmoderns. The first category is ministering *to* the postmoderns. The

second category the emerging movement will try and minister *with* the postmoderns. There is a third category in which McKnight does not see the majority of emerging church as ministering but must be mentioned, and that is they minister *as* postmoderns. This is where they embrace the ideology of the postmodern culture. They embrace the idea that we cannot know absolute truth. They believe it is the time when metanarratives no longer shape one's view of truth. The emerging movement that fits the third category does not like the concept of propositional truth.

- *THE THIRD STREAM - PRAXIS-ORIENTED*

McKnight shares that the connection of the emerging movement to postmodernism may be the main focus among some scholars as it grabs attention and garners criticism yet it is not the number one stream that characterizes the emerging movement. The number one stream that characterizes the movement is that of *praxis* and describes the faith as being lived out. It can be seen in its worship, its concern with orthopraxy (right living), and its missional orientation (participating in the holistic redemptive work of God in this world).

McKnight describes the emerging church praxis as:

- *Calling people to goodness.* This is not in the sense of being nice or being politically correct or being inoffensive, but reflecting God's goodness in this world for the good of others and the good of the world.
- *Calling people to graciousness.* Grace is the sense of knowing that all are in need of God's grace for all are sinners.
- *Calling people to glorify God by being a manifestation of the way of Jesus in this world.* This is what McKnight calls "*orthopraxy*." The professor

defines “orthopraxy” as “how one lives.” The emerging church believes that “how one lives” is more important than “what one believes.” In other words “the power of life forms the best *apologetic* for the way of Jesus.

- *They participate in the community where God’s redemptive work occurs.*

They are asking what God is doing in this world. They become missional by participating with God in the redemptive work that He is doing in this world. It is “Theo-centric” in that it is the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18). Thus, *missional* is first theological and then ecclesiological. The church is not sacramental but the alternative community through which God is working and in which God manifests the utter credibility of the gospel.

- *They participate in the holistic redemptive work of God in this world.* This “holistic” element is the missional impulse of the emerging movement finding its perfect expression in the ministry of Jesus - who went about doing good – to bodies and souls and spirits and to families and societies. Jesus cared about the whole person. Missional is not so much about inviting people to church but going into the community seeking to help them. It is not trying to increase membership but a church with open doors for opportunities to serve. McKnight states, “It wants to embody a life that is other – oriented rather than self – oriented, that is community directed instead of church – oriented. (McKnight 2007:1-3)

- *FOURTH STREAM - POST EVANGELICAL*

McKnight describes the fourth stream that flows into the emerging lake as post-evangelical. This stream is characterized as a protest against much of evangelicalism

as currently practiced. McKnight claims that this stream “flows from the conviction that the church must always be reforming itself” (McKnight 2007:16).

- *FIFTH STREAM – POLITICAL*

The final stream is what McKnight describes as political. McKnight states that Tony Jones describes the emerging movement as “latte-drinking, backpack-lugging, Birkenstock-wearing group of the 21st century, left-winged, hippie wannabes. Put directly, they are Democrats. And that spells ‘post’ for conservative-evangelical-politics-as-usual” (McKnight 2007:16).

A Leading Church Planter - North American Mission Board

Ed Stetzer (2006), church planter for the North American Mission Board, comments on the orthodoxy of the Emerging Church by placing their leaders into three main categories- *relevants*, *reconstructionists*, and *revisionists*. Stetzer comments that “while the first two groups remain true to Scripture and strive to make the church relevant to today’s culture, *revisionists* depart from an evangelical understanding of what the Bible is, what it teaches, and how we should live in our churches” (Stetzer 2006:180-191).

Stetzer states that the evangelical leaders ought to point out when the Scripture is disregarded or misunderstood but at the same time rejoice when we find a biblically faithful church in emerging culture. Stetzer teaches that to reach this postmodern culture churches need to be:

- *Missional* – way we approach people.
- *Incarnational* – describes what is actually happening. We are to be Christ fleshed out in our culture. This has to do with relationships.

- *Theology* – is never to be sacrificed for reaching the postmodern culture. Relevance should never clash with the power of the gospel.
- *Ecclesiological* – The church is important for transforming society. It is not the building, large group, or an incorporation that defines church. Church is a group of believers coming together, with the goal of becoming the body, which in turn can transform culture.
- *Spiritual* – being Christ-like. The awesomeness of God should be the goal of the church. The church should reflect in every way the glory of God for people to be touched and changed for God’s kingdom.

(Stetzer, 2006:180-191)

Speaker - 2006 Shepherd’s Conference

Phil Johnson (2007), a speaker at the Shepherd’s Conference in Sun Valley, California, is not a proponent in any way for the emerging church movement. Johnson describes the movement as worldly, man-centered (worship), liberal and neo – orthodox in theology. Instead of the emerging church infiltrating the culture with the gospel, he believes the culture is infiltrating the church with its philosophies and ways of life. The speaker states, “There has always been some segment of the church or another that is desperate to keep up with the shifting fads of culture and looking for novel ways to adapt Christianity to the spirit of the age. Johnson adds that just because you have candles, contemporary music and every kind of paraphernalia you can imagine, that does not mean you have the gospel. Johnson does agree with Brian McLaren about what to call the movement. McLaren believed (the summer of ‘06’) that the movement should be called “emerging conversation” because that is what best fit what was happening in the

movement at that time. Johnson states that “conversation” better fits the movement than “church” because, in his opinion, the movement did not seem very *churchlike*. Johnson describes the movement as:

- *Emerging* - convenient name for a broad based and growing assortment of similar or related movements that have flourished in the past half-decade, mostly on the fringe of the evangelical movement. The emerging movement is more than just the next’s generation’s version of the seeker sensitive church. In some ways, it is a reaction against and departure from the shallow, mass-movement professional showmanship of the slick mega churches. Emergent types tend to value authenticity over professionalism. It is a very diverse group who is keenly aware that postmodernism has molded the way contemporary people think, the way public discourse is carried on, the way public opinion is shaped, and the way judgments are usually made about truth-claims. This is their reason for arguing that the church must adjust its message accordingly. This unfortunately means for many in the movement, in practice, some level of accommodation to postmodern preferences.
- *Missional* describes the emerging church as revitalizing the importance of involving themselves in the lives of unbelievers in the community outside the narrow circle of church. Living is a very persuasive aspect of our testimony to unbelievers. Phil states that there is nothing wrong with this idea insofar as the gospel is clearly and distinctly communicated with words as the truth. The problem with this is a temptation to just live a holistic life before the community,

never verbally stating the gospel as truth because the post-modern culture despises every kind of clarity, certainty, or authoritative truth-claim.

- *Narrative theology* is the preferred style in the emerging church as opposed to systematic doctrine. Johnson states that the story of the gospel is ultimately more important than the theology of it. Phil does not deny that the narrative stories in the Bible are important to share but not in isolation of the theology that is taught within the stories.
- *Modernism* is played against post-modernism, with the emerging church movement to the point of making postmodernism seem acceptable with its thoughts and beliefs. Phil believes that the emerging church needs to consider the good from the modernistic period and remain faithful to them while discarding from that period that which prevents the church from being church (Johnson, 2007).

Speaker – Evangelical Theological Society Annual Meeting

Brett Kunkle (Kunkle 2006) of *Stand to Reason* at the Evangelical Theological Society's Annual Meeting, November 17-17, 2006, offered his thesis on the Emerging Church Movement and the Emergent Village. Kunkle makes a distinction between the "Emerging Church" and the "Emergent Village. Kunkle states, that the term "Emerging Church," is a very broad phrase that refers to a recent movement (sometimes referred to as a "conversation"). The Emerging Church is not an organized denomination like the Southern Baptist, Presbyterians, Methodists and other religious denominations. Diversity not monolith describes the emerging movement. This makes it difficult to make generalizations that would describe everyone in the movement. Kunkle quotes Scot

McKnight as describing the emerging Christians “. . . as diverse as the universal church. Some are simply evangelicals with a missional slant, while others are postmodernists with a Christian hangover.” The Emerging Church seeks to rethink Christian faith practice. Kunkle comments that according to Dan Kimball, a leader in the movement “the term ‘the emerging church’ simply meant churches who were focusing on the mission of Jesus and thinking about the Kingdom in our emerging culture. It meant churches who were rethinking what it means to be the church in our emerging culture.” The motivation for this rethinking is a perceived emerging postmodern culture. The Emergent Village is an official organization. They have a website, a national coordinator, a board of directors, and even raise funds for the organization. “Emergents” focus more on theology where the “emerging movement” focuses more on methodology. The Emergent Village’s desire is to influence the theological conversation of the emerging movement (Kunkle 2006:1-15)

Other Related Articles

Kim Lawton, wrote concerning the emerging church movement states, “The movement seeks to apply that message (Reconnecting to Jesus with his radical, profound, far-reaching message of the kingdom) in a contemporary, postmodern culture and is developing new ideas about worship, theology, and mission. McLaren’s provocative writings have become a manifesto of sorts for many in the emergent conversation. McLaren challenges Christians to move beyond traditional categories.” (Lawton 2007:1)

Ray Waddle in an article “‘Emergent’ Christians Seek Spirituality” states “‘Emergent’ folks are Christians who are impatient with rigid mega-church formulas and noisy doctrinal infighting They’re hammering out a theology that’s friendly to

ancient faith practices (contemplative prayer, labyrinths, hospitality) in a postmodern world of quantum physics, 24/7 media and coffee-house culture” (Waddle 2008:1).

The New York Times, 2004, described the emerging church as, “Congregations who blend ancient worship practices, using meditation, candles and incenses, with rock music . . .” (Waddle 2008:1).

2.1.2 The Emerging Movement as Defined in Books about the Emerging Movement (Listed by authors and editors)

Dan Kimball

Kimball (2003) in his book *The Emerging Church* states “What once was a Christian nation with a Judeo-Christian worldview (USA) is quickly becoming a post-Christian, unchurched, unreached nation. Kimball further states that Tom Clegg and Warren Bird in their book *Lost in America* claim that “the unchurched population of the United States is now the largest mission field in the English Speaking world, the fifth largest globally” (Kimball 2003:14). With this thought before the church, Kimball believes it is time that the community of believers starts rethinking virtually everything they do as far as church and ministry are concerned. Kimball describes the emerging church as:

- *Not having a single model.* Kimball explains that modernity for many taught the church to look for a clean model to imitate. In a postmodern culture you might have striking patterns developing among churches that are connecting with post Christians, but there is no one model to follow. That is why the movement is called a “conversation” by some. The movement is designed to stimulate others into thinking about what God might have them do uniquely in their own context of ministry.

- *More of a mindset than a model.* Emerging leaders realize the church needs to change how it thinks in relation to itself. Church doesn't need to just replace the outer wrappings of their ministries. The church must look at the inner core with a new mindset.
- *Measures success missionally.* The emerging church must not fall into the trap of the modern church through measuring its success by just having an alternative worship (using candles, artwork, practice of *lectio divina*, and prayer labyrinths). The emerging church must look at its success by examining what its practices produce in believers as they are sent out on a mission to live as light and salt in their communities (Matt. 5:13-16). Success is to be measured by the characteristics of a kingdom-minded disciple of Jesus produced by the Spirit, rather than methodologies, numbers and strategies. The success, in other words, is viewed by such things as seeing if people in the emerging church take social justice and caring for the needy seriously as part of the mission of Jesus (Kimball, 2003:14, 15).

Mike Yaconelli

Mike Yaconelli (2003) has put together a book with numerous testimonies from emerging leaders. In the book, *Stories of Emergence Moving From Absolute to Authentic*, Yaconelli is one of fifteen authors who tell a brief story of why they became an emerging participant. Yaconelli tells of his desire to find a place where people could worship God, learn about Jesus, and share their lives in an authentic community. His departure from the traditional church was due to questioning himself about his feelings of inadequacy and illegitimacy. Yaconelli saw where in the traditional movement of evangelical churches

church was about performance where the minister was the mediator between the congregation and God. The pastor was the one who had the vision for the church and therefore told the church what to do and where to head. Yaconelli's situation was that he never heard the word *intimacy* connected to a relationship with Jesus mentioned. Yaconelli was never encouraged to be with Jesus, experience Jesus, notice Jesus, enjoy Jesus, or savor Jesus, only perform for Jesus. Yaconelli continued by saying that in the seeker-sensitive church there was no room for spontaneity. Yaconelli felt that seeker-sensitive church services had become conspiracies of pretending where ministers tell the people what to do. In wrestling with what to do, Yaconelli left the seeker-sensitive church and started one (20 in attendance):

- *Where they relax and wait for God to show up* instead of making Him show up.
- *Where the worship isn't edited.* In other words when someone wants to sing they sing whether they sing on key or not. If someone wants to interrupt the sermon because they have a question or have a better illustration or a better explanation then they can.
- *Sin isn't talked about often.* The reason sin isn't talked about that much is because everyone knows they are sinners. They don't have to be told that. They feel bad enough about their sin without focusing on it. Church in the emerging movement is where people come to find out what to do about their sin. In other words, how do they find a way out of the addiction of sin?

- *Propositions are not talked about.* In the emerging church that Mike oversees stories are told. Stories describe our interaction with God, the tale of God's presence or lack of it in the lives of believers (Yaconelli 2003:14-21).

Spencer Burke

Spencer Burke in the book, *Stories of Emergence Moving From Absolute to Authentic*, entitles his chapter "From the Third Floor to the Garage." Burke was once a pastor in a mega church (10,000 average weekly attendance). The church that he served had everything a modern evangelical pastor could want - great people, great programs, and great pay. The problem was not with the modern evangelical church. The problem was with him. Burke felt that he was not a modern evangelical pastor, therefore grew tired of keeping up appearances that came with being a contemporary Christian. Burke described the modern church as "Spiritual McCarthyism." Spiritual McCarthyism to Burke is about "idolatry" – finding righteousness in something other than Christ. Through an experience Spencer seemed to find himself as a "fellow traveler" (emerging Christian) instead of a tour guide (contemporary Christian). In 1998 Burke started TheOoze.com that has grown into a thriving online community. It is a place where Christians can feel safe to ask questions and learn from each other. The online place tolerates differences and treats people who hold opposing views with great dignity. In other words it is a nonthreatening place to visit. It is emerging (Burke 2003:28-39).

Todd Hunter

In chapter three of the book *Stories of Emergence Moving From Absolute to Authentic*, Hunter (2003) tells of his "Entering the Conversation." When Hunter was 46 years old he tells how he got in the postmodern conversation by accident. Hunter was a

church planter and director of a new denomination – Vineyard USA. Hunter ministered primarily to young people. While ministering to these young people Hunter found himself trying to answer a whole new set of questions from the younger generation:

- *Is there truth?*
- *How can one know it given our fallibilities?*
- *How certain can we be about truth?*
- *Is all truth inherently good?*
- *Are there ways of knowing truth apart from the absolutist, foundationalist ways we were taught? If so, what does this mean for apologetics, theology, and church history?*
- *In addition to these questions there was nervous pessimism about church. The young people were wondering about power, authority, and hierarchy on the one hand, and why the church seemed so impotent on the other hand.*

These questions and others led Hunter to resign as director from the Vineyard and revision his thinking. There were three main streams that converged into a river that changed the shape of the intellectual and vocational riverbanks of his life:

- *The state of affairs that Todd and others was in was not because of a lack of their best efforts but precisely because of them.*
- *Christendom in the USA as most people had known it was quickly disappearing – what could be done differently to stop this from happening needed to be answered.*
- *Postmodernity needed to be responded to.*

The opportunity and necessity to respond to postmodernity led Hunter to discover several great gifts:

- *Led Hunter into being a post-reductionist.* Revision thinking for Hunter involved telling the story instead of propositionally teaching it. People actually live from a sense of story, not from facts, data, bits of information, or bullet points to which they once gave mental assent.
- *Hunter sees postmodernity as just another worldview.* Hunter desires not to be a faddish embracer of postmodernity or an unthinking critic of modernity.
- *Hunter is a critical realist.* Hunter is always critical of his present knowledge while simultaneously moving toward more perfect knowledge through the use of his critical faculties.
- *As a Christian, Hunter wants to believe in God and have confidence in his ability to deal with any worldview problem.* God is not stumped or derailed by postmodernity. Hunter's God is fully competent (Hunter 2003:42-53)

Tony Jones

In the chapter entitled, "Toward a Missional Ministry," in Stories of Emergence Jones (2003) talks about his journey while ministering to youth in the emerging movement. Jones met some church planters who were missional. The ministry Jones emerged into took on these characteristics:

- *Pastoral care – try to be available for students needs.*
- *Theological reflection – the best method is involvement.* The Socratic Method seemed to work the best – asking leading questions, answering with questions,

and letting the disciples come to the biblical conclusion during their own journeys.

- *Contemplative prayer* – learning silence and solitude.
- *Intergenerational Community* – involving all youth in worship and service, not just on Sundays and Wednesdays. A missional type of life. Being Christian not just doing Christian things at certain times (Yaconelli 2003:58-72).

Chris Seay

Chris Seay (2003), in the chapter “I Have Inherited the Faith of My Fathers,” talks about his family and the transmutation it has encountered. His grandfather was an evangelist of the 50s and his father is a Swindoll-esque pastor. Seay went another direction. The writings of Stanley Hauerwas led Seay to seek out an incarnation of biblical community. In January, 1995, Seay started University Baptist Church in Waco, Texas. Chris has sharpened his skills in story telling. Seay believes that propositional preaching is failing with the postmodern culture. They are seeing through the charade of modern forms of exegesis. Storytelling to Seay is not just giving illustrations to support the propositions extracted from the text. It is telling the stories of the Bible from Genesis to the end. Seay says, “One of the primary reasons emerging generations are post-Christian is that the 20th century Church has focused on teaching that is logical and linear. Emerging generations employ multiple thinking styles as they process truth and information” (Seay 2003:81). Seay uses art and other visuals in accentuating the message he is presenting (Seay 2003:76-84)

Chuck Smith, Jr.

“But Can We Get There From Here” is the chapter where Chuck Smith Jr. (2003) gives characteristics of the church from the 80’s to present and how they have changed with the culture:

1980s

- *Emphasis on contemporary music.*
- *Emphasis on simple, practically applied Bible teaching.*
- *Basis for spiritual community – practice of agape love instead of doctrinal correctness or shared spiritual experience.*
- *Biblical mandates replaced sanctified prejudices.*
- *Marked by an intense commitment to evangelism.*
- *Young people attracted to the new church because of its unique ability to appeal to their lifestyle and address their issues.*
- *New Emphasis on praise and worship.*
- *Churches manifested a climate of expectancy.*

Late 1980s

- *God at work in the world.*
- *Many interested in Jesus Christ and the Bible but had a strong aversion to organized religion.*
- *Culture changes opened new doors for Christian witness.*
- *Need to learn how to dialogue rather than monologue with popular culture.*
- *God’s presence in worship was almost tangible.*
- *Moving from isolation to relationships for witness*

- *Conversion to Jesus was a Spirit-led process rather than an event that occurred as a result of evangelistic witness.*
- *Patience with rather than direct confrontation with those who had aberrant ideas or new age doctrinal beliefs worked best in reaching them for Christ.*

1993-present

- *Giving careful attention to film, television, music, and literature for learning the culture.*
- *Developing a sensitivity regarding gender issues.*
- *Avoiding stances that might isolate the people outside the church from visiting.*
- *Engaging in social issues and helping people in need.*
- *Involving as many people as possible in short term mission trips that meet physical and spiritual needs.*
- *Seeking a common ground near the center of issues that have polarized Christians.*
- *Forming partnerships with other churches and organizations for meeting local and international needs.*
- *Addressing the dilemmas of our time.*
- *A greater engagement with the arts to enhance worship.*
- *Helping to plant churches.*
- *Learning to avoid the kind of rigidity and oversimplification that reduces every issue to right or wrong.*
- *Creating a sense of sacred space and sacred time so that God is more accessible to people.*

Even though the characteristics of Smith's ministry have changed with the culture, or so it seems, the church is still playing catch-up with popular culture. Smith (Smith 99) comments that, "We need new souls, souls that are free to borrow and learn from Christian traditions, without being chained by them" (Smith 2003:88-99).

Jo-Ann Badley

Jo-Ann Badley (2003) is a Baptist woman teaching in a Catholic Theological College who feels right at home. Badley comments about modernism – "I don't find the loss of modern world frightening. In many ways the postmodern world looks like the same dissonance I have always known, now appearing at the broader level of the culture. I do find frightening those who advocate postmodernity without humility. An arrogance that assumes that you know the truth, that you are like God, is always a danger, whether that arrogance is found in individuals or in communities (Badley 2003:113).

James F. Engel

James F. Engel (2003), author in the book *Stories of Emergence Moving From Absolute to Authentic*, describes how his Christian journey has transformed him into a postmodern believer. Engel was very active in the modern culture. He was very purpose driven. Engel received his doctorate in business teaching at such schools as the University of Michigan, Ohio State, Wheaton College Graduate School, and Eastern University in Philadelphia. Engel wrote numerous books and articles and became very well known. Continuing to experience success in the area of business did not take care of the emptiness he experienced in his walk with the Lord. Engel soon discovered that much of what he believed and embraced had become contaminated with modernism in four ways:

- *A Great Commission fraught with great omissions* such as distinctions made between evangelism, personal holiness, and social transformation. Christ did not come only to see the lost saved but for the saved to become holistic.
- *A misplaced confidence in human initiative, reasoning, and strategy.* The commitment to reach the unreached world has left the modern Christians reducing the gospel to methods that communicate propositional truth followed by persuasion “to receive Christ.” Modern believers have engaged in serious biblical reductionism where the gospel becomes nothing less than a consumer product marketed internationally with an abundant message that ‘dreams will come true.’ Engel comments that evangelism takes place as sensitive and caring believers relate with those seeking to discover the reasons for our hope.
- *Unwarranted evangelical triumphalism.* With there being a Christian presence worldwide for the first time in history, sin and injustice in these countries have reached levels not even seen in Sodom and Gomorrah states Engel. This leads Engel to believe that Christianity has become little more than a veneer on society in far too many countries that need to be reached. There seems to be more emphasis placed on numbers than on discipling and unleashing new believers.
- *The Practice of Putting Programs before People.*
Engel (2003) states that the solution is a journey where one recognizes that Christ’s goal is to extend His Kingdom and reign on the earth. Christ’s method for accomplishing this goal is spontaneous expansion of the local church. Engel states that the church that Christ envisioned to accomplish this

goal is radically different than what the church is today. This radically different church exists as a community characterized by love, acceptance, and accountability, where common people are transformed by their faith to live uncommon lives and do uncommon deeds. With this in view Engel welcomes the collapse of modernism in both the Christian and secular world and applauds the courageous voices calling for sweeping changes within the ranks of evangelism. The warning from Engel for the postmodern emerging movement is that they not neglect the lessons from Jesus and from the history of Christian witness. James finishes by saying, “We don’t need another Christian infrastructure that future generations will be forced to dismantle” (Engel 2003:118-130).

Brad Cecil

In the chapter, “I Told You We Weren’t Crazy,” written by Brad Cecil (2003) the author states, “I told you we weren’t crazy,” concerning the emerging movement and postmodernism. Cecil states, “At the core, postmodernity represents a new way to think and categorize our thoughts. The Enlightenment and subsequently the modern worldview first emerged in the 1500s as a response to medieval mysticism. It was appropriate at the time and provided a platform for new investigations and understanding. However the Enlightenment promise to explain all the mysteries of the world failed. Modernity marginalized matters of faith and moved them to the sidelines . . . I believe it’s time to unhitch the wagon. We need to develop a new expression of Christianity for emerging postmodernism. Postmodern seekers do not consider the church as the only place to obtain spiritual resources anymore. The secular-spiritual divide is coming down. With the

return of faith, most recognize that God and spirituality cannot be removed from any aspect of life. Faith is no longer marginalized. It is an ideal time for new theological categories and thought.”

- *Limitations and Contingency* – Postmodern thought leaders is the recognition of limitations, especially in language, culture, and conceptual understanding. This means that we can’t know with certainty only with contingency. What we know is contingent upon our assumptions about language, about conceptual understanding, and on the cultural setting.
- *Community* – Modernity promotes truth as ‘the way things really are.’ Any rational person properly informed of the facts can acquire it. Postmodernity promotes a concept that truth equates to agreements formed in community and only people who participate in a community can obtain truth. In other words community equals truth.
- *Spiritual Formation* – Modernity’s spiritual formation is didactic where postmodern information is viewed just as information. Postmodern era seems to consider relationships and experiences to be the primary transformers in their lives. This does not mean that information is removed from the spiritual formation matrix – only that it is devalued a bit. The primary paths that people in the emerging community take in their spiritual formation are: *cognitive* (transformation through study of Scriptures), *contemplative* (transformation through practices such as meditation and prayer), *ascetic transformation* (through service to others), and *expressivist* (transformation through self-

expression such as art, music, acting and filmmaking), and *communitarian* (transformation through shared lives).

- *Leadership* – the postmodern emerging movement doesn't seek to put much stock in mission statements and goals. They want a new type of leadership where relationships are the king instead of mission statements and goals.
- *Commodification of Christ* – Modernity has turned God into a consumer commodity. The community of believers needs to present to the world a new expression of Christianity – a simple, humble, relational expression, people sharing life together, recognizing our limitations, and living in faith (Cecil 2003:166-179).

Editors - Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones

In the book *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, the reader is engaged with some of the voices that are involved in the emerging movement. It is a book consisting of twenty-five contributors who talk about such topics as spiritual formation, social justice, sex, church, and community, evangelism racial reconciliation, post colonialism and the Bible. Not all contributors will be discussed, only those that the author thinks are pertinent to this work.

Mark Scandrette

Scandrette (2007) is writer, spiritual teacher, and executive director and cofounder of ReIMAGINE. Scandrette talks about how for many leaders in the movement the door was opened to reimagine faith and the church through pain, disappointment, failure, burnout, public or private humiliation, or a sense of personal alienation. The desire is to learn to cultivate an environment of honesty, transparency, and support that brings greater

wholeness to both individuals and communities. At times the movement's constructions of faith and practice are dismantled and, at times, destroyed so that they can approximate a more coherent and integrative *orthopraxis – good theology and good living*. The central and reoccurring theme of the conversation has been a renewed fascination with the kingdom of God. By this it is used in terms of God's agenda to remake and restore all creation. This is why the movement believes that how they live is of equal importance to what they believe. The emerging group believes that this kind of perspective allows for an experimental approach to Christian faith and practice. The "conversation" believes that they are recovering from a legacy in which religious experience and devotion have been significantly separated from the domain of everyday life. Embracing the reality of the kingdom means that everything matters, therefore it calls for a holistic life. The emerging movement characteristics as Scandrette sees them are:

- *Significant interest in "community" and renewed monastic practices.*
- *An open – source approach to community, theology, and leadership that encourages more collective participation.*
- *Revitalized interest in the social dimensions of the gospel of Jesus (community development, earth-keeping, global justice with a relational engaged approach to these issues.*
- *Renewed interest in contemplative and bodily spiritual formation disciplines.*
- *Renewed emphasis on creation theology (this theology celebrates earth, humanity, cultures . . . and gifts of the Creator to be enjoyed in their proper context).*

- *Cultivation and appreciation of the arts, creativity, artful living, and provocative storytelling.*
- *Reexamination of vocation, livelihood, and sustainable economics.* (Scandrette 2007: 22-30)

Samir Selmanovic

Selmanovic (2007) grew up in a European Muslim family and served as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor and community organizer during the 9/11 crisis in Manhattan. Selmanovic serves on the Coordinating Group for the Emergent Village. Selmanovic states, *“Every generation of those who decide to follow Christ learns that there are Bible texts to be reinterpreted, theologies to be reconstructed, and faith communities to be reimaged.”* Selmanovic goes on to say that the choice between accepting the name of Christ and being Christ-like has been placed before millions of people in human history and today. *“One does not need to behave in God before living in God’s presence. God is present whether we believe in Him or not. Can it be that the teachings of the gospel are embedded and can be found in reality itself rather than being exclusively isolated in sacred texts and our interpretations of these texts? If the answer is yes, can it be that they are embedded in other stories, other peoples’ histories, and even other religions?”* (Selmanovic 2007:191-92). The emerging church movement has come to believe that the ultimate context of spiritual aspirations of a follower of Jesus Christ is not Christianity but rather the kingdom of God. This means that God decides whether He places His truth in others other than Christianity. The gospel is not our gospel, but the gospel of the kingdom. Selmanovic (2007) goes on to state, *“Christianity cannot regain credibility or recaptivate [sic] human imagination until it learns to exist for the sake of*

something greater than itself. An emerging generation of Christians is simply saying, ‘No more special treatment’” (Selmanovic 2007:194).

Dwight J. Friesen

In the book *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* Friesen contrasts the difference between *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxy*. Friesen states that “ortho” means “right” or “correct” and “doxa” means “thought,” “teaching,” or “glorification” with these right beliefs leaning toward authoritative theoretical and theological claims, such as creeds, doctrines, and dogmas. *Orthopraxy* is generally understood as right practices. It is the customary use of knowledge of skills, distinct from theoretical knowledge. Orthopraxy often refers to the practice of faith. Friesen goes on to say that both “orthodoxy” and “orthopraxis” are important but neither was Jesus’ primary mission, and neither is the primary ministry of God’s people. Friesen also defines and describes “*orthoparadoxy*” – “*the Triune life of God: one God while simultaneously three differentiated social persons, moving together in a coeternal Divine Dance of service for the sake of the other. This Divine Dance is the hope of the kingdom of God – that we would be one as He and the Father are one* (John 17:20-21). Friesen’s emerging manifesto of hope for the world is that followers of Christ embody an orthoparadoxical ethic, theological method, and theology” (Friesen 2007:205). Friesen’s proposal is for an ethic of rightly holding difference, paradox, and tensions, shape the postmodern theological method. It represents “a conversational theological method that seeks to graciously embrace difference while bringing the fullness of a differentiated social self to the other. By declaring orthoparadoxy a *conversational theological method*, a dialogical form of ongoing, open communication is underscored” (Friesen 2007:207). Friesen continues by warning that

orthodoxy or authoritative dogmatic claims become conversation stoppers, whereas “orthoparadoxy” sees the theological conversational process less as a goal unto itself and more as serving the people of God and to live full and particular lives with God, with one another, and with creation. “Orthoparadoxy” is Friesen’s manifesto of hope for living within the emerging movement (Friesen 2007:202-12).

Robert Webber

In the book, *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches – Five Perspectives*, Robert Webber (2007), general editor, records perspectives from five leading emerging leaders in the USA. Some of the leaders have already been commented upon so not all leaders will be heard from in this section.

“As the culture goes, so goes the church” is a phrase that expresses the close relationship between the church, its theology, ministry, and prevailing culture states Webber. Webber shares an insightful symbiotic relationship between Christianity and culture in the following way:

- *The church started as a missionary movement in Jerusalem.*
- *It moved to Rome and became an institution.*
- *It traveled to Europe and became a culture*
- *It crossed the Atlantic to America and became a big business.*

This may be somewhat simplistic but Webber states that it does present a truth that being the church always bumps up against culture. “While the Christian faith has a fixed framework of creation, fall, incarnation, death, resurrection, church, and new heaven and new earth, this framework and the story of God it reveals is always

contextualized into this or that culture” (Webber 2007:9). Webber illustrates the different cultures this way:

- *Ancient world – faith engaged with Platonism*
- *Medieval world – faith engaged with Aristotle*
- *Reformation era – faith engaged with nominalism*
- *Modern world – faith engaged with rationalism*
- *Postmodern world – faith must engage with a Post-Christian, neo-pagan world*

Webber (2007) comments that in each cycle until the twentieth century one could observe the “last gasp of the older paradigm” and the first breath of the “new paradigm.” But with the cultural upheaval from modernity to postmodernity, the twentieth century may be seen as the century of transition. Webber goes on to illustrate that traditional evangelicalism (1947-80) is the *high point* of modern evangelicalism; pragmatic evangelicalism (1980-2000) is the *last gasp* of evangelicalism in the modern world; and the emerging church is the *first gasp* of evangelicalism in the postmodern world. Evangelicalism faces new challenges as it seeks to thrive in this new cultural context. These new challenges demand new ways to think and speak the Christian message (Webber 2007:9).

Mark Driscoll

Mark Driscoll (2007), “The Emerging Church and Biblicist Theology,” by some, is considered a part of the emerging church movement but due to the direction that the movement has taken in the last three years Driscoll has distanced himself from the movement. Driscoll is Calvinistic in theology. Driscoll believes that the Scripture is the

inerrant Word of God. Driscoll believes that propositional truths of the faith are timeless and unchanging whereas the emerging church believes that experiences and culture should give space for propositional truths to change or be viewed differently. The real test of one's theology (beliefs) with the emerging church must be relational, not propositional. The emerging movement believes that spiritual character is developed by responding to God. Driscoll believes that to respond to God one must first know what God wants that person to respond to. In other words, truth needs to be known and principles taught from God's word for it to be followed through with. Driscoll comes across as authoritative and assured when it comes to certain truths in God's word. The Emerging church does not like authoritative assurance like that which Driscoll demonstrates. To the Emerging church, that leaves no room for others to be right or possess a different belief, even if it is wrong. The emerging church is always open and is forever willing to change in what they believe and how it is practiced, whereas Driscoll comes across as unchangeable. Driscoll's view of Christianity and the Bible seems offensive and unattractive to many in the emerging movement. They think Driscoll's view seems to oppress people who think differently. With the emerging movement being all inclusive, Driscoll could be considered a part of the conversation movement but one would have to categorize him as a minister who does not agree with most of their characteristics and values (Webber 2007:27).

John Burke

Burke (2007), in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives*, talks about how in the nineties he attended a representative traditional evangelical seminary while working as a representative pragmatic modern church

(Willow Creek Community Church) but how there was a lack of success in trying to reach the first postmodern generation. This caused Burke to question his method. In 1999 Burke and his family left Chicago to start a church in Austin, Texas to reach the emerging, postmodern, post-Christian world. Burke feels that he has not fully fit into the emerging camp yet but is still a part of the camp in many ways. Burke believes that the emerging church must be careful not to have the concerns of man in mind when shaping their theology instead of having the concerns of God. (Matt. 16:23). Burke does believe that once the emerging theology is anchored in revealed Scripture then the interpretations need to subject to broader community, including traditional and pragmatic communities on whose shoulders the church stands and from whom faith was passed down. Burke believes that the emerging church is at a global intersection, one that is wrapped around God's special revelation: 'How do we accurately re-present Jesus to a global diversity of religious cultures?' The emerging church must wrestle with what the Scriptures say God has revealed about the uniqueness of Jesus in relation to the world's religions. The point of conflict is how can the emerging church honor Jesus, stay true to Scripture, and best answer the burning questions of our global culture? Burke believes the answer to be both incarnational and propositional. Burke believes that the emerging church must be wise as serpents but innocent as doves in reaching the postmodern culture with its many pluralistic beliefs. Burke comments that the emerging church must avoid arguments about religion and get back to the basics of knowing God. A bridge that the emerging church can use to reach the many religions with the truth of the gospel without turning them off is the common ground of God revealing Himself in history. Only three religions claim

God's self-revelation: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This opens the door for the truth of Christianity to be shared (Burke 2007:51-77).

Doug Pagitt

Doug Pagitt (2007) is minister of Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis. With Pagitt theology must be at its essence, confessional. Pagitt doesn't believe it is enough to just say what it is (how we see it to be). Pagitt believes that theology must come from the life of the one who holds it. For Pagitt, theology is connected to real life, answering particular questions, concerns, and opportunities of the day, it will *be ever-changing* (emphasis mine). Pagitt believes that theology is the living understanding of the story of God in play with the story of our lives. The minister believes that the emerging movement must have a *reconstructing theology*. Pagitt believes that theology is for believers and those outside the faith because it brings life to those who have faith. The pastor also believes that the emerging movement theology should always be human. In other words, theology is to be used by the people who create it as a tool of our culture to explain reality as they see it. Theology should be good news in its particulars. In other words, the gospel needs to meet the situations we live in. Pagitt believes that the Christian community serves as a hermeneutic of the gospel. In other words Pagitt believes the goal of the Christian community is to be a living place of the hopes and aspirations of God. This is one reason the emerging church believes that listening to the community is so important. Pagitt believes that being right or having right doctrine or theology must never trump love. Any theology that accomplishes full knowledge or makes accessible the mysteries of the world and is not love is useless. In reaching the postmodern culture Christendom will not transfer into a conversation with a non-religious, yet spiritual, worldview. Pagitt

challenges the emerging church to embrace evolution, accept theology as conversation - as progressive theology, and realize that men and nature are becoming, evolving into what God desires for them to be – kingdom people not by recognizing they are sinners in need of salvation but by progressively evolving, bringing in the kingdom of God (Pagitt 2007:75-77).

Steve Rabey

In the book *In Search of Authentic Faith*, Steve Rabey (2001) discusses how the emerging generations of young people feel (that most traditional and contemporary churches fail to touch them); how postmodernism has impacted theology and culture; ways in which a few core values of the emerging generations are influencing their views of life and ministry; examining how values such as authenticity, community, religious experience, and pop-culture literacy have shaped the ecclesiology of the new leaders and how the views and experiences have played into the design of the new churches being created; examined some of the questions and tensions that have surfaced; addressed the issue of leadership.

Some of the tensions mentioned by a generation Xer – Jeff Bantz are:

- *They are very individualistic, but highly value relationships.*
- *They don't respond to authority, but long to receive instruction.*
- *They are skeptical yet pragmatic.*
- *They have an extended adolescence, but grew up too soon.*
- *They are slow to commit, but are passionately dedicated.*
- *They are a challenge to manage but are excellent workers.*
- *They are apathetic and yet care deeply.*

- *They are relativistic and searching for meaning.*
- *They are disillusioned, but not giving up.* (Rabey 2001:27)

In the book *In Search of Authentic Faith: How Emerging Churches are Transforming the Church*, a chart describes the Modern and Postmodern generations, the Boomers and the Busters, to help in understanding the influence on their worship (Rabey 2001:28):

BOOMERS – BUSTERS

- “me” generation – “we” generation
- live to work – work to live
- Jay Leno – David Letterman
- Enlightenment worldview – postmodern worldview
- Institutions – relationships
- Propositional truth – relational truth
- Excellence – authenticity
- Growth – community
- Lonely – alone
- Success – wholeness

While many are debating over but doing nothing about postmodernism with its effects on culture, Rabey states that many of the young men and women who are leading new Christian congregations aren’t waiting for an academic verdict on what postmodernism means. They are diving into the turbulent world with a passion to minister in new and sometimes radical ways. These young Christians are identified as the emerging church movement.

“Gone are the days when churches could be all things to all people by attempting to appeal to the broadest possible audience” states Rabey. The author goes on to say, “Many of today’s emerging Christian leaders believe that, in the future, the ecclesiastical landscape will no longer be dominated by large, monocultural, one-size-fits all mega churches, but rather networks of smaller churches, each of which ministers within the context of smaller, more closely knit subcultures. (2001:51-52). Rabey states that today many of the emerging leaders take an approach that focuses on ministry to the generations and subcultures which have largely been neglected.

Rabey (2001) in his book, *In Search of Authentic Faith: How Emerging Generations Are Transforming the Church*, shares some distinctions between the typical postmodern and modern leadership styles:

ENLIGHTENMENT	POSTMODERN
Positional	Earned
Perfect	Wounded healer
Supervisory	Mentoring
Product-oriented	Process-oriented
Individual	Team
Dictatorial	Participatory
Aspiring	Inspiring
Controlling	Empowering

Rabey claims that one thing is becoming increasingly clear: “Emerging leaders are boldly applying their unique core values to the issues of leadership, and what they’re coming up with are promises to remake the church” (Rabey 2001:201).

Tim Conder

Conder (2006), in his book, *The Church In Transition: The Journey of Existing Churches into the Emerging Culture*, states that we are living in an era when the church must open itself to change if it is to fulfill its call. Conder comments about how the culture is rapidly moving from a modern, rational, individualistic, Enlightenment society to a world increasingly described as postmodern, post-rational, and post-Christian (Conder 2006:12-19). Conder believes that the church faces a time where change is both necessary and inevitable because of the ever widening crevice that is exist between the existing church (traditional and contemporary) and its surrounding culture. Conder believes that emerging churches are plotting out some of the paths of transition that can help existing churches navigate within these difficult waters of cultural changes (Conder 2006:33). In the book, Conder talks about his own journey of transition to the emerging church movement. Conder offers seven deadly fears that he believes will prevent existing churches from transitioning effectively (Conder 2006:60-66). To Conder the transition is more than adjusting programs and practices. It is a journey about adjustments in thought and theology. Changes in worship style and ministries run the risk of being inauthentic. There has to be re-exploration of our theology, with new questions framed from a postmodern perspective and theological issues unearthed in transition. This requires more than oversimplifications in theological dialogue. Conder believes it involves churches and leaders to come into “conversation” around the issues that lie beneath the fears and oversimplifications. There must be transition in the primary arenas of practice for the church: spiritual formation, leadership, community formation, mission, and worship (Conder 2006:67-71). Conder summarizes by saying that “postmodernity and the

emerging culture will be experienced differently in every specific church community. Some will rightly realize that faithfulness to their calling and community will mean their transition will come in slow and cautious steps. Others will see transition as an absolute necessity that requires immediate, bold actions. Still others will stand on the steady ground of effective ongoing ministries while opening themselves to new opportunities and possibilities presented by the changing cultural landscape. If we can be kind, bold, and thoughtful in our dialogue with the great diversity of the contemporary and historical Christian community, we will find new creative paths that will allow us to embody and to build Christ's kingdom in this place" (Conder 2006:222).

Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck

DeYoung and Kluck (2008), authors of *Why We Love The Church: In Praise of Institutions and Organized Religion*, are young Xers, who view the emergent movement as something they do not care to be a part of. In the book, DeYoung does most of the writing, but both share apprehension about the movement. Both writers discuss what the Christian faith should look like in this postmodern context and how the emergents have sought to incarnate Christian faith in this context. DeYoung and Kluck reveal that their purpose is not to criticize those who are trying to engage the emerging culture, but rather to critique the emergent church. The writers admit that it is hard to define a movement that is like Jell-O in nature. DeYoung and Kluck contend that leaders of the emergent movement don't see themselves as leaders only as talkers (conversationalist). The writers explain that speaking at conferences all over the US and writing books on the movement puts them in a position where others look to them for spiritual and ecclesiastical direction therefore they should no longer view themselves as just partners in the movement but

leaders and teachers. The writers explain that to some, “emergent” means nothing more than a new style and approach to worship (couches, candles, coffee, etc). To others it signals an appreciation for postmodernism; and yet to others it means a return to a more ancient, primitive, and pristine form of Christianity. DeYoung and Kluck share that the emerging church for many involved a certain age group - high-profile, youth-oriented congregations. Some critics describe the emerging church as a protest movement – protest against traditional evangelicalism, a protest against modernism, and a protest against seeker-sensitive mega churches. Many leaders sympathetic with the movement like to describe it as EPIC – Experiential, Participatory, Image driven, and Connected. The authors state that some describe the movement as postmodern instead of modern, embodied instead of rational, servanthood instead of power, formation, instead of information, expressive instead of constraining, prayer instead of parties, and action instead of theory. DeYoung and Kluck state that there is no single person or group who speak for the emerging movement. The writers continue by saying that this seems contradictory when groups within the movement come together to speak for and describe the group. Even though the movement is amorphous Kevin and Ted believe that there are enough common themes, protests, and shared ideas in the authors who represent the movement, to engage them under the broader banner of the emerging church. The authors share some characteristics that could define an emerging Christian:

If you listen to U2, Moby, and Johnny Cash’s *Hurt* (sometimes in church), use sermon illustrations from *Sopranos*, drink lattes in the afternoon and Guinness in the evenings, and always use a Mac; if your reading list consists primarily of Stanley Hauerwas, Henri Nouwen, N. T. Wright, Stan Grenz, Dallas Willard, Brennan Manning, Jim Wallis, Frederick Buechner, David Bosch, John Howard Yoder . . . Doug Pagitt, Brian McLaren, and Rob Bell; if your sparring partners include: D. A. Carson, John Calvin, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Wayne Grudem, and John MacArthur;

if your idea of quintessential Christian discipleship is Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, or Desmond Tutu; if you don't like George W. Bush or institutions or big business or capitalism or *Left Behind* Christianity; if your political concerns are poverty, AIDS, imperialism, war-mongering, CEO salaries, consumerism, global warming, racism, and oppression and not so much abortion and gay marriage; if you are into bohemian, goth, rave, or indie; if you talk about the myth of redemptive violence and the myth of certainty; if you lie awake at night having nightmares about the ways modernism has ruined your life; if you love the Bible as a beautiful, inspiring collection of works that lead us into the mystery of God but is not inerrant; if you search for truth but aren't sure it can be found; if you've ever been to church with prayer labyrinths, candles, Play-Doh, chalk-drawings, couches, or beanbags (your youth group doesn't count); if you loathe words like *linear*, *propositional*, *rational*, *machine*, and *hierarchy* and use words like *ancient-future*, *jazz*, *mosaic*, *matrix*, *missional*, *vintage*, and *dance*; if you grew up in a very conservative Christian home that in retrospect seems legalistic, naïve, and rigid; if you support women in all levels of ministry, prioritize urban over suburban, and like your theology narrative instead of systematic; if you disbelieve in any sacred-secular divide; if you want to be the church and not just go to church; if you long for a community that is relational, tribal, and primal like a river or a garden; if you believe who goes to hell is no one's business and no one may be there anyway; if you believe salvation has little to do with atoning for guilt and a lot to do with bringing the whole creation back into shalom with its Maker; if you believe following Jesus is not believing the right things but living the right way; if it really bothers you when people talk about going to heaven instead of heaven coming to us; if you disdain monological, didactic preaching; if you use the word 'story' in all your propositions about postmodernism. (DeYoung & Kluck 2008:21-22).

The authors deduce that if all or most of their long sentence describes a Christian, then that believer might be an emergent Christian (DeYoung & Kluck 2008:1-22).

David M. Mills, professor at Cedarville University

Mills (2006) in his article "Mountain or Molehill" seeks to alleviate some suspicions that have developed about the emerging church movement by addressing the issues of epistemology, truth, and relativism from the emergent postmodern perspective.

Mills comments that a common motif in emergent writings is a seeming low regard for

theology, at least in the systematic area. Emergent leaders seem to talk more in terms of narrative than system. Mills believes that it is a wrong perspective to think that telling stories identifies a lack of discipline as well as a rejection of propositional truth-claims. Viewing the emerging movement's approach against the backdrop of postmodern understanding of theory and practice points otherwise. From the postmodern perspective, the Christian life is understood as the effort to live in proper orientation to the reality of God. As one attempts to orient themselves properly to reality by following the way of Jesus, one must know the truth, but only for the purpose of actually living in harmony with God and his reality. Mills believes that the wrong perspective among many outside the emerging camp has led them to believe that the movement has down played the importance of propositional truth whereas they are only trying to live out the truth of the gospel in word and deed. One of the reasons the emerging church leaders call for space when it comes to God and His Word is for mystery. God to them is much greater than anything we can fully understand. Mills further comments that if Christians will act, following the great and often mysterious God, theological concepts and propositions can indeed help us to find our way by helping us find a good fit between our beliefs and by prescribing what the life of faith should look like. Because of this, theology should be an ongoing exercise of imagination as well as reason. In making room for mystery in one's theology one must make room for stories, which allow us to orient ourselves truthfully toward reality even in the presence of mystery, when we lack precise definitions. Stories are used to bind together community with a shared sense of identity and history. The emerging church therefore talks in terms of "belonging" before "believing." Stories help the people in that community feel accepted and a part of that group. With stories and

living a life of love and acceptance others feel comfortable within that community because they not only feel loved and accepted but because they feel they have things in common (Mills 2006:51-66).

R. Scott Smith, professor at Biola University

R. Scott Smith (2006) in his article “Some Suggestions for Brian McLaren and His Critics” challenges McLaren’s view about foundational epistemology and him blaming modernity for the spiritual malaise in the traditional church. Even though Smith agrees with some of McLaren’s concerns about contemporary evangelical church in the USA, he still does not agree with McLaren in several key ways. Smith begins by defining what McLaren believes about modernity. Smith claims that McLaren believes that modernity is to blame for foisting upon us certain ways of thinking and living which the church has assimilated into its thinking and practice that has produced disastrous results. Smith goes on to say that McLaren’s solution involves the embracing of a new way of being a Christian in postmodern times. The cogency of McLaren depends upon how accurate his description and related criticisms of modernity are. Smith believes that to be mistaken here will cause McLaren’s solutions to be incorrect. Smith goes on to prove how his presuppositions about modernity are wrong: modernistic believers are described by McLaren as not allowing room for doubt or being wrong in their epistemology. Smith talks about and gives cases where this is not true. Smith discusses Descartes’s form of foundationalism which McLaren seems to embrace and talks about its faulty assumptions. Smith then shares how the foundationalism which believers of the modern era embrace allows room for humility, doubt, and even change contrary to what McLaren bases his solutions on. Smith concludes by saying, “In contrast to McLaren’s claims, while we can

admit that modernity has had a shaping influence on how we have been taught to live as Christians, it still does not follow that we should therefore embrace a new, postmodern way of being a Christian to solve those kinds of problems” (Smith 2006:82, 67-85).

Leonard Sweet

Leonard Sweet (2004), in his book *Out of the Question . . . Into the Mystery: Getting Lost in Godlife Relationship*, talks about saving the world. Sweet says in order to save the world the church will need more than higher standards to live by. It will need relationships. The tension between rules and relationship is not just for Christian witnessing but also for the church’s struggle for identity in an increasingly hostile culture. Sweet states that misguided allegiance to rules over relationship has impoverished the pursuit of the life of faith. How did the church get where it is? Sweet seems to think that Christians are irrelevant to a postmodern culture. The church makes the message too boring putting it in a context postmoderns aren’t involved in. Sweet believes the church needs to move back into the story of Jesus where they are living with Jesus and not just talking about Jesus. Sweet states that “the church has embalmed Jesus in rules, codes, canonicities, and traditions that have everything to do with the church’s saving itself and nothing to do with the church’s saving the world” (Sweet 2004:5). Sweet explains how the church got where it did – by becoming more interested in the object rather than the relationship. Sweet believes that Western Christianity is more belief based and church based instead of Jesus based. Sweet comments that early church faith was not based in creeds, or invested in institutions. It was invested in relationships. Some have called the emerging movement a “new reformation.” Sweet disagrees with that description, stating “Watching what God is up to today suggests less a reformational paradigm than a

missional paradigm. In other words, rather than a call to take care of family business, yet again, after five hundred years of trying, God seems to be calling us to take care of the world” (Sweet 2004:8). Sweet identifies this new movement as a “re-Orientation” partly because of the word “Orient” which means “east.” The author states that when communities of faith started to build churches they would first get everyone “oriented.” Sweet believes this tradition of getting oneself “oriented” has been lost during the modern era. The author clarifies what the “reformation paradigm” involves – “the reformation paradigm tempts us to replace relationship with reason, and is captured in the word ‘belief.’ It is connected with right thinking and involves systematizing and assenting, excluding those who don’t fully subscribe to the current fashion in credal statements” (Sweet 2004:10). Sweet contrasts the reformation paradigm with the emerging missional paradigm which is “a way of life – the life of faith.” The missional paradigm is a “quest for discovery.” Sweet continues by describing the missional paradigm as “a faith that is kinetic and transformational.” Sweet sums it up as saying that humans are unique with the main uniqueness being made in the image of God. We therefore can seek and enjoy pleasures of seeking. Our primary “quest” is not “a set of questions but the mystery of getting lost in a GodLife relationship” (Sweet 2004:10). This is what Sweet believes the emerging movement to be about and why it is different from that of modernity (Sweet 2004:1-10).

Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger

Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger (2005), in their book, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* define emerging as communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures:

- Emerging churches identify with the life of Jesus
- Emerging churches transform the secular realm
- Emerging churches live highly communal lives
- Emerging churches welcome strangers
- Emerging churches serve with generosity
- Emerging churches participate as producers
- Emerging churches create as created beings
- Emerging churches lead as a body
- Emerging churches take part in spiritual activities

(Gibbs and Bolger 2005:15-238)

2.2 HISTORY OF THE EMERGING CHURCH

Wikipedia

The Wikipedia reliability for a scholarly paper is sometimes questioned but due to the constant use and referral to, by the leaders in the emerging movement, this source is referred to at times in this work.

The Wikipedia explanation describes the emerging movement this way: The emerging church or emergent church is a diffuse movement which arose as a “conversation” in the late 20th century in Western Europe, North America, and the

South Pacific. The emerging church is concerned with the deconstruction and reconstruction of Protestant Christianity in a postmodern cultural context. During recent centuries, Western Christianity was influenced significantly by Modernism in that it sought to take individual narratives of the Bible and extract a set of underlying truths of meta-narratives. Using methods borrowed from scientific reductionism it was hoped that a grand truth and worldview would be attained. In practice, the modernist approach led to additional schism within the church. Postmodern church expressions, in turn, encouraged followers to deconstruct each element of their faith experience, and reassemble the pieces in light of his or her own unique journey through this deconstruction process (<http://www.jesuscreed.org/?> 2007).

Brainy Encyclopedia

The historical context of the emerging church from the Brainy Encyclopedia states that Western Civilization and Western Christianity have been influenced by modernism. In the 19th century modern protestant theologians sought to examine the individual narratives of the Bible and extract a set of underlying truths or ‘meta-narratives.’ Methods borrowed from scientific reductionism were used in hope to bring about a grand truth and worldview. In practice, however, the modernist approach led to additional schism with the Church – Liberal Christianity vs. Christian fundamentalism. Postmodern church expression, on the other hand, encourages followers to deconstruct each element of their faith experience and reassemble the pieces according to his or her own unique journey of deconstruction (brainy encyclopedia).

Robert Webber

In the book, *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*, Robert Webber (2007) suggested that for one to understand the 20th century shift in theological thought, one needs to be acquainted with and draw from the historical analysis provided for by sociologists William Strauss and Neil Howe. These men suggest that cycles or patterns recur over time. In the opinion of Strauss and Howe “Anglo-American society enters a new era – a new turning – every two decades or so. With each period people change how they feel about themselves, the culture, the nation, and the future. These turnings come in cycles of four. Each cycle is a life span of about eighty to one hundred years. These cycles comprise history’s seasonal rhythm of growth, maturation, entropy, and destruction. “In each turn of history since the late forties, evangelicals have responded to cultural change, and the emerging church is responding to the new cultural. To understand the current diversity within evangelicalism, Webber comments on the response of evangelicals to the cycles of culture since WWII and looks at the emerging church within the current cycle.

- *The First Turning: High Evangelicals (1946-64)* “*High Turning*” – is the age of Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy. Webber states that this turning was a time in culture of rebuilding America. The institutions were firm. The values were set. It was a world built on reason and science. This was the period where *traditional* evangelicalism was birthed. The new evangelism regarded fundamentalism as “anti-intellectual, anti-social action, and anti-ecumenical. There was a call for engagement with philosophy and the intellectual ideas of the day. The new evangelical theology distanced itself from fundamentalist Biblicism. It became

marked by a rational worldview, propositionalism, and evidential apologetics. This was a time for sparring with the best intellectuals and engaging secularists and liberals for the faith. Traditional evangelicalism did well but with its success its academic theology lost connection with practice. Theology became an abstraction, an idea to be defended.

- *Second Turning: Awakening Evangelicals (1964-84), “An Awakening”* – is a period where culture passed through another major shift. Confidence in the American way of life began to erode. Attention shifted from institutions to self. In culture a split was in the making between ideas and the reality of life. During the period three shifts began to take place in theological thinking. (1) The shift away from scientific theology and apologetics. (2) The shift away from the traditional approach to theological thinking. This came by way of the existential philosophy which was a new focus on experience. The new experience was essentially the experience of self. This brought on the contemporary worship movement. This movement became increasingly unconcerned about theological issues. It became a relational movement directed toward the emotional and psychological needs of a generation torn by the generation of social upheaval from the sixties and seventies. (3) The final shift was toward a Christian political movement. It eventually became a world wide civil movement. The evangelical church was now reflecting the cultural division where theological thinking and relational thinking were at odds in the same community.
- *The Third Turning: Evangelical Unraveling (1984-2004), “An Unraveling”* – is where civic order underwent a rapid unraveling. The decline that had already

begun to decline in the sixties unraveled further. There are three changes that should be noted: (1) The American family, formerly moving in the same direction, became a nation divided into groups demanding its rights (homosexuals, feminists, blacks, environmentalists, skinheads, moralists, etc). Society began to focus on generational needs. Busters, boomers, and Generation X's interests were targeted. (2) The moral values attacked in the sixties began to unravel even more during the period – 1984-2004. It became the period of casual sex, increased availability of pornography, easy availability of abortion, public acceptance of homosexual relationships and families, breakdown of families, the rise of latchkey children, the presence of gangs in cities, suburbs, and rural areas, the prevalence of marijuana, cocaine, and other drugs, and the increase of violence. (3) The government became characterized by “fiscal excess” with large deficits, reliance on other nations, and a widening gap between rich and poor. America was deep into a new era of lost purpose and shattered consensus. It was in a state of new decline. While institutionalism, morality, and government declined, confidence in self and a focus on self accelerated. This self focus accelerated in churches as well. The prominence of self in the spiritual realm brought about the rise of the New Age movement, the new interest in Eastern religions, the new emphasis on psychology, and the restoration of ancient pagan religions. This context birthed a “pragmatic evangelicalism.” Until the arrival of the emerging church, evangelicalism had been primarily divided between the traditionalists and the pragmatists. The traditional church with its worship and theology went into decline. The mega church, seeker tradition, contemporary

worship, and the need-driven church became post-evangelicalism, responding to the unraveling of society, created new practical solutions – corporate churches, entertainment worship, need-driven programs, and therapeutic faith. Theology became irrelevant. Pragmatics became prominent. The divorce between theology and practice was complete. Theology became lost in the privatization and narcissism of a Christianity that focused primarily on the needs of self.

- *The Fourth Turning: The Emerging Church and the Younger Evangelical Leaders (2004-)*, “*The Crisis*” – this is a period where there is a crisis upon America, the crisis fueled by the emergence of a postmodern, post-Christian, neo-pagan culture and the global war on terrorism. This turning usually always consists of times where there is great upheaval and a developing of a new order crafted out of the old. Fourth turnings in American history have been: The American Revolution (1773-1794), the Civil War (1860-1865), and the Great Depression and World War II (1929-1946). The latest period of turning will begin shortly after the new millennium. In this era “a hero generation is born.” The emerging church has the potential to establish a new kind of evangelicalism that will relate to the current cultural crisis. The emerging movement will form a new evangelical identity. This movement will be marked by new insights, new concerns, and new patterns of theological application, worship, spirituality, and ministry. The emerging church will hopefully be the new group of evangelicals that will be able to overcome the unhappy split between traditionalists on the one hand and pragmatic practice on the other and will bring about a new threshold of development (Webber 2007:10-16).

Bob Wright

The movement according to Wright (2007) “began in the 1990’s when ‘young evangelicals’ began to converse on Christianity against the backdrop of Postmodernism and the kind of church that would best reach them” (Wright 2007:1). The proponents believe that the modern period that began with the Enlightenment has been completely replaced by a world view that is postmodern. The movement has moved beyond modernism where truth was assumed to exist to whatever the individual community believes it to be. The Emerging Movement consists of those who are emerging from this process of deconstructionism and reconstruction of Christianity. Some believe this group’s purpose not just to be a desire for reaching the postmodern culture but of protest: (1) Protest against their upbringing in conservative, fundamentalist churches. (2) Protest against many aspects of modernism, and (3) Protest against the modern church, especially the mega-church and seeker-sensitive church that they see as a consumer oriented church (Wright 2007:1-17).

Let Us Reason Ministries

Oppenheimer in the article (2007) on “The Issue of other Religious Practices as Worship in the Church” states that the Emergent church began as a grassroots movement in the 21st century. Its purpose was to reach a culture that had changed. Its rationale was because the culture and thoughts have changed we must adapt. It is a movement that is turning people into a group of free thinkers that do not look to the Bible (alone) as the literal guide for their spiritual living. They promote spiritual experiences that result in a Christianity without the Bible (Oppenheimer 2007:1-12).

Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger

The authors Gibbs and Bolger (2005) of the book *Emerging Churches* comment that in the mid 1990's, a conversation began as to whether postmodern Christians could still be considered evangelicals. Evangelicalism was claimed to have been born and given its primary expression in the modern period. Perhaps the first church leader to discuss the possibility of a postmodern evangelical was Dave Tomlinson (Holy Joes, London). Tomlinson discussed much of his concerns and thoughts within his book *The Post-Evangelical*. Gibbs and Bolger (2005) state that because the church has been in a decline since the mid-1960's and because the majority of current church practices are cultural accommodations to society that no longer exist (modernity) leaders in the emerging movement decided it was time to both deconstruct and re-construct church to reach the postmodern culture (Gibbs and Bolger 2005:34-46).

In the mid 1990s the Generation Xers dominated the scene among many churches and pastors. Networking ministry groups like Leighton Ford Ministries, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and Young Leaders Network supported the Xer's style of ministry hosting conferences where these young ministers were introduced and promoted. Publishers did their share of promoting by boosting their movement through books. By the late 1990s the Generation X movement began to fade. The new emphasis became Postmodernity, yet the shift was not without its questions and concerns. Discussions followed as to whether or not to embrace this new shift or not. Involved in these discussions were many of the present day key leaders in the emerging movement (Bolger & Gibbs 2005:32).

Leadership Network played a big part in bringing these founding leaders together. It also played a key part in birthing the Young Leaders Network (YLN) led by Doug Pagitt. Pagitt initially helped to organize a group of young speakers who conversed on the current styles of ministries. From this network another group moved to a broader platform engaging the postmodern culture with Christianity. Such men as Chris Seay, Dan Kimball, Tony Jones, Mark Driscoll and Dieter Zander were among the first to take on this new journey along with the more seasoned minister Brian McLean (Driscoll 2006:97-98).

Driscoll in his book *The Radical Reformation: Reaching Out Without Selling Out* tells how he made the shift from Generation X in the mid 90s to postmodern discussion. He describes the shift as a conversation among young pastors evolving from reaching Generation X, to ministering in a postmodern culture, “to a more mature and profitable investigation of what a movement of missionaries would look like, missionaries sent not from America to another nation but from America to America” (Driscoll 2004:18).

Later a new team emerged called the Terra Nova Project, replacing the Young Leadership Network. The leadership consisted of such men as McLaren and Pagitt. This group lasted but a short while only to later emerge in a new form called the Emergent Village (McLaren 2004:275).

With the emerging movement the shift from modern Christianity to postmodern Christianity was the driving force in changing from the traditional practices of Christianity to re-imagining the way church ought to be done in the postmodern culture.

Jeff Kluttz (Returning King.com)

Kluttz (2009), in the article “Emergent: History and Characteristics,” shares that:

The movement was founded in the late 20th century. The U.S. versions arose in the late 1990's as the result of a group of church leaders desiring to create a new methodology of church to reach the postmodern culture. There were European emerging trends prior to the ones in America. The participants seek to live their faith in what they believe to be a 'postmodern' society. Proponents of this movement call it a 'conversation' to emphasize its developing and decentralized nature, its vast range of standpoints and its commitment to dialogue. What most do agree on within the movement is that they are disillusioned with the organized and institutional church and support the 'deconstruction' or 'modern' Christian worship, modern evangelism, and the nature of the modern Christian community (Kluttz 2009:1-7).

Dan Kimball

Kimball (2003), in his book *The Emerging Church*, describes the Modern era (A.D. 1500-2000), as Judeo-Christian. Kimball comments that for the most part everyone brought up in America during this period were brought up in an atmosphere where Judeo-Christian values were taught. Most everyone, whether Christian or not agreed with most of the biblical values and ethics taught from the Bible. Most everyone believed in one God. Most people from the modern era learned propositionally. Most people did not travel much and therefore viewed life through a home town lens. Truth was knowable and absolute. The Bible for many was a reference point for experience. The Bible informed people of where life came from, its purpose, and its meaning. Then came the Post-Christian era (A.D. 2000) or what some refer to the postmodern era. In this era the beliefs of a person raised in America are shaped by a global, pluralistic atmosphere. Music, news, fashions, and religions are instant and global exposure for this culture. Available are many gods, many faiths, and many forms of expression from which to choose. In this postmodern culture people grow up learning to accept all faiths as equal. Because Christianity teaching opposite of that view then Christianity is looked upon as a negative intolerant religion. With a postmodern, ethics and morals are based on personal

choice. Much of the postmodern ethics that are accepted are learned from the media and their peers. Relativism is the norm for the postmodern although there are some who accept absolutes. In the postmodern world pluralism is the norm. People increasingly long for the mystical and the spiritual rather than the evidential and facts-based faith of the modern soil. In the postmodern era in America there is a plurality of people with a plurality of beliefs and values. Kimball shares that those born in the postmodern world don't have the roots of the modern world to remember or to return to it. Therefore the emerging church movement has sought to rethink and reconstruct the church. This came about in the 1990s in the United States and has progressed into the new millennium (Kimball 2003:21-66).

Steve Rabey

Rabey (2001) states in his book *In Search of Authentic Faith: How Emerging Generations Are Transforming the Church* that in the 90s many books and articles addressed how in the Western world the “philosophical moorings and generational makeup were undergoing profound changes” (Rabey 2001:1). Rabey talks about how change has been a constant throughout church history but in the last decade it seems to have changed even more rapidly. Rabey talks about the motivation behind the emerging movement by sharing some stories concerning young leaders he knew in the 90s who saw a need for change in order to reach the postmodern culture. Rabey illustrates this message with Trevor Bron who launched an evening service called Tuesday Nite Live focusing on reinventing church for his own generation. The group grew from a small handful to over 1500 in size. In 1996 the group started a newsletter *Xcitement* where one could read anything from offbeat tips on “How to Handle Stress” to jamming 39 marshmallows up

your nose then trying to sneeze them out. Rabey tells how this out-of-bounds church group was developing a passionate calling to an emerging group of people referred to by many as the Generation X. One key ingredient that these Generation Xers looked for was relationship. In 1997, Tuesday Nite Live had been identified as The Next Level Church. By 1999 Christian leaders from around the country were flocking to Denver to study this church. The pastor of the church commented that their goal was to be accessible and adaptable as they possibly could be to the ever-changing culture without the message of the church changing.

Rabey implies with his story that change has taken place very rapidly in our culture but most churches were not changing enough to reach the postmodern culture. There were some like that of pastor Bron who saw the need and took the initiative to pioneer in uncharted waters so as to reach this emerging generation. Rabey also shares how Barna and others helped alert Christian leaders to this emerging postmodernism. With this emerging postmodern culture the terrain of the church needed to take new shape along with the gospel message. Rabey talks about Kevin Ford, an evangelism consultant, along with George Barna informing the young leaders of the 90s how the postmoderns seemed to be more “nonlinear than linear, very comfortable with contradictions, and view all religions as equally valid” therefore needing to be more open as a community of believers with a more conversational “narrative” style of sermon (Rabey 2001:1-11).

Mark Devine

In the book *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement*, edited by William Henard and Adam Greenway, Mark Devine states

the emerging movement seems to have sprung from seeds of discontent with how traditional evangelical churches and pragmatic evangelical churches were operating. Many of the discontented struck out on their own only to eventually come together under the emerging movement flag. They were made up primarily of white twenty-something, internet-savvy people who eventually found each other in the “blogosphere of Seattle, Washington, Kansas City, Missouri, to Manchester, UK” (Devine 2009:5). They also found older ones made up of “preachers, pastors, and writers who could scratch some of their itches – people such as Brian McLaren, Leonard Sweet, Tim Keller, and Robert Webber” (Devine 2009:5).

Devine (2009) also shares Scot McKnight’s perspective concerning the emerging movement at present. McKnight believes that even though the movement in many ways started as a protest, it has since shifted its protest energies to the actual work of building what they desired. Devine identifies the dissatisfaction of the movement with these words: authenticity, community, mission, mystery, culture, narrative, and arts. The emerging movement considers culture of supreme importance if the church is to be effective and relevant. Devine divides the emerging movement into categories: doctrine friendly and the doctrine weary or doctrine-averse. Such men as Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church on Broadway in Manhattan, and Mark Driscoll, pastor of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington, Devine classifies as leaders in the doctrine friendly stream. Devine identifies the doctrine weary or averse side in terms of Emergent referring to a web site www.EmergentVillage.com operated by Tony Jones. The reason Devine identified Emergent as doctrine weary and doctrine-averse is because of the wide scope of belief that is identified with Emergent. Devine states that “so evident has this

difference between the two streams become that some doctrine-friendly leaders now hesitate to self-identify as ‘emerging’ at all, preferring instead the term ‘missional’” (Devine 2009:10).

2.3 TERMS TO DEFINE

2.3.1 Emerging or Emergent

Emerging deals with a group (usually the younger generation but not always) known as the emerging or emergent movement trying to reach the postmodern or Post-Christian culture. Sometimes they are referred to as a “conversation” due to not having any doctrinal or creedal ties. It is a place where people of any religion, cult, or denomination are supposed to feel safe to converse about any and everything, especially that which deals with their faith.

Leonard Sweet (Sweet 2000) describes the movement with an acronym EPIC – **E** stands for experiential. It is said that postmoderns desire experience over teaching which involves the didactic style of preaching and teaching. **P** stands for participants instead of bystanders. They are said to want an active faith not one of teaching principles where you are told how to live but fail to live by them. **I** relates to images. Emerging churches often use projected images, artwork, film and video in their worship because the postmodern generation is very sight-oriented. **C** means communal. It involves community. They stress a strong involvement with the community. Their claim is that they desire to be church, not just attend church (Sweet 2000:27-158).

Stetzer and Putman (Stetzer & Putman 2006) describe the emerging church movement as a dynamic movement taking seriously the missional emphasis of church – that which is trying to connect with the emerging culture. Stetzer and Putman describe

the hard to define movement with three words: (1) *Relevants* – are those “who are trying to make their worship, music, outreach more contextual to emerging culture” (2006:188). In other words they are trying to explain the message of Christ in a way that their generation can understand. (2) *Reconstructists* – “think the current form of church is often irrelevant and the structure is unhelpful” (2006:189). They usually hold to a more orthodox view of the Gospel. They often embrace what is called the “incarnational” or “house” models. When resetting forms of the church it must always be reset as a biblical form and not just a rejection of the old form. Things such as budget, building, and programs are fine to discard if led to do so but not the Bible, Scriptural leadership, and covenant community. (3) *Revisionists* – question almost everything. They question whether they should meet in a building or whether they should have a budget. They even go a step further by questioning doctrinal teaching. They question such things as the substitutionary atonement, the reality of hell, the complementarian nature of gender, and the nature of the Gospel itself. Stetzer and Putman state that these should not be perceived as evangelicals.

The emerging church or emergent church movement is one that is characterized by (1) missional living (2) narrative theology (3) incarnational and (4) authentic. The movement wants to deconstruct and reconstruct Christianity within a postmodern culture. In other words the emerging church movement wants to rethink and redo Christian faith and practice (Stetzer & Putman 2006:180-90).

Chad Hall in his article “Analysis: What is the ‘Emerging Church Movement’” states that some people hail the movement claiming it to be the “second-coming of the Protestant Reformation, while others rail against it as a form of liberalism, and others see

it as a passing fad” (Hall 2006:1). Hall describes the emerging movement as chaotic, discernable yet barely describable, considerable, but not containable. The movement means different things to different people at different times. Hall states that the proponents of the movement hold to three general beliefs: (1) the thought and practice of Christianity is not static, but constantly changing. (2) The movement is more conversational than anything else. (3) They believe certain elements of modern thinking need to be rejected.

Hall finishes by listing a few positive contributions about the movement: (1) The emerging movement “refuses to allow Christianity to be equated with modern thought alone” (Hall 2006:2). By this Hall means that the church has adopted many of its thoughts and practices within the past 100 years and that they are not necessarily the way church was done in the first century. This frees the church to find which ones work in the 21st century and which don’t and thus use the ones that do work as well as try new ones to find out if they work. (2) Claiming heritage from Scripture, ancient Christian writers, as well as other historical research they demonstrate that Christian thought and practice isn’t limited to Caucasians in Europe and North America. (3) The emerging movement is developing practices to match their new thoughts. This is what some call “new wineskins” – making use of new technologies and methods of communicating the gospel. (4) Humility where even the leaders in the movement don’t mind admitting that they are wrong at times (Hall 2006:1-2).

Hall (2006) also lists some negatives - what he calls the “ugly shadow” side. Hall’s list of some of the most disturbing aspects of the movement which he has noticed are: (1) Playing loose with doctrine. The leaders of the emerging movement seem to want

to take the “jewels of Christian doctrine and look at them afresh” (Hall 2006:2). Some are careful with the process so as not to become heretical with the doctrine while others play loose and hard with the doctrine wearing “heretic” as a badge of honor. Hall admits that it is helpful to re-examine doctrines and find the value of them but it becomes dangerous when such doctrines are rejected or overhauled. Those who do this (reject or overhaul doctrines) miss the truth that is to shape their lives. (2) Conversation many times is left in the theoretical and conceptual realm which ends up not being helpful for the practice of ministry. Hall states that sometimes it might be better to do something constructive and then talk about it. (3) Seeing a need to put their own stamp on any thought or practice. (4) Hijacking other beliefs and practices. Hall says that one of the biggest complaints about the emerging movement is that emerging worship is just contemporary worship camouflaged with such things as candles and incense. (5) A sense of arrival. Some emerging leaders think that they have finally figured out what the kingdom is all about (Hall 2006:2).

Hall (2006) also lists some misunderstandings about the movement: (1) They are liberal. While some are liberal in thought and doctrine not all are liberal in the classical or heretical sense. (2) They are New Age. Since some emergents urge contemplative practices like meditation and even yoga while others because of their flexible theology urge such things as elevating the *Imago Dei* theology (the truth that we are created in the image of God, believing we inherently have God inside of us available to us therefore not needing a savior) the movement as a whole is not marked by it. (3) The movement is made up of young postmoderns. This is true in part but only in part. The movement does have variety of ages within its makeup. (4) The movement is contemporary. It is

contemporary in some ways but it is different in that contemporary churches like Willow Creek in Chicago or North Pointe Church in Atlanta do not seek new forms of Christian thought where the emerging church does (Hall 2006:4).

Phil Johnson (2006) defines the emerging church as: (1) “a convenient name for a broad-based and growing assortment of similar or related movements that have flourished in the past half-decade, mostly on the fringe of the evangelical movement. Emerging congregations in one way or another tend to be keenly attuned to the postmodern shift in art, literature, and public discourse. In some way the emerging church is a reaction against and a departure from the shallow, mass-movement professional showmanship of the slick megachurches like Willow Creek and Saddleback. Emergent types tend to value authenticity over professionalism. It is a diverse movement. Some believe in adjusting its message accordingly to accommodate the postmodern preferences” (Johnson 2006:7).

Johnson (2006) recognizes the second vital aspect that distinguishes the emerging movement as being missional. The emerging church claims that the traditional church is more about evangelistic programs than just doing evangelism as a way of life. Johnson recognizes a problem with the way they many times are evangelistic by being missional. Their postmodern preferences can and do work in opposition to clearly communicating the gospel. When one factors in the postmodern tendency to distrust or despise every kind of clarity, certainty, or authoritative truth-claims then gospel preaching is downplayed or deliberately omitted.

The third aspect of the emerging church is a preference for “narrative theology” as opposed to systematic doctrine. In other words the “story of the gospel is ultimately more important than the theology of it” (Johnson 2006:8). Johnson believes that the

simple narrative of salvation must not get lost in the careful parsing of theological words and ideas but at the same time the emerging church must remember that much of the word of God is didactic also.

Johnson continues with a fourth aspect of the emerging movement – “people in the movement usually don’t hold the idea of propositional truth in high regard. Johnson states that postmodernists simply don’t like handling ideas with that kind of clarity – either true or false. So there’s a tendency among emergent types to denigrate or devalue the very idea of propositional truth, logic, and rationality” (Johnson 2006:8).

Johnson’s final aspect of the emerging movement deals with the movement’s feeling that they are an answer to the influence of philosophical modernism. Being postmodern in thinking and in approach, they believe they have are the answer to the influence of modernism by being polar opposite.

Johnson believes that many in the emerging movement were the “fruit of churches that tailored their youth ministries to whatever style currently fashionable, holding alternative church services for youth in separate buildings never incorporating them into the actual life of the church itself. Many were never exposed to worship in the context of the actual church, with real adults. They were deliberately entertained instead, and thus they were conditioned to think that way. They grew old, but they never grew up, and now even as adults, they want to continue to play church, but outside the mainstream of the historic church. While that is not the background of everyone in the emerging subculture, Johnson feels that many fit that profile (Johnson 2006:16).

Three things are listed which disturb Johnson about the movement: (1) “It fosters contempt for authority. (2) It breeds doubt about the perspicuity of Scripture. (3) It sows

confusion about the mission of the church. The ‘missional’ emphasis in the emerging movement seems to be entirely focused on an effort to adapt the church to the culture, with very little stress on the church’s duty to proclaim a message of repentance and faith in Christ that calls men and women to forsake the world. In other words the emerging church movement seems to be all about the conversion of the church, rather than the conversion of the sinner. I am convinced that this movement is going to be a serious detriment to the testimony of the church as a whole, a source of great confusion for many Christians, and another in long series of movements that will surely undermine the work of the gospel rather than advance it” (Johnson 2007:19).

Johnson finishes by stating some valid points made by the emerging movement: (1) The movement is right to reject the professionalism and big business approach to ministry of the megachurches. (2) The movement is right to complain about the way evangelicals have sold their birthright for a mess of Republican Party porridge. (3) The movement is right with their claim that the traditional evangelicals have not done enough to reach the outcasts and counter-cultural people of our society.

Gibbs and Bolger in their book *Emerging Churches: creating Christian community in postmodern cultures* describe the emerging movement as:

- They identify with the life of Jesus.
- They transform the secular realm
- They live highly communal lives
- They welcome the stranger
- They serve with generosity
- They participate as producers

- They create as created beings
- They lead as a body
- They take part in spiritual activities

(Gibbs & Bolger 2005:43-44).

2.3.2 Emergent Village

The Emergent Village is an official organization. They consist of a website (www.emergentvillage.org) with a national coordinator, a board of directors, and fund raisers for the organization. Their focus is on theology whereas the emerging church's focus is on methodology. "Members of the Emergent Village hold in common four values and several practices that flow from them. In the language of a religious order, they call the four values their 'order and rule.' The four values are: commitment to God in the way of Jesus; commitment to the church in all its forms; commitment to God's world; and last commitment to one another" (Emergent Village 2010:1-5). With each value the emergent village lists practical ways for those values to be accomplished. The Emergent Village claims to be "a growing, generative friendship among missional Christians seeking to love our world in the Spirit of Christ. Their aim is to fund theological imaginations and spiritual lives of all who consider themselves a part of this broader movement (Emergent Village 2007).

McKnight in his article "Five Streams of the Emerging Church" in *Christianity Today* states that there is a distinction between Emergent and emerging. McKnight describes the difference between the two this way, "Emerging is the wider, informal, global, ecclesial (church-centered) focus of the movement, while Emergent is an official organization in the U.S. and the U.K (McKnight 2007:2)."

Hammett shares that according to McKnight, it would appear that the broader umbrella term used for all those seeking to engage in postmodern culture would be “emerging” whereas “emergent” would be described as a subset of “emerging” (Hammett 2009:220).

Tony Jones in the book *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* answers the question “What is Emergent Village?” by going back to the time when he was first asked to attend a meeting in Arlington, Texas in August of 1998. Jones comments that it was a time of conversation searching for ways to describe what was going on. The best word that they could come up with to describe the meeting was “friends.” It was more than a “network” and definitely not a “denomination.” It wasn’t a “club” or a “society.” Some called them a “think tank” but Jones felt that didn’t quite fit either. The word “friend” was what they kept coming back to. They talked about ideas for the church and for developing a deeper life with Christ. All these ideas evolved around doing it together. Jones was confident that this group of men of women would together take the church into its next iteration. “In the beginning they came together under the auspices of Leadership Network (LN), a church assisting foundation in Dallas, Texas” (Pagitt & Jones 2007:12). The Network hired Doug Pagitt in 1997 to develop a network of innovative young pastors. The group would throw parties calling them “events” each time they met. The real emphasis of the parties would be for relational connection – technical term for friendship. The group has done such things as “debating leading theologians and biblical scholars to literally digging in dirt together to get God’s goodness under our fingernails” (Pagitt & Jones 2007:14). Jones finishes with the question asked earlier, “What is Emergent Village?” Jones’ answer is “A mess. A beautiful, good mess” (Pagitt & Jones 2007:15).

Brett Kunkle (2006) in his article “Essential Concerns Regarding the Emerging Church” has a section which clarifies the difference between emerging and emergent. He states that the “Emerging Church” is distinct from “Emergent Village.” He goes on to say that the “Emerging Church” is a broad brush phrase which involves the recent emerging movement sometimes referred to as “a conversation.” The “conversation” is not an organized denomination like Presbyterians, Methodists, or Baptists. It is diverse like the universal church. This movement seeks to rethink Christians faith and practice.

The “Emergent Village” on the other hand is an official organization. The Emergent Village is a subset of the broader category known as the Emerging Church Movement. Their endeavor is to “fund the theological imaginations and spiritual lives of all who consider themselves to be a part of this broader movement” (Kunkle 2006:4). The desire of the Emergent Church is to influence the theological conversation of the Emerging Movement.

2.3.3 Missional Living

All believers are missionaries but being missional within the Emerging Church means believing in and actively living a holistic Gospel. Scot McKnight in his article “What is the Emerging Church?” urges everyone to “define emerging as many of us do – in missional, or ecclesiological terms, rather than epistemological ones” (McKnight 2006:29). Andrew Jones states that “you will often hear the word ‘missional’ added to the ‘emerging’ to form the description ‘emerging – missional church’” (Jones 2006).

John Hammett (2009) in the book *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement*, shares that while most emerging church leaders “acknowledge a common starting point, and perhaps a common core of meaning

there seems to be two basic directions different members of the movement take in developing the meaning of missional. One camp sees a missional orientation as requiring churches to contextualize their methods., structures, and mind-set but doing so precisely to communicate the unchanging gospel. They retain a strong concern for sound doctrine alongside the concern for cultural relevance. The second camp sees a missional orientation as requiring a radical reconsideration, not only of methods, but also of the gospel itself” (Hammett 2009:230). Hammett gives an example of the first camp of missional minded leaders from the book *The Shaping of Things to Come* by Frost and Hirsch (2003). Their description of the pattern is, “The missional-incarnational church should be living, eating, and working closely with its surrounding community, developing strong links between Christians and not-yet-Christians. It would be best to do this in the homes of not-yet-Christians and their preferred public places . . . but also in the homes of Christians. By creating a net of deep, loving friendship, more and more people will be swept into the community” (Hammett 2009:231). Hammett continues by saying “Frost and Hirsch, Kimball, and Driscoll would all affirm that a missional church should be ‘biblically faithful and culturally appropriate’ and would understand biblical faithfulness as limiting how far cultural contextualization can go and requiring a stable meaning for the gospel” (Hammett 2009:231). The second camp sees the gospel of the kingdom with a different focus or emphasis. The focus is not on personal salvation in terms of forgiveness of sins by way of faith in Christ but primarily about God’s will being done on earth, in history. As Gibbs and Bolger (Gibbs & Bolger 2005) bring out in their book *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern cultures* “The gospel of emerging churches is not confined to personal salvation. It is social

transformation arising from the presence and permeation of the reign of Christ” (Gibbs & Bolger 2005:63). Hammett states “The emphasis on social transformation, issues of social justice, and God’s will being done on earth now signals a significant difference in the missional nature of the church in this branch of the emerging church” (Hammett 2009:234). The differences in the above mentioned emerging camps should be seen in light of emphases and not in terms of black and white.

2.3.4 Holistic

The definition found for “holistic” in the “Brainy Encyclopedia (2007) states it as being committed to emulating Jesus’ way of living is the role of the church in our culture. This can involve the structure of a group in fellowship with a high degree of emphasis on social action, community building, or other Christian project.

Stetzer (Stetzer 2006) says, “Postmoderns want a spirituality that’s applicable to all areas of the life, not one that only lasts for an hour on Sunday morning but one they can rely on all week. Postmoderns want a spirituality that’s authentic above all else; it doesn’t have to be perfect, but it must be genuinely and humbly held. Postmoderns are looking for people who are genuine and transparent. People no longer want to hear about Christianity; they want to see Christianity in action. Genuine faith always expresses itself in ministry” (Stetzer 2006:136-37).

Milfred Minatrea (2004), in his book *Shaped by God’s Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches* states “Most of us would say that, individually, we feel passionate about God. Many of us would also say that we feel passionate about our church. But for missional churches, the passion does not stay personal or referential; it is the essence of and expression of their corporate culture, the primary value that drives

their behavior” (Minatrea 2004:17). Minatrea continues by describing the missional church as what some called holistic: “love God, live His mission, love people and lead them to follow” (Minatrea 2004:17).

Donald Posterski (1994), describes believers today living a holistic life as not just proclaiming the gospel but living out the life: “In today’s world, reinventing evangelism means that we must go beyond words. Our society desperately needs serious followers of Jesus who will engage the culture with a coherent gospel. We need to become Christian meaning-makers. Meaning-makers are people who make sense of life, people who make sense of God, people whose lives ring clarity in the midst of contemporary ambiguity, people who have integrity, people who reside in today’s world revealing with their living and their lips that Jesus’ death is the source of vital life” (Posterski 1994:15).

Pagitt (2004) in his book, *ReImagining Spiritual Formation* states, “This idea of holistic spiritual formation is nothing new. In fact, it has a long and prominent history within the Christian church. Throughout history, becoming a follower of Jesus has often meant being brought into a community of people who ate together, lived together, shared their possessions and their lives” (Pagitt 2004:26).

2.3.5 Ecclesiology

The Emerging Church ecclesiology has little to do with traditional church structures/organizations and instead attempts to gather in ways specific to their local context.

Hunsberger (1997) in the book *The Church Between Gospel and Culture* talks about the postmodern culture no longer assuming general agreement in what a church should be or how it should operate according to its values and beliefs. Hunsberger calls

for the church to become “a body of people sent on a mission” (Hunsberger & Gelder 1997:341). Hunsberger coined the phrase “missional” to describe its essential task – journeying with the gospel into surrounding cultures.

Roxburgh (1997) in the book *The Church Between Gospel and Culture*, edited by Hunsberger and Gelder describes the leadership in the church as “apostles,” “poets,” and “prophets.” The “apostle leads the congregation as witnesses to the gospel in lands where old maps no longer work” (Roxburgh 1997:326). The apostle is the one who leads the congregation out of the insulated and safe harbor of its surrounding culture into the uncharted seas of the emerging culture. The pastor as a “poet” hears his congregation. A poet is an observer, a listener who is sensitive to the experiences of his congregation and who allows those experiences a voice. The poet narrates the body with the gospel story from isolation (in modernity) to expression (daily experiences of living) in postmodernity. The “prophet” is the pastor who has the task of “addressing the word of God directly into the specific, concrete historical experience of the people of God” (Roxburgh 1997:331). The current cultural realities come from the prophet as he translates God’s word.

Conder (2006) in the book *The Church in Transition: The Journey of Existing Churches into Emerging Culture*, states that “many existing churches are transitioning toward greater plurality and community participation in leadership . . . calling for leadership structures that are more inclusive and participatory. Conder continues by using his church as a personal example. Conder shares what he believes is one of the reasons for their church’s survival during this emerging time – egalitarian leadership. Conder states that his “leaders have been able to speak freely of the implications that the

changing cultural context has on their conceptions of Scripture and theology. His structure encourages a mosaic of voices describing their community's experience, which is greatly preferable to the singular perspective of a dominating leader" (Conder 2006:134).

Phil Johnson (2007) comments that many of the emerging culture that came into the church during the 1990s did so without ever being assimilated into the regular worship. They usually did their own style of worship and program thereby never being exposed to worship in the context of the actual church. The youth became entertained instead of learning to share in worship with adults. Johnson continues by saying that many of the youth who are now young adults in church still have that mindset. Johnson also states his concerns with the movement, one being authority, with Scripture and authority figures within the church. Many in the emerging church want to take the center stage of the preacher and the Word of God of worship. The preacher is only one of many who have a message. Also the Word of God is just one gospel story among many to be shared during the worship (Johnson 2006:1-21).

2.3.6 Narrative Theology

Wikipedia (2007) states that narrative presentations of the Bible are emphasized over the traditional exegetical Bible study of propositional presentations such as systematic theology.

Doug Pagitt (Pagitt 2004), in *ReImagining Spiritual Formation* states, "The concept that knowledge comes through information is 'foundationalism' – in rough terms, learning as a construction project. But the belief that leads to spiritual formation is not simply knowledge: It is centered in the ways we experience life, on the things that

happen to us. Information alone rarely suffices to create belief; it needs to partner with other aspects of how we understand and live in the world. Belief is formed when information finds a partner with people's hopes, experiences, ideas, and thoughts. At Solomon's Porch, sermons are not primarily about my extracting truth from the Bible to apply to people's lives. In many ways the sermon is less a lecture or motivational speech than it is an act of poetry – of putting words around people's experiences to allow them to find deeper connection to their lives. Our sermons are not lessons that precisely define belief so much as they are stories that welcome our hopes and ideas and participation. Our belief is built when all of us engage our hopes, dreams, ideas, and understandings with the story of God as it unfolds through history and through us" (Pagitt 2004:115, 120-21).

Both Pagitt and McLaren seem to imply that the Bible is only a part of the narrative story that "mirrors the flow of a conversation" (Diduit 2006:119) recognizing that the community connects with it as they have an equal role to play in the preaching event.

Robert Webber in the *Criswell Theological Review* (Spring 2006) commented that "the Christian faith is a story not just about a private personal relationship with God, but a story about the world – its origins, its meaning, and its destiny. God's story once shaped the world. It shaped culture, nations and civilization. We live in a world that has no comprehensive defining story. But we also live in a world of competing stories. It is in this world, a people without a defining story, that the church cannot afford to be defined by culture. The challenge to narrate the world once again must begin with a restoration of the original story. What we must recover is not this or that piece of the story, but the story

as a whole. This unfolding story shows the vital connection between the story and the people, the story and its authoritative texts, the story and its worship, and the story and its ethics. The point is this: when God's story is recovered, all ministry will flow from the story" (Webber 2006:19-22).

2.3.7 Generous Orthodoxy

Wikipedia (2007) states that "generous orthodoxy" is an ecumenical view that is non-dogmatic in everything especially doctrine. This view tends to dialogue with non-Christian groups as well as Christian groups.

David M. Mills in the *Criswell Theological Review* (Spring 2006) stated that we must "allow space for mystery." He continues by saying "God will always be greater than anything we can fully comprehend. It should engender humility and a willingness to move forward in the life of faith without complete and satisfying answers to all of our questions, even as we seek in faith for those answers. We should expect these constructions to orient us properly to the reality of God and his world, even if such constructions are, like Volf's hastily packed suitcase, incomplete, imprecise, vague, or in perpetual need of revision. Thus, theology should be an ongoing exercise of the imagination as much as of reason, and we should neither regard it as a completed project nor allow it to become an end-in-itself" (Mills 2006:62-63).

McLaren (2002) in his book *More Ready Than You Realize* comments concerning believers that they can never achieve an objective vantage point. McLaren shares the reason, because our views are always changing. McLaren continues by claiming, "To understand anything, we need to apprentice ourselves to the community that honors what it is we want to understand" (McLaren 2002:77). With this in view it seems McLaren is

acknowledging a constructivist view implying that we cannot know reality, instead we must “construct” or “make” it.

Grenz and Franke (2001) in their book *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* comment “we do not inhabit the world-in-itself; instead, we live in a linguistic world of our own making” (Grenz & Franke 2001:53).

Pagitt (2004) comments about his community, “we are a gathering of people who are on a pilgrimage through life with each other and with God. Our gatherings for worship are designed to help us along on this journey. We invite people to share their stories, to listen to someone else’s, and to allow the story of God to provide a better understanding of both. There are times when the story is explicitly about things of faith and times when it is about struggles or successes. Telling and hearing these stories shapes us and forms us” (Pagitt 2004:51, 56-57).

2.3.8 Emerging Interpretation

Wikipedia (2007) states that biblical interpretation with the Emerging Church Movement exemplifies openness for considering plurality of interpretations as well as the impact of the reader’s cultural context in contrast to the primacy of the author’s intent and cultural context.

McLaren’s (2007) view on “emerging interpretation” is that everything needs to change. He comments about Jesus, the cross, and His finished work not being the central tenet of the gospel. McLaren declares that the message of the kingdom of God is the central focus because in the postcolonial, postmodern world in which we live the kingdom message focuses on more than just the afterlife. It deals with the personal, social, and global transformation in the present life. In other words God’s will and

dreams enough can come about if enough people will join in at replacing earth's injustice with harmony here on this earth. McLaren believes for this transformation to come about there needs to be a new and fresh approach to preaching called "a new rhetoric." With this new approach "mystery" is called upon to replace "what is truth?" Leaving it unanswered constructing words to have a softer and simpler tone without confidence and authority in the Word of God. McLaren believes that truth delivered indirectly fares better than truth delivered directly. In other words, the preacher should present the idea that not everything can be explained, nor should it always be attempted to be explained. McLaren views community as the greatest hermeneutic and explanation of the gospel. McLaren testifies to the Bible being a gift from God but in the postmodern framework this means embracing it as a moving story full of mystery, intrigue, and wonder where one rediscovers the story line with uncertainty, questions, and skepticism in a community of conversation.

Pagitt (2007) states that the message worth believing is one that is progressive, evolving and ever changing. Pagitt believes that since the world has changed and continues to change the message of God from the past is not sufficient for today therefore it requires adjustments, changes, and adaptations for people to live faithfully into the story of God for each generation. Pagitt believes that the Bible is a living member of the community of faith where its values, authority, and power reside in the community of people actively engaged in the story of Scripture. The message of the Bible offers a deconstructed, re-imagined message different from that of traditional orthodox beliefs. Pagitt with rediscovered gospel views humanity in uninterrupted connectedness with God as personal friend. For Pagitt Jesus is man's guide to living and partnering with God in

love for the betterment of the world. Pagitt's pre-sermon preparation is shared with the community of faith as they participate in this phase of the sermon. His sermon delivery is shared by the community as they engage in it to make any necessary changes.

Kimball (2007) acknowledges the importance of the vintage theology of the Nicene Creed yet at the same time welcomes the journey for exploring and rethinking theology for today. Kimball, like Pagitt and McLaren does not believe the Bible should be used as an answer all book. He has loosened his grip on some of the previously held concise theological answers and now welcomes more mystery, wonder and awe in the gospel message. He now believes that there are some things Christians cannot be certain about. Kimball insists on change in the methodology of preaching due to the change in culture. The adjustments to his preaching approach include such things as having a theological approach to proclamation with an increase in audience participation embracing dialogue as a central issue for an emerging generation.

2.3.9 Authenticity

Wikipedia (2007) states that the emerging movement involves the sharing of experiences and interactions that are personal and sincere over scripted interactions such as propositional, evangelistic tracts and teaching.

Mark Miller in his book *Experiential Storytelling: (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message* says "While there are many reasons why the Church in America is in decline, the most striking reason is that people are no longer connecting with the redemptive story of the Bible. We live in a culture that is craving narratives, metaphors, and images – anything that can provide some meaning to their nihilistic lives" (Miller 2003:5-6).

In the book *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* the authors Stetzer and Putman comment on the authenticity that missional churches are promoting. The authors state that when Jesus called His disciples He also gave them two things to help them in following Him – “power and picture.” Jesus “spent nearly three years modeling the life that he intended for them to live” (Stetzer & Putman 2006:77). The authors continue by stating that many of many people have rejected the church because of the way certain self-proclaimed Christians live. Stetzer and Putnam comment that “The world isn’t interested in Christianity because we Christians aren’t known as people who live what we say. As a disciple we too are to model life as Jesus did. We are to invite people to come follow us as we follow Him” (Stetzer & Putman 2006:77). In other words missional postmodern churches desire authentic preachers and members who are not just proclaiming how to live but living what they proclaim.

In the *Criswell Theological Review* (2006) Webber has an article entitled “Narrating The World Once Again: A Case For An Ancient Faith” where he talks about the Emerging Church which has reacted against an evangelicalism that has become corrupted by its alliance with modern and contemporary American culture – narcissism. Webber states that “the church and its ministries of worship and spirituality, have become shaped by business principles and will only change when we do the hard work of reflecting God’s story and re-situating the church as the continuation of the story, and spirituality as the contemplation of the story and participation in the life of the story as revealed in Jesus Christ” (Webber 2006: 15, 25). It would appear that Webber believes that the emerging church is accomplishing this, more so than the traditional evangelical

church. One reason for the emerging movement being successful with this task is because of their authenticity as the story of God once again becomes their focus in everything.

Carson, in his book *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and its Implications*, states that one of the strengths of the emerging movement in reading the times is seeing a need for authenticity – “authentic Christian faith, authentic spirituality, authentic Christian obedience” (Carson 2005:49). Carson goes on to state, “We might wonder whether corporate worship is any more “authentic” just because there are candles or centers for journaling. Certainly we must try to think through such matters fairly. But which of us can safely deny that a fair proportion of what goes on in many traditional evangelical churches – whether corporate worship, small-group Bible studies, and even prayer times – feels disturbingly *inauthentic* at times” (Carson 2005:49)? The inauthenticity that Carson has in mind is having meeting after meeting but leaving knowing that we have not met with the living God. We attend meetings out of habit or because we feel it is the right thing to do not with a hunger to be with God, His people, and to be fed from His word. Carson believes the emerging movement has done well to recognize this problem with the church today.

Spencer Burke (2003) in the book, *Stories of Emergence: Moving From Absolute to Authentic* edited by Mike Yaconelli, writes an article entitled “From the Third Floor to the Garage” where Burke talks about his search for authentic expression. The author talks about being a pastor at Mariners Church in Irvine, California. This megachurch has a budget of 7.8 million dollars a year. Each weekend some 4,500 adults pass through its doors with nearly 10,000 people attending its services. Burke goes on to talk about all the wonderful things the church offered but how he became disillusioned with many of them

because he felt they were only ministries meeting needs but not being missional. Burke finally left the church and its vision. Burke's vision and goal in life began to change. Burke began to read after new authors, some of whom the contemporary evangelical church he left would not have approved. Burke shares how he soon felt the need to leave the professional ministry. The author still feels called to serve the church but now more as a fellow traveler. In 1998 Burke started TheOoze.com, a safe haven for him to ask questions and work through issues he never felt he could do while in the professional ministry. Burke says "an 'oozy' community tolerates differences and treats people who hold opposing views with great dignity. To me, that's the essence of the emerging church" (Burke 2003:37). This was Burke's personal journey where the author searched for authentic expression.

Todd Hunter (2003) in the book *Stories of Emergence: Moving From Absolute to Authentic* talks about his journey in finding authenticity. Hunter says that for 20 years he worked with young youth leaders only to find out that they were not wrestling with the same issues he did as a rookie. The contemporary Christian leaders were asking such questions as:

- Is there truth?
- How can one know it given our human fallibilities?
- How certain can we be about truth?
- Is all truth inherently good?
- Are there ways of knowing truth beside the absolutist, foundationalist ways we were taught? If so, what does this mean for apologetics, theology, and church history?

With the “questions about truth came the nervous pessimism about church. The young leaders were wondering about issues of power, authority, and hierarchy on one hand, and why the church seemed so impotent on the other hand. The effects of living in the wrong story are devastating to our churches. As I have processed afresh our ‘Story,’ I have re-envisioned what it means to be a Christian, to be the church. Story re-seated all the bits – Bible, salvation, substitution, community – back into their proper place with radically more powerful meanings. I want to actually believe in God and have confidence in his ability to deal with any worldview problem. Our God is fully competent. He’s worthy of our complete trust” (Hunter 2003:42, 43, 47, 49, 53). Hunter’s authentic journey involved finding a new way that allows for questions and doesn’t have all the answers.

2.3.10 Conversation/Dialogue

Conversation or dialogue is creating a safe environment for sharing opinions that might be rejected within historic orthodoxy thereby being able to talk freely without dogmatic proclamation.

Brad Cecil (2003) in the book *Stories of Emergence: Moving From Absolute to Authentic* edited by Mike Yaconelli writes an article entitled “I Told You We Weren’t Crazy” where he talks about his journey from the absolute to the authentic. Cecil tells how it all began – in a seminary class in 1991 when a student asked the professor of the class if a certain passage could be translated a certain way. The professor’s reply was yes, but if Cecil did interpret it that way the student would be wrong with that interpretation. This dogmatic response continued to haunt Cecil and push the author in the direction of the emerging movement where authority and dogmatism was not a characteristic that

would any longer dog him. As Cecil continued to move in the direction of the emergent movement the author found others who wrestled with the same thoughts and who openly dialogued about these issues. The emerging movement prides itself in the fact that it can talk freely without feeling guilty about it. This is one of the reasons why the movement is identified as a “conversation.”

D. A. Carson (2005), in his book *Becoming Conversant With the Emergent Church: Understanding a Movement with its Implications* states “whether understood as a movement or a ‘conversation’” the emerging movement “is based on the conviction that changes in the culture signal that a new church is ‘emerging’” (Carson 2005:12). Carson in his book seems to identify the movement or “conversation” as a group of generation Xers mixed with some older members who encourage conversation/dialogue with each other. The “conversation/dialogue” is described by many as happening within a “safe haven” sphere.

Andrew D. Rowell (2007) in his thesis “Innovative Ecclesiological Practices: Emerging Churches In Dialogue with Dietrich Bonhoeffer” states that “the emerging church people want to have ‘conversation’ about theological issues that are grounded in practical or ‘missional’ questions. The organization ‘Emergent Village’ which encourages ‘conversation’ among the emerging church movement in the Unites States has organized what they have called ‘Theological Conversations’ with N. T. Wright, Stanley Hauerwas, Walter Brueggeman, Miroslav Volf, and Jack Caputo for just this purpose” (Rowell 2007:35). Rowell seems to identify the movement as a conversation which encourages within its ranks “conversations or dialogues.”

2.3.11 Praxis

In *Christianity Today* “praxis” among emergents is described as “how the faith is lived out. Its distinctive emphasis can be seen in its worship, its concern for orthopraxy, and its missional orientation” (McKnight 2007).

In an article “What is the Emerging Church” Scott McKnight (2007) states that “praxis” is where the “Emerging Movement” is summoned or invited “to live like followers of Jesus in everything they say, do, and think. The Emerging Movement seeks to model that in its emphasis on relationships as a core of the work of God in the world today. It is a movement concerned with praxis and not theology. If the older fashion was to define others by their theology, the Emerging Movement wants to be defined by its behavior.” McKnight then proceeds to list three emphases in the Praxis element of the Emerging Movement:

- The Emerging Movement calls people to goodness. Not in the sense of just being nice or politically correct or being inoffensive, but reflecting goodness of God in the world for the good of others and the good of the world. There is a commitment to do what is right, to loving others as Jesus Christ calls us to do, exhibit moral goodness in all the relationships of life. Goodness and community are connected. Goodness compels relationships with others for their good.
- The Emerging Movement calls people to graciousness. Grace in the sense of knowing that each of us, in one way or another, is a sinful, cracked Eikon, and in knowing ourselves in such a way that we can comprehend others as made as God’s Eikons who are also in need of grace.

- The Emerging Movement operates with a summons to glorify God by being a manifestation of the way of Jesus in this world.

(McKnight 2007:2-3).

McKnight (2006), in his article “What is the Emerging Church?” describes “praxis” as one of four rivers that flows into the emerging lake. The “praxis river” is illustrated as the river where “emerging churches are communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures” (McKnight 2006:14). Praxis for the emerging movement involves: worship, orthopraxy, social justice, and being missional. These are the areas where “praxis oriented” is on display.

2.3.12 Orthopraxy

An article by Scott McKnight, in *Christianity Today*, states that the Emerging Church considers “orthopraxy” to be “right living.” The emergents believe that *how* a person lives is more important than *what* a person believes (McKnight 2007).

McKnight (2006), states in his article “What is the Emerging Church?” that “orthopraxy” demonstrates how a person lives. McKnight goes on to say that “the emerging movement thinks how a person lives is more important than what they believe, that ‘orthopraxy’ is the most important thing. And that the power of a life forms the best apologetic for the way of Jesus” (McKnight 2006:16). McKnight continues by stating that the emerging movement believes that Jesus didn’t offer a doctrinal statement, just a way of life. Jesus called people to follow Him not just get their theology right. According to many in the emerging movement each one is left alone to what they think is right theologically. Since there are no absolutes (different scholars believe differently) many in

the emerging movement don't worry about getting everything right. Instead, they concentrate on living the way of Jesus (McKnight 2006:4-5).

Dwight J. Friensen in the book *The Emergent Manifesto of Hope* edited by Pagitt and Jones (2007) states that “orthodoxy” and “orthopraxy” are familiar concepts. Orthodoxy (*ortho*= “right” or “correct”; *doxa*- “thought,” or “teaching,” or “glorification”). “These right beliefs tend toward authoritative theoretical and theological claims, such as creeds, doctrines, and dogmas. ‘Orthopraxy’ is generally understood as right practices. Orthopraxy is the customary use of knowledge or skills, distinct from theoretical knowledge. Often orthopraxy refers to the practice of the faith, especially to corporate and private worship, such as liturgies, life rules, and prayer books. As important as both right beliefs and right practices might be, neither was Jesus Christ’s primary mission, and neither is the primary ministry of God’s people” (Friensen 2007:204).

2.3.13 Deconstruction

“The Emerging Church views ‘deconstruction’ as the license to disbelieve whatever does not suit them and to redefine ‘traditional’ understandings of biblical concepts.” (Apologetics Index 2009) The process involves dismantling according to its presuppositions.

LeRon Shults tells in his article why the Emerging Church is drawn to deconstruction: (1) It not only accepts but embraces the category of *difference*. Shults says that the postmodern generation is open to differences in ways that the modern generation was not. Many of the traditional churches focused on sameness whereas deconstructionism liberates the post moderns from a constricting obsession with

sameness. (2) Deconstructive epistemology (or hermeneutics) calls for humility in the search of knowledge. In other words deconstructionism (the method) is self-reflective in a way that promotes an ongoing interrogation of the way in which one is holding on to one's knowledge. It challenges arrogant claims of finality. It helps our finitude – “we are not God, but this is OK.” This kind of thinking is supposed to help us not be anxious (trying to have all the answers) and therefore we can humbly follow Jesus without us trying to know everything. (3) Deconstruction is surprising because we don't know ahead of time exactly what will emerge when we begin the process of interrogating our beliefs and practices (Shults 2007:1-12).

Bill Crouse (2008) states in his article “Deconstruction: The Postmodern Cult of Hermes” that “deconstruction is a powerful movement currently in vogue on major college campuses and among the intellectual elite. Its influence permeates every area of our culture. There are two terms that are indispensable to understanding “deconstructionism”: modernism and postmodernism.”

“Modernism is another word for enlightenment humanism. Thomas Oden says that this period began with the fall of Bastille in 1789 (French Revolution). The end came with the collapse of communism and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This was a period that affirmed “the existence and possibility of knowing truth by human reason alone. Naturalism replaced the supernatural. It avowed scientific discovery, human autonomy, linear progress, absolute truth (or the possibility of knowing it), and rational planning of social orders. It began with great optimism” (Crouse 2008:1).

“Postmodernism in many ways is a reaction against modernism. It has replaced the intellect with the will, reason by emotion, and morality by relativism. Reality is

nothing more than a social construct; truth equals power. Identity comes from a group. Postmodernism is characterized by fragmentation, indeterminacy, and a distrust of all universalizing (worldviews) and power structures (the establishment). It is a worldview that denies all worldviews (“stories”). In a nutshell, postmodernism says there are no universal truths valid for all people. Instead, individuals are locked into the limited perspective of their own race, gender or ethnic group. It is Nietzsche in full bloom” (Crouse 2008:1).

Deconstruction “resists all attempts at definition as tyrannical” (Crouse 2008:1). Deconstruction says that all life is a text to be interpreted. The emphasis is never to learn the intended meaning of the author. It is the subjective interpretation that counts. Deconstruction argues that “all writing is reducible to an arbitrary sequence of linguistic signs and words whose meanings have no relationship to the author’s intention or to the world outside the text. The deconstruction approach is to dismantle it, paying particular attention to its elitists, anti-feminist or otherwise unchic presuppositions” (Crouse 2008:2).

Crouse lists some major tenets of deconstruction:

- Nature of reality: Objective reality cannot be known.
- The possibility of knowledge: A statement is true if it empowers an individual or group (influence of pragmatism).
- The nature of man: Individual identity is a myth. Man only achieves his identity through his group or culture.
- Moral decision-making: They do not believe in universal values as being true for all cultures and all time. Right is what a group decides is right for

the moment. Right emerges out of power. Laws and social conventions are only masks for power. Value judgments are power plays.

- The nature of the language: Language is a system constructed on the foundation of arbitrary symbols. Texts are collections of words and pictures that have no inherent meaning or connection to the objective world of things or objects. Since language is the medium for communication, and since language constructions are unstable, interpretation is also uncertain. The emphasis is always on the one receiving the message, the reader, or the interpreter.

(Crouse 2008:2-3).

According to a private email, Scott Smith shares Jones' perspective on deconstructionism: "A philosophical movement and theory of literary criticism that questions traditional assumptions about certainty, identity, and truth, and asserts that words can only refer to other words, and attempts to demonstrate how statements about any text subvert their own meanings (Smith 2005:43-44).

The speech given by Bob Wright at Corban College on "The Emerging (Emergent) Church" states that McLaren views deconstructionism as "the idea that you cannot get at and know the intention of an author when he or she wrote a text, and there is no fixed meaning of any text. The reason is that there are no identities; meanings, like anything else they always change, and are subject to what each reader brings to the text. Deconstruction causes people to question everything, and when we do, we often find that behind the scenes, what really is motivating some viewpoint is power" (Wright 2009:15).

Deconstruction according to Carson is “having to do with a literary approach, that hunts down tensions and inconsistencies in a text (those that deploy deconstructionism insist that all texts have them) in order to set them at odds with each other and thus deconstruct the text, to generate new insights that might actually contradict what a text ostensibly says” (Gilley 2007:4).

According to an article from the *Christian Articles Resource* - “Emergent Deconstructionism: Hell” - deconstruction is considered a “philosophical idea that fits nicely into post-modern, and consequently emergent, thought processes. Essentially, deconstruction is the systematic removal of all certainty and propositional truth from a text based on the assumption (loosely that a text finds its meanings from its readers rather than having a finite and comprehensible intent of its own” (Brian McLaren 2010:1).

2.3.14 Modernism

Modernism is another word for the Enlightenment. It is said to have begun with the fall of Bastille in 1789 (French Revolution). The period is said to have ended with the fall of communism and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This was a period characterized by reason. It was an era where the existence and possibility of knowing truth by human reason alone was affirmed. It avowed scientific discovery, human autonomy, linear progress, absolute truth (or the possibility of knowing it), and rational planning of social orders (Crouse 2008:1).

Modernism, according to Kimball (2003), came about during the Enlightenment period where human thinking was looked at as a cure all. It was a period when many thought they could solve everything with reasoning. Among church goers it was a time when many thought they figured out God and systematized the Christian faith. Not all

that came out of the modern period was bad. There were wonder advances in medicine, science, and technology. According to Kimball the Modern period (1500-2000+) was known for these major worldview shifts:

- Epistemology – During the Enlightenment epistemology shifts to a man-centered trust in reason as a way to discover truth.
- Understanding – Power and faith were in human reasoning, science, and logic, which also helped explain and interpret God.
- Communication – Printing press transforms communication.
- Authority – Authority was in reason, science, and logic and for Christians was in the reasonable interpretation of the Bible.
- Theme – ‘Knowledge is power’ - Francis Bacon. ‘I think, therefore I am’ - Decartes (1596-1650)
(Kimball 2003:44).

David W. Henderson (1998), in the book *Culture Shift: Communicating God’s Truth to Our Changing World*, describes the Enlightenment period this way:

- The Western world that for fifteen hundred years had a habit of turning to the Bible for answers whenever substance arose began to change. (Questions like: What is true about God’s Character? Why does the world exist? Who am I? Why am I here? What happens when I die? These types of questions for fifteen hundred years had brought seekers to the Bible for answers. Then along came Rene Descartes, a Christian mathematician and philosopher who at the start of the 1600s set out to make a list of the things people could know with absolute certainty. He

started out with things he thought could be said with confidence and followed with those things which were more difficult to answer with human reason. His skeptical probing raised suspicions about the Bible which led him to step out from underneath the sphere of the Bible to find answers.

- Next came the rise of new science. For centuries questions about the universe and what made it tick were researched in the Bible. Then came Copernicus, Kepler, Galilee, Bacon, and Newton. These men offered a new way of making sense of the natural world. These men relied on firsthand observation along with empirical measurable evidence. Most of the early scientists were Christians but the result of their work pushed people away from God making them lose even more confidence in God and the Scripture.
- The birth of secularism. Thinkers such as Rousseau, Voltaire, Hume, and Locke seemed to push the ideas of the Renaissance to their extreme. The growing awareness of humanity's resourcefulness and artistry quickly accelerated into a confidence in humanity, a boastful optimism about scientific progress, an unchallenged trust in reason, and an equally dogmatic affirmation of the fair-minded goodness of the individual. Prideful humankind at the center, reason as final authority. God is nowhere to be found. This was secularism, the modern way of understanding the world that untied the Christian worldview from its moorings and sent it spinning downstream (Henderson 1998:127).

Towns and Stetzer (2004) in their book *Perimeters of Light: Biblical Boundaries for the Emerging Church*, use Millard Erickson's elements of Modernism to describe what modernism is:

- Naturalism (reality is restricted to what can be observed or proved).
- Humanism (humanity is the pinnacle of the universe).
- The scientific method (knowledge is inherently good and is attainable).
- Reductionism (humans are highly developed animals).
- Progress (Because knowledge is good, its acquisition will lead to progress).
- Nature (evolution – not a creator – is responsible for life and its development).
- Certainty (because knowledge is objective, we can know things for certain).
- Determinism (the belief that things happened because of fixed causes).
- Individualism (the supremacy of each individual and their ability to discern truth).
- Anti-authoritarianism (each person was the final arbiter of truth).

Due to the failure of modernism and its promises people lost hope in the ideals of the Enlightenment (Millard 2004:157).

Thomas C. Oden in the book edited by Dockery, *The Challenge of Postmodernism*, describes modernism as a time of enchantment “characterized by technological messianism, enlightenment idealism, quantifying empiricism, and the smug fantasy of inevitable historical progress. These values have dominated the elites – those

who trade in knowledge – the university, the press, jurisprudence, science, and the communications industry since before French Revolution” (Oden 2005:24).

2.3.15 Postmodernism

Some say “postmodernism” is a reaction against modernism. This period came about in the late 1900s. With postmodernism “the intellect is replaced by will, reason by emotion, and morality by relativism. The individual’s identity comes from a group. Reality is nothing more than a social construct. The period is characterized by fragmentation, indeterminacy, and a distrust of all universalizing (worldviews) and power structures (the establishments). It is a worldview that denies all worldviews (“stories”). It says that there are no universal truths valid for all people. Individuals are locked into the limited perspective of their own race, gender or ethnic group” (Crouse 2008:2-3).

Mohler in the article “Truth-Telling is Stranger Than It used to Be, Part One” begins by talking about when people gather today the task of truth-telling is stranger than it used to be. Matter of fact, Mohler states, “it is tough business” (Mohler 2006:1). The reason for this may be “due to the rise of postmodern culture and philosophy” (2006:1). Mohler explains that “it developed among academics and artist, but quickly spread throughout the culture. At its most basic level it refers to the passing of modernity and the rise of a new cultural movement. Postmodernism might be best described as a mood instead of a movement or methodology. The mood is the heart of the postmodern challenge (2006:1). Some basic features of Postmodernism according to Mohler are: (1) The Deconstruction of Truth. Debate over truth has been around for many centuries but postmodernism has turned the debate upside down. “While most arguments throughout the history have focused on rival claims to truth, postmodernism rejects the very notion

of truth as fixed, universal, objective, or absolute. Postmodern philosopher Richard Rorty asserts, truth is made rather than found” (Mohler 2006:2). (2) The Death of the Metanarrative. “Postmodernists believe all truth to be socially constructed; therefore all presentations of absolute, universal, established truth must be resisted. All grand and expansive accounts of truth, meaning, and existence are cast aside as ‘metanarratives’ which claim far more than they can deliver.” Mohler continues by saying “Christianity is meaningless apart from the gospel, which is a metanarrative. Christianity is the great metanarrative of redemption” (Mohler 2006:2, 3).

Bob Wright in the article “The Emerging (Emergent) Church” speaks of “postmodernism” as “any of a wide-ranging set of developments in critical theory, philosophy, architecture, art, literature, history, culture, which are generally characterized as either emerging from, in reaction to, or superseding modernism. It can apply to movements in the arts, to mean stylistic developments such as collage, the return of ornament and historical reference as well as appropriation of popular media. In sociology postmodernism is said to be an economic and cultural change coming from the ubiquity of mass production and mass media. In philosophy it refers to movements surrounding post-structuralism and other critiques of positivism. Postmodernism can also be used as a pejorative term to attack changes in society seen as undesirable as they relate to questioning of absolute value systems and other forms of foundationalism” (Wright 2009:14).

Towns and Stetzer (2004) in their book *Perimeters of Light; Biblical Boundaries for the Emerging Church* speak of postmodernism in the literal sense as being “that which comes after modernism. From that definition, it follows that much of what has

become postmodernism developed as a reaction to the emptiness of modernism” (Towns & Stetzer 2004:158). Towns and Stetzer also give Millard Erickson’s definition of postmodernism:

- The denial of personal objectivity – (cultural expression) I do believe in God but that is really the influence of my parents. Nobody can know for sure.
- Uncertainty of knowledge – (cultural expression) The government says that the Atkins diet does not work, but who really knows if it is true.
- Death of any all-inclusive explanation – (cultural expression) You know, things just don’t fit into a nice neat explanation.
- Denial of knowledge’s inherent goodness – (cultural expression) The more knowledge that is out there, the more dangerous the world is becoming.
- Rejection of progress – (cultural expression) I have all this technology but am still not happy.
- Supremacy of community based knowledge – (cultural expression) It is arrogant to think I, alone, have figured out spiritual truth.
- Disbelief in objective iniquity (cultural expression) Her is what I think that verse means, but I could be wrong – what is your interpretation?

(Millard 2004:158-59).

Kimball (2003) in the book *The Emerging Church* cites that “we don’t know exactly when postmodernism began or how long it has been around. We don’t know where it will be taking us, or how much further it will shape the culture” (Kimball 2003:47). Kimball describes postmodernism within the four major worldview shifts

(Ancient World; Medieval World; Modern World; and Postmodern World) in the areas of epistemology, understanding, communication, authority, and theme:

- Postmodern epistemology – Self-determined pluralistic view of culture and religion. Conflicting truths and beliefs are accepted.
- Postmodern understanding – Power and faith is in personal experience.
- Postmodern communication – Internet and media accelerate an instant global communication revolution.
- Postmodern authority – Suspicion of authority. The Bible is open to many interpretations and is but one of many religious writings.
- Postmodern Theme – “If it makes you happy it can’t be that bad” – Sheryl Crow. Every viewpoint is a view point from a viewpoint.

(Kimball 2003:44).

2.3.16 Foundationalism

“It is any theory in epistemology (typically, theories of justification, but also of knowledge) that holds that beliefs are justified (known, etc.) based on what are called beliefs (also commonly called foundational beliefs). Basic beliefs are beliefs that give justificatory support to other beliefs, and more derivative beliefs are based on those more basic beliefs” ([wikipedia 2008](#)).

Broomall (1960) in *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Everett Harrison, shares that in addition to the uses cited above (literal and figurative), the word foundation is often used in theological literature in different connotations. Sometimes it is used for ‘foundational studies’ like that of apologetics; while at other times it is used for the basic beliefs of Christianity; and sometimes for foundational passages (Gospel passages which

are accepted by modern criticism as absolutely reliable) as well as other ways (Broomall 1960:229).

Geisler (1999) in *Baker's Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* states that “foundationalism is the theory of knowledge (Epistemology) that affirms the need for certain foundational principles as the basis of all thought (Geisler1999:259). For example: The law of noncontradiction that says a proposition cannot be both true and false at the same time and in the same sense. Also, either something is true or false but not both – exclusion of the middle. Finally, the principle of identity – what is true is true and what is false is false. These are foundational principles.

2.3.17 Epistemology

Carl F. H. Henry in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Everett Harrison, states that “epistemology” is “the science of the nature and possibility of knowledge; religious epistemology, the science of religious knowledge. Henry shares that in biblical terms the Bible does not systematically present a theory of knowledge, yet it excludes many theories and implies one of its own. Its approach is not abstract and speculative, but ethico-religious (Gen. 2:17; John 8:32). Its frame of reference is God as Truth (John 1:1 where the Logos is identified with Deity), the universe as a rational creation (Gen. 1-2), and man as the unique bearer of divine image (Gen. 1:26). The Logos is the source of all knowledge, not simply of the knowledge of God (John 1:4, 9). All knowledge, therefore, in some sense has the character of revelation. Human reason is a divinely fashioned instrument for its apprehension” (Henry 1960:184).

P. D. Feinberg in *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell, states that “epistemology” is “the branch of philosophy that is concerned with the

theory of knowledge. It is an inquiry into the nature and source of knowledge, the bounds of knowledge, and the justification of claims to knowledge. Religious epistemology is the inquiry into the nature of knowledge about God and the justification of claims to religious knowledge” (Feinberg 1984:359-60).

E. D. Cook comments about “epistemology” in *New Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Ferguson and Wright, by saying that it is the Greek word (*episteme*) for knowledge or science. He continues by stating that “epistemology is the study of the nature and basis of experience, belief and knowledge. It asks what we know and how we know it. It is concerned to differentiate knowledge from feeling sure or believing. It asks how we justify claims to know, whether we can be wrong about what we know, if we can know only if it makes sense that we can also not know, and whether we know that we know something” (Cook 1973:225).

“Traditionally, the distinction between belief and knowledge has taken the form of faith and reason in theology. Biblical writers do not seem to hesitate about making claims that God is known and that Christianity is not simply a question of faith, but also one of knowledge. Theologians express the various sources of knowledge in religion in terms of revelation and experience” (Cook 1973:225).

“The knowledge claims have been criticized by many philosophers, especially logical positivists, because of absence of proof required by theories of verification and falsification. Following the biblical balance between faith and knowledge makes it crucial to deal with questions of truth and justification whenever claims of knowledge and belief are made” (Cook 1973:226).

Geisler, in *Baker's Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* describes "epistemology" as the "discipline that deals with theory of knowledge. The term can be broken down into *epistem-ology* (Greek *episteme*, "to know; *logos*, "to study"). It is the study of how we know. The various epistemologies include 'rationalism, empiricism, agnosticism, idealism, positivism, existentialism, phenomenology, and mysticism. Epistemology considers whether ideas are innate or whether we are born a *tabula rasa*, that is, a blank state. It also deals with tests for truth and whether true ideas merely cohere or need an ultimate foundation in self-evident first principles. Epistemology also treats certainty and doubt. Agnosticism claims we cannot know reality, whereas realism asserts that we can know reality. The degree of our certainty in what we know ranges from low probability to rational necessity" (Geisler 1999:215).

D. A. Carson (2005) in the book *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* describes "epistemology" by distinguishing how it has been viewed in previous periods such as the premodern period, modern period, and now the postmodern period.

Premodern epistemology is a catchall category common in the Judeo-Christian faith before the Enlightenment. This was when most people presupposed that God exists and knows everything. All human knowledge is an infinitesimal small subset of God's knowledge. Put simply it means that our knowledge is dependent upon revelation. By revelation Carson means that which God knows and chooses to disclose to man in whatever way He chooses to disclose it. With the premoderns, epistemology does not begin with man, but with God. This does not mean that premoderns thought that God must know things before they knew them. It meant that when they "thought about how

they came to know things, they realized that the knowledge they were talking about was a small subset of what God already knew. They could not think about how they came to know something without first recognizing that, if the knowledge being considered is genuine knowledge (it conforms to what is in fact the case), God must know it first. This is how they came to know things could not be separated from God's omniscience, from His omnipotence, from His providential ordering of their lives, from revelation, and thus from God's truthfulness, and thus from the reliability of whatever God chose to disclose. Human epistemology revolved around the 'given' of God's existence, attributes, and character" (Carson 2005:88).

Modern epistemology is usually applied to the epistemology of the Western world from about the beginning of the seventeenth century until a few decades ago. Modern epistemology is usually connected to Rene Decartes (1596-1650). Many of Decartes' intellectual friends did not buy into premodern epistemology. Some of his friends were closet atheists. Decartes, a devout Roman Catholic, wanted to convince them of the truth of Catholicism but "found the common 'givens' too few to make significant progress in discussions with them" (Carson 2005:92). His plan was to doubt everything so as to find a bedrock, a foundation that he and his intellectual friends could share. He ended up settling on the formula that most people know him by - "I think, therefore I am" which became the foundation of Cartesian thought. Often viewed in a synonymous way are "Cartesian thought," "Enlightenment thought," and "modern epistemology."

Modern epistemology was characterized by six elements:

- Instead of beginning with God like the premodern epistemology did the modern epistemology began with self, the finite “I.” In other words God is not the “given,” at best only the conclusion of the argument.
- Modern epistemology was profoundly foundationalist. Decartes was looking for a foundation when dealing with his unbelieving friends. With a common foundation they could together begin to build a common structure. This search for foundations became endemic to the fundamental thought of most disciplines.
- Modern epistemology was constrained by rigorous method. This is the idea where one would begin with appropriate and convincing foundations and add carefully controlled methods and then generated truth. This is seen in many Western Ph.D. dissertations.
- Modern epistemology rarely doubted that epistemological certainty is desirable and attainable. This did not mean that some were not confident that their knowledge was exhaustively right. What it does mean is that few doubted that human beings could know things truly (objective knowledge was attainable) and that this was a good thing (objective knowledge was obtainable). Few doubted that more progress would and could be made and that, in principle, certainty about many things would be achieved.
- Modernist epistemology embraced an understanding of truth that ascribed to it what some have called ‘ahistorical universality.’ In other words, what is true is universally true. Another way of saying this is that truth is understood as objectively true.

- Although theists and deists were primarily the philosophical figures during the first part of the Enlightenment period it grew over time to encompass such thinkers as philosophical naturalists. As far as philosophical naturalism is concerned matter, energy, time, and space is all there is. This view has the universe as closed and God who is considered outside the universe as some childish myth. (Carson 2005:92-95).

“Postmodern epistemology modifies or changes or overthrows every one of the six characteristics of modern epistemology” (Carson 2005:95). Carson compares the six characteristics of postmodern epistemology with that of modern epistemology.

- Postmoderns begin with the finite “I” as moderns do but the inferences they draw are different. Each individual is a finite “I” but each individual is a member of a defined culture with a particular set of assumptions, values, structures of thought, linguistic usages, and the like. Each group, culture, or identifiable unit of people will invariably look at things a little differently from the way people in other cultures look at things.
- Postmodern epistemology is profoundly suspicious of all foundationalism. It argues that all foundations are not secure because they are self evident only within given cultures. Foundations are products of humans therefore they are no more stable than the foundation themselves.
- Postmodernism accepts that there are many methods which produce distinguishable results and none are any more true than the other. Since both foundations and methods rest with individuals then neither is secure.

We can seek consistency through chosen methods and the chosen assumptions but we cannot claim the outcome is “objective” knowledge.

- Postmodernism insists that objective knowledge is neither attainable nor desirable. At this point it finds itself in absolute opposition to modernism.
- Postmodern epistemology cannot partake of ‘ahistorical universality. Truth claims are true for some people, not for all people at all times and places.
- Postmodern epistemology does not rely on the rigorous methods and approaches of modernism but encourages many presuppositions and methods and approaches to be open to mystical appeals, assorted religious appeals (provided they make no exclusive claims, and especially if they are Eastern religions rooted in some form of pantheism), or superstition (as moderns would have considered it).

(Carson 2005:95-98).

2.3.18 Metanarrative/Micronarrative

Mohler (2006) in the article “Truth-Telling is Stranger Than It Used to Be, Part One” talks about postmoderns deconstructing Truth. Mohler states that “While most arguments throughout history have focused on rival claims to truth, postmodernism rejects the very notion of truth as fixed, universal, objective, or absolute. The Christian tradition understands truth as established by God and revealed through the self-revelation of God in Scripture. Truth is eternal, fixed, and universal. Our responsibility is to order our minds in accordance with God’s revealed truth and to bear witness to this truth. The postmodernists reject both the Christian and modernist approaches to the question of

truth. According to postmodern theory, truth is not universal, is not objective or absolute, and cannot be determined by a commonly accepted method. Instead they argue that truth is socially constructed, plural, and inaccessible to universal reason. Since postmodernists believe all truth to be socially constructed, all presentations of absolute, universal, established truth must be resisted. All grand and expansive accounts of truth, meaning, and existence are cast aside as ‘metanarratives’ which claim far more than they can deliver (Mohler 2006:1-3).” Mohler continues by stating that Christians should not present the gospel as one narrative among many true narratives or as “our narrative alongside the authentic narratives of others” (Mohler 2006:3). The Christian’s claim is that the Bible is “the Word of God for all” (Mohler 2006:3). In other words Mohler sees the Christian faith as that which defines itself as a metanarrative faith – “the Word of God is for all” (Mohler 2006:3) whereas the postmodernists believe that meaning is created by social groups with plural meanings – micronarratives. Postmodernists believe that language is a cultural creation, therefore meaning is a social construction. Mohler (2005) in the book *Whatever Happened to Truth*, states that truth becomes localized without global reach or validity therefore being subjective without absolute authority.

Koessler (2008), editor of *The Moody Handbook of Preaching* and author of chapter one, “Losing the Center,” speaks about metanarratives and micronarratives. Koessler talks about every sermon having a center of gravity. The expositor must stand upon something to make their point. With preaching a sermon it must be the Word of God for that is what makes the message truly biblical.

Koessler points out that in our postmodern age a seismic change has taken place. The center of gravity has shifted to the experience of the preacher and audience rather

than the text. With this style of preaching anecdotes don't illustrate the central truth of the text, instead personal story becomes the central truth of the message which is corroborated by Scripture. Koessler points out that "the weight of proof in the sermon" no longer "rest on proposition but on identifiable experience" (Koessler 2008:16).

Koessler describes this seismic shift as a shift from the metanarrative to the micronarrative. The author states that this shift is rooted in the thinking of the twentieth-century philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard. Lyotard claimed that 'the grand narrative' "has lost its credibility for people in the postmodern age" (Koessler 2008:16). Lyotard believed that the metanarratives would no longer be accepted because they did not fit everyone.

The premodernists truth began with God whereas the Modernists considered truth to be "reliable when it could be validated by experientially based knowledge - the observable, measurable, repeatable data of science"(Koessler 2008:16). Postmodernists shifted the "locus of knowledge away from the external sources of tradition and scientific method (premodern) and from empirical – measurable – experience (modernism) to the internal realm of subjective experience" (Koessler 2008:16).

Koessler describes this change of perspective in preaching as from metanarrative to micronarrative. The metanarrative is considered the big story that explains everything where the micronarrative (metanarrative's alter ego) is the little story that tells what the world looks like from that person's own personal angle of vision. Koessler states that the "key distinctive of a micronarrative is that it is 'local' rather than universal." Koessler further states "when the micronarrative becomes the center of the sermon, personal

experience becomes the final arbiter of truth instead of the text. In the micronarrative-based sermon the text serves the story and not the other way around” (Koessler 2008:17).

D. A. Carson (2005) in the book *Being Conversant with the Emerging Church* speaks of metanarratives when describing McLaren’s views and how Christianity must change to reach this postmodern era with the gospel. Carson states that McLaren argues for a new way of describing, defining and defending the gospel. The metanarrative speaks of a unifying theory of universal meaning which needs to be replaced with a new humble understanding of truth – accepting pluralism and relativism – which holds all truth claims under suspicion. McLaren and many in the emerging movement are allowing the culture to influence their way of looking at the Word of God – insisting that truth claims must be shared in a humble way without claiming universal validity, objectivity, or absoluteness – all truth is local without any global reach.

Johnson (2001), in the book *Preaching to a Postmodern World* speaks of postmodernity rejecting all worldviews because “any one way of understanding the world will inevitably leave out someone, leading to marginalization and oppression. Tolerance becomes the balancing point to keep power equally distributed. When someone claims to know the truth, postmodernity asks, ‘What is your angle?’ For this reason, postmodernism has a built-in aversion to what is called a ‘metanarrative,’ or ‘big story.’ The metanarrative is the all consuming, all-encompassing overview that seeks to answer the big questions of human existence. Postmodernity carries two objections to the possibility of a metanarrative. One is epistemology. No metanarrative, it appears is large enough and open enough genuinely to include the experiences and realities of all people. The second objection to metanarratives is ethical: ‘Metanarratives are inevitably

oppressive and violent in their claims to totality.’ In the end, injustices prevail and people eventually pay the price for allowing metanarratives to exist. Once the grand stories are removed, the only thing that remains is the *petite histoire* or ‘little story’ – micronarrative. Here relativism resurfaces. The only true understanding that anyone can ever speak of is what’s been personally experienced” (Johnson 2001:32-33).

2.4 PREACHING STYLES (Emerging Church – Traditional Expository)

2.4.1 Emerging Church Preaching (dialogue/storytelling)

Just as the Emerging Church Movement is hard to define because of its amorphous composition, its preaching style is just as hard to nail down. There are a variety of styles that are used by the emerging preachers but the style that this paper will address will be the style that seems to identify its constituents the best – dialogue/storytelling.

The Greek word for “dialogue” is *dialegomai* and occurs ten times in the book of Acts and three times in other books in the New Testament (Mark 9:34, Hebrews 12:5, Jude 1:9). The word *diale gomai* is used in Acts 17:2 when Paul “*reasoned* (emphasis) with them from the Scripture” and means “to speak through, ponder, or resolve in the mind.” It came to mean “converse with or to discuss.’ A similar thought is found in the verb *homileo* (Acts 20:11), meaning ‘to converse or talk with, engaging in conversation with” (Henard and Greenway 2009). The author of Acts gives a good description of Paul’s dialogical preaching and how it was used by Him in the New Testament. Dialogical preaching has been around for some time. Not only is dialogical preaching evident with Paul but it has been attempted by preachers for several decades. This is important in light of what many in the Emerging Church movement claim concerning

dialogue preaching – that it has come about in this culture due to a need to reach the post-moderns who seem to be dialogical in nature.

Leonard Sweet describes the dialogical preaching as congregational involvement reported in his E. P. I. C approach - **e**xperiential, **p**articipatory, **i**nteractive, and **c**ommunal (Sweet 2000). Lori Carrell describes preaching as a partnership between the listener and the preacher (Carrell 2000). Murray Frick encourages preachers to pass a brown bag for the collection of questions from the congregation for the preacher to answer – “Brown Bag Sermons” (Frick 1999). Dan Kimball in his book *The Emerging Church* encourages congregational participation. He believes the postmodern generation desire more interaction and therefore suggests a style of preaching that allows for dialogue and interaction (Kimball 2003). Brian McLaren, one of the Emergent Church’s most influential thinkers supports the dialogue and interaction style of homiletics. He states that “the more my preaching mirrors the flow of a conversation, the more people connect with it” (McLaren 2006). Both Frick and McLaren believe that structured groups can be utilized both before and after the sermon (The meeting before the sermon is for input whereas after sermon groups are primarily for evaluation of the sermon). These groups help enrich the sermon and facilitate dialogue between preacher and audience. Doug Pagitt in his book *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith* calls for traditional preaching to be replaced by “progressional dialogue” (Pagitt 2005:30). Doug describes “progressional dialogue” as “intentional involvement of multiple viewpoints that leads to unexpected and unforeseen ideas. The message will change according to who is present and who says what. This kind of preaching is

dynamic in the sense that the outcome is determined on the spot by participants” (Pagitt 2005:30, 52).

As one can see, dialogical preaching is described in many different ways, among them Howe’s “partners in preaching” (Howe 1967), Bond’s “interactive preaching” (Bond 1991), and Alexander’s “relational pulpit” (Alexander 1993). For the purpose of this study dialogical preaching with its diversity in description will be identified in this work as preaching that intentionally seeks to involve the listener in the involvement of the sermon (meaning preparation, delivery, and follow up).

2.4.2 Traditional Evangelical Expository Preaching

In the book by Vines and Shaddix *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* the authors say:

First and foremost, preaching is rooted in the *divine* (italics mine). God has chosen to reveal Himself to mankind, and He has chosen human vessels to be mediums of that revelation. The authors support their statements by referring to the Old Testament words used for prophet – one proclaiming God’s word to mankind. The Hebrew word *nabi* conveys the idea of one who pours forth or announces. It is used when one is moved by divine impulse to prophesy (Deut. 13:1; 18:20; Jer. 23:21; Num. 11:25-29). *Nabi* is the most common word used in the Old Testament for prophet but there are also two other words used in the Old Testament for “seer: *Hozeh* suggesting “a glow or growing warm” (Amos 7:12) and *Roeh* simply meaning “one who sees.” These terms seem “to indicate that the prophet was one whose heart had been warmed by something the Lord allowed him to see (Vines and Shaddix 1999).

Vines and Shaddix continue with terms in the New Testament which imply the divine origin of preaching. They first mention the Greek word *logos* which refers to “a word or saying” and how the communication of God’s message is sometimes referred to as “preaching the *Word*” (italics mine), (2 Tim. 4:2). The authors also refer to the Greek word *rhema* meaning “that which has been uttered by the voice (Rom. 10:17). Another

word used for preaching in the New Testament is *dialegomai* meaning “to speak through, ponder, or resolve in the mind.” The verb *homileo* means “to converse or talk with.” Finally, the frequently used *kerusso* means “to proclaim after the manner of a herald.” The word carries the idea that the listeners are to listen and obey because the message is one of authority (Rom. 10:14-15; I Cor. 1:21, 23; 2 Tim. 4:2). This word was used by Jesus to commission His followers just prior to His ascension. It was a way of “ordaining preaching as the primary method of dispensing the gospel” (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47), (Vines and Shaddix 1999).

Vines and Shaddix continue to describe expository preaching as communication which “has its roots in the clear explanation of God’s revelation” (Vines & Shaddix 1999). They talk about how God has always provided teachers to help people understand His Word, offering examples of this from the Bible.

Expository preaching is not just rooted in explaining God’s revelation but in making it practical for the lives of the contemporary listeners. The Greek word *paratithemi* used in reference to Paul’s preaching in Thessalonica (Acts 17:3) carries the idea of “being placed alongside.” In other words, Paul’s preaching was “an applicable presentation of Scripture.” Jesus used the same word with regard to the parable (Matt. 13:34). This word could be used for strength and encouragement (2 Tim. 4:2). At other times the application would come by way of rebuke or conviction - *elegcho* (Titus 1:9; 2:15) (Vines & Shaddix 1999).

Preaching with Vines and Shaddix is also “informed by the idea of public proclamation before a corporate assembly” (Vines & Shaddix 1999:22). In Ecclesiastes chapter one verse one the Hebrew word *qohelet* means “a caller, preacher, or lecturer”

(Vines & Shaddix 1999:22). The root word is *qahal*, meaning “to assemble together” (Vines & Shaddix 1999:22). Vines and Shaddix states that the word implies one who spoke before an assembly of people (Vines & Shaddix 1999:22). Another Hebrew word which means “to call out” (*qara*’), used in Isaiah 61:1, identifies the prophet as the called out one who addresses the people with the message of God. In the New Testament preaching involved dialogue (*dialegomai*) – reasoning with them from Scripture and *homileo* – meaning to converse or talk with. In this style of preaching the preacher proclaimed the word of God to the people but sometimes the people were to respond with feedback. Sometimes the preacher would give a “witness” (*martureo*) before the people. The word simply means “to affirm that one has seen, heard, or experienced something, be a witness” (Vines & Shaddix 1999:22). Confession or profession (*homolego*) was used at times to describe the nature of preaching in the New Testament (1 Tim. 6:12). The Greek word means “to agree with or say the same thing.” Preachers communicated what God said and were in total agreement with it.

Vines and Shaddix also point out that the word (*peitho*) used for preaching means “persuade others to believe” (Acts 13:43; 18:4; 2 Cor. 5:11). At other places the Greek word *apologia* is used for preaching suggesting verbal defense (Acts 22:1; Phil. 1:7, 17; 2 Tim. 4:16). Preachers during the New Testament presented the message “in the most convincing, appealing, and persuasive way possible” (Vines & Shaddix 1999:23).

Vines and Shaddix (1999) state that the roots of preaching found in the Bible reveal two forms for preaching: First, “preachers during the biblical period were involved in *revelatory* preaching. This means that the prophets, Jesus, and then the apostles proclaimed God’s first-time revelation as they spoke.” This means that they spoke

information from God that they had never heard before (Vines & Shaddix 1999:23). Second, “preachers during the biblical period also engaged in *explanatory* preaching. After the revelation of God was given they gave explanation of the revealed information” (Vines & Shaddix 1999:24). The authors’ five point criteria derived from the theological roots of preaching: (1) The mode is oral communication. (2) The message is biblical truth. (3) The medium is the Holy Spirit/human personality. (4) The mark is a given audience. (5) The motive is a positive response (Vines & Shaddix 1999: 24-26).

The definition that Vines and Shaddix give for *preaching* (emphasis mine) is “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” (Vines and Shaddix 1999). The process for expository preaching consist of *exegesis* (making sure to have the right meaning of the text), *hermeneutics* (the science of interpreting what a passage means), and *homiletics* (the art of saying the right thing that the text says) and *exposition* (the final step which is laying open what the text says in such a way that the original meaning is brought to bear on the lives of contemporary listeners (Vines & Shaddix 1999:28). The definition that the authors give for *expository preaching* (emphasis mine) 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” (Vines & Shaddix 1999:29).

Vines and Shaddix list the different categories that have been given to sermons based upon certain qualities: (1) Topical sermons are built around some particular subject. (2) Textual sermons are “based on one or two verses from the Bible where the major theme and major divisions of the sermon come from the text” (Vines & Shaddix

1999:29). (3) Narrative sermons are usually based upon a narrative text but can be define by sermonic form instead of literary genre. (4) Biographical sermons are based on the life of a Bible character. The idea of the bible character forms the basis for the message. (5) Dramatic monologues are sermons like biographical sermons except the preacher becomes the bible character. (6) Theological sermons are similar to topical sermons in that they rely on one thought (doctrine) but usually rely more on references to theological concepts. (7) Ethical discourse sermons are based upon a specific Bible motif that teaches the believer an ethical lesson. These different categories can be considered expository if the above process is followed and the sermon delivered stays true to the text and main thought of the text. “In essence, the expository sermon is the package in which the truth is delivered by the preacher to the people, resulting from his own investigation and organization of the biblical text” (Vines and Shaddix 1999:29-30).

In the book by John MacArthur and the Master’s Seminary faculty, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, Richard Mayhue says this about expository preaching:

Biblical preaching’s authenticity is significantly tarnished by contemporary communicators who are more concerned with personal relevance than with God’s revelation. Scripture unmistakably requires a proclamation focused on God’s will and mankind’s obligation to obey. With men wholly committed to God’s Word, the expository pattern commends itself as preaching that is true to the Bible. Exposition presupposes an exegetical process to extract the God-intended meaning of Scripture and an explanation of that meaning in a contemporary way. The biblical essence and apostolic spirit of expository preaching needs to be recaptured in the training and preaching of men who are freshly committed to “preaching the Word (MacArthur 1992:3).

Mayhue divides preaching into three types: (1) topical, (2) textual, and (3) expository. The “topical” message according to Mayhue usually combines a series of Bible verses that loosely connect with a theme. The “textual” message is usually a short

text or passage that generally serves as a gateway into whatever subject the preacher chooses to address. Mayhue adds that “neither the topical nor the textual method represents a serious effort to interpret, understand, explain, or apply God’s truth in the context of the Scripture(s) used. In contrast the “expository” sermon focuses predominately on the text(s) under consideration along with its (their) context(s). Exposition normally concentrates on a single text of Scripture, but it is sometimes possible for a thematic/theological message or a historical/biographical discourse to be expository in nature. An exposition may treat any length of passage” (Mayhue 1992:9).

Mayhue quotes Merrill F. Unger as saying:

No matter what the length of the portion explained may be, if it is handled in such a way that its real and essential meaning as it existed in the mind of the particular Biblical writer and as it exists in the light of the overall context of Scripture is made plain and applied to the present-day needs of the hearers, it may properly be said to be *expository preaching* . . . It is emphatically not preaching about the Bible, but preaching the Bible. ‘What saith the Lord’ is the alpha and the omega of expository preaching. It begins in the Bible and ends in the Bible and all that intervenes springs from the Bible. In other words, expository preaching is Bible-centered preaching (Mayhue 1992:11).

The form of the message is not what defines whether it is expositional or not. What determines the message to be expositional is the “source and process through which the message is formed” (Mayhue 1992:11).

In the book *Biblical Preaching* by Haddon W. Robinson (one of the examples for traditional expository preaching used in this research), the author states:

Defining can be a sticky business because what we define we sometimes destroy. Example – the same boy dissected a frog to find out what made it jump, but in learning something about the parts he destroyed its life. Preaching is a living process involving God, the preacher, and the congregation, and no definition can pretend to capture that dynamic. But here is an attempt at a working definition of expository preaching.

Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers (Robinson 1980:19).

Robinson goes on to say that expository preaching starts with the preacher's purpose and answer to this question: "Do you as a preacher endeavor to bend your thought to the Scriptures, or do you use the Scriptures to support your thought?" The question is not whether you are preaching that which is orthodox or evangelical or whether you hold a high esteem of the view of the Bible. The expositor must on one hand approach the Bible with a "childlike attitude to hear again the story, not coming to argue, to prove a point, or even find a sermon," yet on the other hand "he knows he lives not as a child but as an adult locked into presuppositions and a world view that makes understanding difficult" (Robinson 1980:21). Robinson sums up by saying that "the Bible is not a child's storybook, but great literature that requires thoughtful response" (Robinson 1980:21).

The chapter on the review of literature has made an attempt to record definitions and analyses of the Emerging Movement from those highly involved with the movement and those not so involved and even some who are leery of the movement. It is not an exhaustive description and analysis of the Emerging Movement but there has been an endeavor to include material which would best describe the movement. This was done by reading articles and books by scholars, lay people, and main players of the Emerging Movement, as well as opponents of the movement. The chapter has also included a section on the different styles of preaching that will later be compared and contrasted – dialogical/storytelling and traditional expositional preaching. Some word studies from the

Bible have been offered to help clarify the meaning of the message, the messenger, and the type of communications offered for the listener. All the information offered in this chapter will be analyzed and organized for the methodology chapter – chapter three.

CHAPTER THREE

A Methodology of the Interpretation of the Practice of Two Church Models and Two Models of Preaching

Chapter two will attempt to analyze the two styles of homiletics – dialogical/storytelling and traditional expository preaching by first categorizing the periods in which the preaching is best known or best represented (modern period – postmodern period). This will help the reader understand the characteristics of the periods in which the preaching was dominant and whether that style of preaching is relevant in the postmodern era. Characteristics of the different preaching styles will be categorized, compared, and contrasted. As the characteristics of the preaching styles are categorized, compared, and contrasted, the reader will be able to better understand how effective the styles of preaching are in the postmodern era. This process will also involve a comparison and contrasting of sermons critiques and other related material that will aid in the comparing and contrasting process.

The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast the preaching in the Emerging Church (dialogical/storytelling) with that of traditional expository preaching which was prominent during the modern period and to evaluate if one style is more successful than the other in addressing the need of postmodern Christians. For the interpretation of the characteristics of the traditional church and the emerging church as well as the practice of preaching in the two different ecclesiological models, I am following the methodology of practical theology proposed by Osmer (2008). The methodology used in attempting to accomplish this purpose will begin by characterizing each period (modern – postmodern) with certain peculiarities that seem to identify that

era. The characteristics of that period will later be examined with the characteristics of the different styles of preaching to help in determining whether one style of preaching is more successful in reaching the postmodern culture than the other.

3.1 INTERPRETATION OF THE DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MODERN AND POST MODERN PERIOD

3.1.1 Interpretation of the Different Characteristics of the Modern Period (1500-1989)

Millard Erickson suggests the following beliefs and approaches to life for the modern era:

- *Naturalism* – reality is restricted to what can be observed or proved. Rationalism leads to complete knowledge.
- *Humanism* – humanity is the pinnacle of the universe. Technology makes things better for mankind. Mankind with its knowledge can conquer the world. Humans are to be worshipped.
- *Scientific method* – knowledge is inherently good and attainable. Nothing stands between mankind and science in creating a better world.
- *Reductionism* – humans are highly developed animals. Man is just a highly developed animal who views all moral values as arbitrarily contingent upon the changing social and psychological determinants of human cultures.
- *Progress* – because knowledge is good its acquisition will lead to progress.
- *Nature* – No creator is responsible for life and its development.
- *Certainty* – because knowledge is objective, we can know things without a doubt.
- *Determinism* – is the belief that things happen because of fixed causes.

- *Individualism* – is the supremacy of each individual and their ability to discern truth.
- *Anti-authoritarianism* – is when each person is the final arbiter of truth (Erickson 1998:158-164).

The Modern era or what some call the “Enlightenment Period heralded the unlimited scope of the human spirit” (Loscalzo 2000:14). This was a period where rationalism was supposed to lead to complete knowledge. Empirical observation and the scientific method was the answer for “freedom from learning based on myths and superstitions, whether cultural or religious” (Loscalzo 2000:14). Reason became the “god of human conscience” while “objectivity became the hallmark of intellectual endeavor” (Loscalzo 2000:14). “History moved on a teleological path of unending progress.” The western world was seduced by technology and reason. The technology that promised to rid the world of evil and provides a better life for mankind, in many ways, failed to produce. Science and technology enhanced life in some ways but could not perform as mankind’s god in accomplishing everything it promised. As Loscalzo in his book *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ in a Postmodern World* states, “Modernity scratches its bewildered heads as postmodernity pulls back the curtain to expose Oz’s (movie – “Wizard of Oz”) all too-human wizard” (Loscalzo 2000:16).

It appears that the shift to postmodernity comes from a failure of modernity to provide what it promised. Mankind showed great progress in the Enlightenment period but also displayed an ability to destroy life, hurt the environment, and produce insecurity with the economy. As a result people lost hope with the ideals of the Enlightenment.

Postmodernity seemed to develop as a reaction to the emptiness and failure of modernism.

3.1.2 Interpretation of the Characteristics of the Postmodern Period (1900- today)

Millard Erickson's definition of postmodernism:

- The denial of personal objectivity
- The uncertainty of knowledge.
- The death of any all-inclusive explanation.
- The denial of the inherent goodness of knowledge.
- The rejection of progress.
- The Supremacy of community-based knowledge
- The disbelief in objective inquiry. (Erickson 1998:158-164)

Postmodernism is experienced in everyday life. The values of postmodernism rapidly made their way into every arena of life – schools, television, magazines, fashion, politics, and religion. Much of the rapid spread of postmodernism has come about through technology and the internet. In the postmodern world the blurring of spiritual lines (relativism is the norm) is accepted as norm. The Emerging Church movement realizes that there is a problem. The culture has changed but the church has not. Their primary premise is that churches must change to respond to postmodern culture. That premise involves not just how you perceive church but how you communicate the message.

Before listing the differences characterized by traditional expository preaching and the postmodern emerging church preaching - dialogical/storytelling, there needs to be a summation of the characteristics that differ between the traditional church during the modern period and the Emerging Church during the postmodern period. The

characteristics shared will not only describe the purpose of the emerging church (according to Emergent leaders) but will aid in determining whether one style of preaching is proving more successful in reaching the postmodern culture than the other. The description of the emerging church will be data gathered from the chapter containing the review of literature. The data will be summarized to show the contrast between the traditional evangelical church and the postmodern Emerging Church according to how the Emerging Church leaders as opposed to the traditional evangelical church leaders view the situation. After the perspectives have explained the preaching styles and characteristics will be shared from both perspectives.

3.2 INTERPRETATION OF THE DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EMERGING CHURCH IN COMPARRISON TO THE TRADITIONAL CHURCH AS VIEWED BY EMERGENT LEADERS AND TRADITIONAL EVANGELICAL CHURCH LEADERS.

- The *Emerging Church* believes in missional living where all are to be missionaries. The emerging church believes that the traditional church has failed largely in the area of transforming society. The Emergent Church believes that the traditional church was more about teaching and defending the truth than living the truth.
- The *Traditional Church* believes that every Christian should be involved in reaching the world for Christ through the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20. The traditional church feels it has fallen short in making disciples but sees it as not a failure as much as a challenge to be more successful.

- The Emerging Church believes in reaching the postmoderns (younger generation) but also all who desire to be church-ed? They believe the church should not just try to reach people according to age, race, or status. The goal should be to simply reach the lost. The Emergent Church believes the traditional church in the 90s became more concerned with reaching certain groups according to age and status. Many of the traditional churches became seeker-sensitive in their method of reaching the culture.
- The *Traditional Church* saw many churches emphasize seeker-sensitive methods in the 90s but only for the purpose of reaching the seeker sensitive generation. The traditional values were not abandoned by most traditional churches. The traditional church is presently trying to reach the postmoderns without compromising truth and the churches' traditional values.
- The *Emerging Church* believes that faith is a journey rather than a destination. The movement believes that more than just the final destination should be emphasized in discipleship. They believe that the experience with God on earth is where the emphasis should be placed. The Emergent Church believes that the traditional church failed by placing too much emphasis on evangelism and a person's destination.
- The *Traditional Church* believes that faith includes both a journey and destination. The relationship with God involves eternal life which begins here and continues through eternity.

- The *Emerging Church* believes in authenticity. It views traditional churches as placing great importance on buildings, entertainment, big budgets, and baptisms instead of showing authority.
- The *Traditional Church* believes that the people, not to building, are the church. It believes that buildings are for meetings but should not be viewed otherwise. The traditional church also understands that sometimes motives for ministry can become perverted and corrupted.
- The *Emerging Church* believes in holistic living. It views itself in a holistic way as a church that does well to the bodies, souls, spirits, families, and societies as Jesus did when He was on earth, whereas the traditional church is more concerned about themselves and church life.
- The *Traditional Church* realizes that the goal of every believer is to be conformed to the image of Christ. This seems to be what the Emergent Movement would define as holistic.
- The *Emerging Church* believes in orthopraxy instead of orthodoxy. The emerging church believes that the traditional church has not been consistent in calling people to goodness, graciousness, and to glorifying God the way that the New Testament teaches.
- The *Traditional Church* believes in glorying God by of being Christ-like which involves goodness, graciousness and many other godly character traits.
- The *Emerging Church* believes in spontaneity. It does not believe in a regimented program although some churches may operate by one.

- The *Traditional Church* believes that the Spirit of God should lead one's life. It believes that the Spirit of God will never lead one contrary to the Word of God. Programs can be implemented and used in churches at the discretion of the leaders of that church and their relationship to the Spirit of God.
- The *Emerging Church* believes in diversity not monolith. The emerging church is a movement that seeks to rethink the Christian faith practice by focusing on the mission of Jesus and rethinking about the kingdom in our culture. The movement is willing to explore beyond traditional categories. This diversity involves safety and acceptance where one can differ in doctrine and not feel condemned or ostracized for their differences.
- The *Traditional Church* believes in autonomy. It believes that faith has been examined and tried throughout history and continues to be examined and tried today. Each believer has a responsibility to study and understand the Bible with the help of the Holy Spirit, mature believers, books, and church teachings. This does not mean that everyone will believe the same way. It does mean that the foundational truths should be understood and accepted by persons wanting to unite with that church in membership. Some guidelines and truths need to be foundational; otherwise chaos would rule.
- The *Emerging Church* believes in hammering out a theology that's friendly to ancient faith practices (contemplative prayer, labyrinths, hospitality) in a postmodern culture. The emerging church is described by the New York Times as "those who blend ancient worship practices, using meditation, candles, and incense with rock music" (The Emerging Church and Contemplative Spirituality

- 2008). The Emergent Church believes that the traditional church became too modernized in worship, leaving the ancient faith practices behind.
- The *Traditional Church* believes that the church is autonomous and should practice its worship as the group feels comfortable. Symbols, candles, and other so-called ancient objects of worship can be used in a traditional worship service. Traditional churches believe that objects, not Christ, can become the focus of worship if the worshipper is not careful.
 - The *Emerging Church* believes in rethinking everything they do (Deconstruction and Reconstruction). The Emerging Church believes that the church needs more than what the traditional church offered by changing the appearance, ministries, music, style of preaching, or name of the church. They believe that the church must look at the inner core with a new mindset.
 - The *Traditional Church* believes in changes but not total deconstruction and reconstruction of everything. The traditional church believes in finding what is good in any society and using it if it can help reach that culture for Christ. But only if it doesn't compromise the truth.
 - The *Emerging Church* believes that the best way to reach this postmodern culture is not with propositional teaching and preaching but instead with dialogical/storytelling. Todd Hunter feels that people today actually "live from a sense of story, not from facts, data, bits of information, or bullet points to which they once gave mental assent" (Hunter 2003:42-53).

- The *Traditional Church* believes that there are many ways to preach the word of God. They use a multiplicity of styles in trying to communicate the gospel to the culture.
- The *Emerging Church* believes that stances which could isolate people outside the church should be avoided. With this type of conviction the movement tries to avoid any kind of rigidity and oversimplification that reduces every issue to right or wrong. In other words, truth is evolving and ever changing therefore one should not be dogmatic with their doctrines. Allow for tolerance the Emerging movement cries. Let the reader come to the text with meaning determining what is to be found within the text. The Emerging Movement believes that because the Bible was written so long ago there is no way we can know with certainty what the writing truly meant. Therefore, it is left up to the reader today to decide what it should mean. This is called deconstructing the text.
- The *Traditional Church* believes in taking a Christ-like stand for truth. The church understands that not everyone will agree but if done in a godly way one should not worry about what others think. Just continue to show love to everyone whether they disagree with you or not.
- The *Emerging Church* believes that evangelism is not in methods that communicate propositional truths followed by persuasion to accept Christ as savior and lord. It is more than a consumer product marketed internationally where pie-in-the-sky promises are made. Evangelism among the movement is considered to be more than just numbers. It is discipleship where new believers are unleashed. This type of church described by the Emerging movement is one

where “the community is characterized by love, acceptance, and accountability, where common people are transformed by their faith to live uncommon lives and do uncommon deeds” (Yaconelli 2003:118-30).

- The *Traditional Church* believes in methods for evangelism. Methods are only tools to help one understand how to share the gospel in an effective way to the unbeliever. Just like anything, methods can become mechanical. One must continuously search one’s heart to determine how the method is being used. The traditional church understands that God uses methods that contain his gospel presentation to help in changing lives.
- The *Emerging Church* considers relationships and experiences, not information to be the primary transformers in a person’s life. The movement believes information is helpful in transformation but not the primary source. They don’t put much stock in mission statements and goals; instead their emphasis is put on relationships. The movement believes that spiritual character is developed by responding to God.
- The *Traditional Church* believes that information, relationships, circumstances, trials, and experiences are all used in transforming a person’s life.
- The *Emerging Church* has developed a renewed fascination with the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God refers to God’s agenda to remake and restore all creation. This kind of perspective allows for an experimental approach to Christian faith and practice. The Emerging Church believes that “the ultimate context of spiritual aspirations of a follower of Jesus Christ is not Christianity but rather the kingdom of God” (Yaconelli 2003:190-94). The movement believes

that it is God's choice whether He desires to place His truth in others outside of Christianity. The gospel is God's gospel, the kingdom gospel not ours to make those decisions. The movement believes that the traditional church's approach to finding truth limited God.

- The *Traditional Church* has different views concerning the Kingdom of God. That alone reveals that the traditional church God has not been limited by any approach.
- The *Emerging Church* "does not like authority, but longs to receive instruction," whereas the traditional church practiced too much authority and believed to have all the answers (Rabey 2001:27).
- The *Traditional Church* believes in the priesthood of the believer but also believes in God-given roles involving authority.
- The *Emerging Church* "is slow to commit but passionately dedicated" (Rabey 2001:27), whereas the traditional church acted too fast and often ended up with very little dedication. The movement proposes that the traditional church's dedication stemmed from an authority telling them what they should or should not do instead of becoming on their own what God would have them be.
- The *Traditional Church* tries to emphasize dedication but is not always successful. The traditional church understands that the change in someone's life must come by way of the Holy Spirit and therefore not everyone will be dedicated. The authority can only teach the importance of dedication realizing that the discipleship process and results are ultimately between the person being disciplined and the Holy Spirit.

3.3 INTERPRETATION OF THE DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS OF PREACHING: EVANGELICAL TRADITIONAL EXPOSITORY AND EMERGING DESCRIBED

To determine whether the dialogical/storytelling method of preaching in the Emerging Church is any more effective for reaching postmoderns than expository preaching in the traditional church is the goal. This work will present characteristics concerning both methods. The comparison used is from Dan Kimball’s book *The Emerging Church* (Kimball 2003:175):

TRADITIONAL CHURCH	EMERGING CHURCH
The sermon is the focal point of the worship service The preacher serves as a dispenser of biblical truths to help solve personal problems in modern life.	The sermon is one part of the experience of the worship gathering. The preacher teaches how the ancient wisdom of Scripture applies to kingdom living as a disciple of Jesus.
Emphasizes the explanation of what truth is.	Emphasizes the explanation and experience of who truth is.
The starting point is with the Judeo-Christian worldview (Acts 17:1-3)	The starting point is the Garden of Eden and the retelling of the story of creation and of the origins of man and sin (Acts 17:22-34)
Biblical terms like <i>gospel</i> and <i>Armageddon</i> don’t need definition.	Biblical terms like <i>gospel</i> and <i>Armageddon</i> need to be deconstructed and redefined.
The scriptural message is <i>communicated</i> primarily with words.	The scriptural message is communicated through a mix of words, visuals, art, silence, testimony, and story.
Preaching in a worship service is the primary way one learns from the Scriptures during the week.	Preaching in a worship gathering a motivator to encourage people to learn from the Scriptures throughout the week.
Preaching takes place within the church building during a worship service.	A lot of the preaching takes place outside of the church building in the context of community and relationship.

3.4 MINISTERS AND SERMONS OBSERVED

3.4.1 Traditional Expository Preaching

The following preachers were selected because they are representatives of the two models of preaching – the traditional evangelical expository preaching and the emerging dialogical/Storytelling Preaching.

Dr. John MacArthur

Dr. Chuck Swindoll

Dr. Haddon Robinson

3.4.2 Emerging Dialogical/Storytelling Preaching

Rev. Mark Driscoll

Rev. Dan Kimball

Rev. Doug Pagitt

Sermons, books and articles on these men and the different styles of preaching will be examined, critiqued, compared and contrasted. The results will be examined as to how the methods of preaching best reach the postmodern culture. Those findings will be shared in the chapter four.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings of the Comparison of the Two Models of Preaching

This chapter will include the interpretation of the different characteristics of both preaching expository preaching of the traditional church and dialogical/storytelling of the Emerging Church. The characteristics of these styles will be listed and then expounded according to findings from this research. The findings will then be compared to the characteristics of postmodern culture to measure which style has received more success if any in reaching this culture. Included in this finding will be six preachers. Three are considered traditional expositional preachers, and three are considered emerging preachers who are identified with the dialogical/storytelling style of preaching. The preachers will be critiqued according to the characteristics of the styles they use in preaching and examined against the characteristics of the postmodern culture.

4.1 INTERPRETATION OF THE DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS OF PREACHING STYLES – TRADITIONAL EXPOSITORY PREACHING COMPARED WITH EMERGING’S DIALOGICAL/STORYTELLING

The interpretation of the different characteristics of preaching that were listed by Dan Kimball pertaining to the Modern (Traditional) Church as opposed to the Emerging Church will be discussed individually along with the findings from this research work.

- *Traditional Church (expository preaching style)* – the sermon is the focal point of the worship service.
- *Emerging Church (dialogical/storytelling style)* – the sermon is one part of the experience of the worship gathering.

- **Findings** – The traditional church, with the expository preaching style, believes that preaching is rooted in the divine. It believes that God has chosen humans to reveal Himself to people. The Hebrew word *nabi*, one of the most common words for “prophet,” carries with it the idea of “one who pours forth or announces. It includes the implication of being moved by divine impulse to prophesy” (Deut. 13:1; 18:20; Jer. 23:21; Num. 11:25-29), (Vines and Shaddix 1999:18). The Hebrew words *hozeh* (to grow warm) and *roeh* (to see) were words used to describe the prophet and his message. They simply meant that the prophet was one whose heart grew warm by something the Lord had allowed him to see. In the New Testament the most frequently used word for “proclaiming the word” is the Greek word *kerusso* (“to proclaim”). The divine origin of preaching is described by the words *logos* (refers to “a word or saying”) and *rhema* (“that which has been uttered”). “When the Word was spoken in the New Testament, God actually was communicating Himself through the act of proclamation” (Vines and Shaddix 1999:18). Vines and Shaddix continue with saying that “The New Testament preacher was one who proclaimed the message of the King of Kings to men. The preaching event, then, was accomplished by an atmosphere of seriousness, authority, and divine mandate” (Vines and Shaddix 1999:18). Albert Mohler comments, “Preaching did not emerge from the church’s experimentation with communication techniques. The church does not preach because preaching is thought to be a good idea or an effective technique. Rather, we preach because we have been commanded to preach. Preaching is a commission-a charge. Paul boldly stated that it is the task of the preacher to ‘preach the Word . . . in season

and out of season' (2 Tim. 4:2). The preaching act is *sui generis*, a function of the church established by Jesus Christ" (Mohler 2006:1). Mohler goes on to quote P. T. Forsyth, "With preaching Christianity stands or falls, because it is the declaration of the gospel" (Mohler 2006:1). The traditional church views preaching more than "speaching" (Pagitt's description of modern preaching).

- The Emerging Church with its dialogical/storytelling views the preacher and preaching in light of being just one of many equal parts in a matrix of experiences. The movement desires maximum participation in worship. This is very commendable and admirable but can be dangerous. Worship can become confusing. The Word of God as the message of God can lose its authority and therefore lose its authority in the life of God's people. If the Word of God is not looked upon as the Divine Word from God it can be perceived as words written by men without any divine source. By rejecting the Bible as the soul authority on spiritual truth, the Emerging Church places the church's authority as equal with the preaching event. Pagitt comments, "The Bible ought to live as an authoritative member of our community, one we listen to on all topics of which she speaks. Understanding the Bible as a community member means giving the Bible the freedom to speak for herself. Sometimes that will mean getting out of the way and putting less effort into interpreting Scripture for others, instead letting them carry out their own relationship with what the Bible says" (Pagitt 2005:195). With the Emerging Church the Bible seems to become just one contributor in a worship service filled with many as authority for faith and practice.

- *Traditional Church (expository preaching style)* – The preacher serves as a dispenser of biblical truths to help solve personal problems in modern life.
- *Emerging Church (dialogical/storytelling style)* – The preacher teaches how the ancient wisdom of Scripture applies to kingdom living as a disciple of Jesus.
- **Findings** – The traditional church that practices expository preaching believes that the preacher should be called by God to preach and teach - rebuking, encouraging, guarding against false doctrine, while discipling others to do the same. (2 Tim. 2:1-2; 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 4:6, 11, 13; 5:17).

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:1-2, NASB).

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NASB).

In pointing out these things to the brethren, you, will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following . . . Prescribe and teach these things . . . Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching (1 Tim. 4:6, 11, 13, NASB).

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17, NASB).

- The traditional church believes that the pastor can participate as a facilitator and fellow seeker but there are times, such as during worship, when the pastor is to be a herald. Paul told the Corinthians “Follow me as I follow Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1, NASB). Overseers (pastors) are called to be “above reproach” (Titus 1:6, NASB) instructing in sound doctrine, rebuking those who contradict it (Titus 1:9), and modeling good works (Titus 2:7). The traditional church desires the preacher to

be more than just a lost traveler having more questions than answers. The preacher is to “fan into flames the gift of preaching (2 Tim. 1:6), be willed with power instead of timidity (1:7), and rebuke, reprove, and exhort with complete patience and teaching” (4:2), (DeYoung and Kluck 2008:160). The pastor in the traditional church is more than just a dispenser of biblical truths. The minister models as well as disciplines the flock with the Word of God.

- The Emerging Church states that “the preacher teaches how ancient wisdom of Scripture applies to kingdom living as a disciple of Jesus” (Kimball 2003:175). The traditional church also teaches discipleship but through expository preaching. The primary difference found between the two is the method of homiletics. The Emerging Church is more dialogical where knowledge of the Bible and the truths that it teaches are not that necessary in the *process* (emerging identifies it as “*journey*”) of becoming Christ-like. Instruction is very important with the traditional preacher in the process.
- *Traditional Church (expository preaching style)* – emphasizes the explanation of what truth is.
- *Emerging Church (dialogical/storytelling style)* – emphasizes the explanation and experience of who truth is.
- **Findings** – The Traditional expository preaching has as its agent of transformation the employment of *knowledge* (Shaddix 2009:289). Pagitt of the Emerging Movement states in his book *Preaching Re-Imagined*, that our preaching practices “ought to be judged by their effects on our communities and the ways in which they help us move toward life with God” (Pagitt 2005:28). He

goes on to state, “I have become convinced that our misguided belief that life change can come through proper knowledge acquired through education has failed to produce the kind of radical commitment to life in harmony with God and the way of Jesus that we are called to” (Pagitt 2005:21). He also says, “I truly believe progressional dialogue is necessary to move people into fuller, richer lives of faith. People’s lives are not changed by the information they get. Lives are changed by new situations, new practices, and new ways of experiencing the world” (Pagitt 2005:163). The “explanation and experience of who truth is” of the emerging church preaching is acquired through progressional dialogue where experience is placed on the same level as the truth. Shaddix states that “Scripture takes issue with such an assertion. God rebuked the preachers of Hosea’s day because they failed to help the people know and understand His Word. He said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will reject you from serving as My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your sons” (Hosea 4:6). People’s understanding and knowledge of truth is absolutely critical for life change. Bill Hull (2009) stated that “transformation comes through the commitment of the mind. Without the proper knowledge and thinking we have no basis for personal change or growth. The mind is the pivotal starting place for change.” You can trace the emphasis all the way through the Bible and the idea of clarity in making understanding possible is paramount” (Shaddix 2009:290-91). Both the traditional expository preaching and the emerging homiletics (dialogical/storytelling) claim

to teach the truth and how you can know the truth. The primary difference is placing experience over doctrine which the Emerging Church chooses to do.

- *Traditional Church (expositional preaching style)* – The starting point is with the Judeo-Christian worldview (Acts 17:1-3).
- *Emerging Church (dialogical/storytelling style)* – The starting point is the Garden of Eden and the retelling of the story of creation and the origins of man and sin (Acts 17:22-34).
- **Findings** – The Emerging Church claims that they tell the whole story of the Bible where the traditional church tells only the story of the cross. The Emerging Church claims that the postmoderns are ignorant of the Word of God and need to hear the whole story. In most traditional churches where expository preaching is practiced the whole story is told, maybe not every sermon, but never the less it is preached.
- *Traditional Church (expository preaching style)* – Biblical terms like *gospel* and *Armageddon* don't need definition.
- *Emerging Church (dialogical/storytelling)* – Biblical terms like *gospel* and *Armageddon* need to be deconstructed and redefined.
- **Findings** – The Emerging Church says that the traditional church uses words in their preaching that the modern church people could understand but the post moderns are Post-Christian and have not been brought up in church; therefore the words need to change for their understanding. In “deconstructing and redefining” words in the Bible, the Emerging preacher falls prey to misrepresenting the original meaning of the word along with the way the word might be used in a

certain context. Deconstructing the words in a text can lead to deconstructing a text and even deconstructing and redefining the truth of the text. In traditional churches there has always been, with expository preaching, an attempt to make words clear and simple. There are times when preachers get lazy and assume that everyone understands what is being said. Sometimes words are used without clarification but that doesn't seem to be the intent for most traditional churches where expository preaching is practiced.

- *Traditional Church (expository preaching style)* – The scriptural message is communicated primarily with words.
- *Emerging Church (dialogical/storytelling style)* – The scriptural message is communicated through a mix of words, visuals, art, silence, testimony, and story.
- **Findings** – In the traditional church where expository preaching is done the medium is the message. The Emerging Church tends to promote a multiplicity in medium when worshipping. You have many things going on during or around the message. These different mediums could involve the message (dialogical/storytelling) along with meditation, lighting of candles, participation of labyrinth (Eastern mystical practices), syncretistic spirituality (using of Eastern meditative practices), visuals, art, silence, testimony and a number of other things.
- *Traditional Church (expository preaching style)* – Preaching in worship service is the primary way one learns from the Scriptures during the week.
- *Emerging Church (dialogical/storytelling style)* – Preaching in worship gathering is a motivator to encourage people to learn from the Scriptures throughout the week.

- **Findings** – The traditional church with its expository preaching does use worship as *one* means of learning during the week, but only one. Traditional expository preaching is directed toward a particular end by the preacher. In other words the preacher with the message is trying to get the listeners to arrive at a particular conclusion. Paul’s approach in dialogical preaching was much the same (Acts 17:2-3). Expository preaching is designed to guide the listeners to a pre-established conclusion. Traditional expository preaching challenges people to live their Christian life in a Christ-like way during the week. It also informs people that for this act to happen there must be personal Bible study as well as group Bible study (cell groups, Bible studies on Sundays, etc.). Expository preaching is not the only way that believers are encouraged to learn the Bible during the week.
- Emerging churches with their dialogical/storytelling style of preaching along with the many other facets of worship sometimes tend to lead the listeners to “unexpected and unforeseen ideas.” It may “motivate and encourage people to learn from the Scriptures” but open ended dialogue has a tendency to result “unexpected and unforeseen ideas” (Shaddix 2009:286). Biblical teaching is rooted in the divine and not the collective “wisdom” of a group (Shaddix 2009:286).
- *Traditional Church (expository preaching style)* – Preaching takes place inside the church building during a worship service.
- *Emerging Church (dialogical/storytelling)* – A lot of the preaching takes place outside of the church building in the context of community and relationships.

- **Findings** – In the traditional church much of the preaching, while not intentional, has been done within the four walls of the church. Expository preaching challenges people to take the gospel outside the four walls of the church and go into the community with the message of Christ showing Him to a world that needs to know Him. The preaching either seems to be falling on deaf ears or is being rejected. Whatever the reason for this failure, the Emerging Church is trying to remedy it by changing the way in which they do church (preaching included). Whether it is working one will not fully know until some time has passed.
- *Traditional Church (expository preaching style)* – According to emerging leaders propositional preaching considered to be expositional preaching is not relevant, therefore it is not reaching postmoderns.
- *Emerging Church (dialogical/storytelling style)* - declares that post moderns reject propositions and believe that truth is not universal, objective, or absolute and cannot be determined by a commonly accepted method. The postmoderns believe that truth is socially constructed, plural, and inaccessible to universal reason. Emergents believe that dialogical/storytelling is the best method for reaching post-moderns. The Emerging Church, in trying to reach postmoderns, seem to have adapted the culture's desires that say, "We desire to participate in bible study that minimizes finding pat answers in the exploration of Scripture." For example, Doug Pagitt, one of the leading players in the Emerging movement said, "Progressional dialogue that involves the intentional interplay of multiple viewpoints leads to unexpected and unforeseen ideas. The message will change depending on who is present and who says what. This kind of preaching is

dynamic in the sense that the outcome is determined on the spot by the participants” (Pagitt 2005:52). Another main player in the movement commented that the more his preaching mirrored the flow of a conversation, the more people connected with it.

- **Findings** – The progressive dialogical/storytelling style of preaching places the Scripture in a position where it is only one of many participants in an ongoing conversation, whereas traditional expository preaching based upon propositions that are grounded in truth place emphasis on Scripture as being the primary medium and sole authority for faith and practice.

4.2 THREE PREACHERS FROM THE TRADITIONAL EXPOSITORY PREACHING CATEGORY CRITIQUED AND THREE PREACHERS FROM THE EMERGING CHURCH CATEGORY CRITIQUED.

4.2.1 Traditional Preaching

John MacArthur

MacArthur is the pastor of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California. MacArthur is considered an expositor of the Word of God. MacArthur is an expositor who is very effective with that style of preaching. The preacher has a very large engaged church. The preaching that happens on Sunday is not confined to just Sundays. The preaching has effects on members’ lives. The members of Grace Community Church are very engaged in the community where they worship and serve.

MacArthur’s messages are more Bible than stories yet they are very successful within the community and even worldwide. MacArthur will usually preach through certain books of the Bible using word studies, explaining passages, describing historically

the setting the passage deals with, but always allowing everything to be built upon propositional truths. MacArthur doesn't use many illustrations but the illustrations included are used as windows to help the listener understand the propositional truth being made.

MacArthur's church is located in California in an area just north of Los Angeles where many post moderns live. The church is made up of all ages, including those who would be considered a part of the postmodern generation.

Chuck Swindoll

Swindoll is pastor of Stonebriar Community Church in Dallas, Texas. Swindoll is considered one of the most well known expository preachers in America. Swindoll preaches narratives, dialogically (biblically), verse by verse, and character preaching. The sermons presented by Swindoll are sprinkled with illustrations and stories to help relate the passage to the present culture. Thousands of people read, listen to Swindoll's sermons on the radio and visit his church weekly for preaching. Swindoll believes in making the message true to the meaning of the text even though it turns out to be very relevant to today and what people are facing today.

Stonebriar Community Church seems to be engaged in ministry at their location. Christ-likeness is exemplified in many of the believers. Just like the church where MacArthur pastors, Stonebriar is not a perfect church, and if asked, Swindoll would probably comment about how it would be wonderful to see more members involved in active living and ministry for the Lord. It seems though they are affecting that community for the kingdom with expository preaching. The church is made up of modern and post-modern Christians.

Haddon Robinson

Robinson is professor of preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Robinson wrote the classic book *Biblical Preaching* which was used by many seminaries in the 80s and 90s for preaching classes. Some schools still use the book for preaching classes. Robinson not only teaches preaching but is a prince of a preacher. It is hard to match up to Robinson's expertise in preaching. Robinson believes that techniques can enhance communication but never should they substitute for the message. Robinson understands the importance of preaching. When Paul was writing the famous letter to the Romans the apostle commented, "I long to see you, that we may impart to you some spiritual gift that you may be established, that is, that I may be encouraged together with you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine" (Rom. 1:11-12 NASB). Paul knew the importance of being with and before others for certain ministries. Paul knew that even an inspired letter would not substitute for preaching, "I am eager to preach the gospel to you . . . who are in Rome" (Rom 1:15 NASB). Robinson's expository preaching consists of coming up with the central thought (CT) of the passage in the biblical setting. Robinson then teaches that one should take the CT and then make it a universal CT. This is where the central thought does not change from the original meaning but is reworded into more of a universal statement where all can understand and it becomes more relevant to them. After the CT is reworded to be universal then it is reworded (usually a combination of the original and the universal) to fit the immediate setting. The original meaning (thought) although reworded at different times never deviates from its original meaning. Robinson's view on preaching is described in these definitions:

Preaching is a living process involving God, the preacher, and the congregation . . . therefore expository preaching is the communication of a

biblical concept (CT), derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its *context* (emphasis mine), which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher (must be alive in him before he can effectively deliver it before the congregation), then through him to his hearers (Robinson 1980:20).

This concept comes from the text and is communicated across centuries. For this to occur those involved (biblical characters, preacher, listeners) must share things in common – language, culture, a world view, communication forms. Robinson states that:

The expositor must pull his chair up to where the biblical authors sat. First, he begins by working his way back into the world of the Scriptures to understand the message. The expositor does not have to be a master of the languages, the history, or the literary forms used by the biblical writers but should appreciate the contribution of each of these disciplines. Second, the truth must be applied to the expositor first. This places the dealing with the preacher at the center of the process. The preacher cannot be separated from the message. The audience does not hear a sermon, they hear a man. Before a man proclaims the message of the Bible to others, he should live with that message himself. Regrettably, many preachers fail as Christians before they fail as preachers because they do not *think biblically* (emphasis mine). Ultimately God is more interested in developing messengers than messages, and since the Holy Spirit confronts men primarily through the Bible, a preacher must learn to listen to God before he speaks for Him. Third, the Holy Spirit not only applies His truth to the personality and experience of the preacher, but that truth must go through him to the hearers. Application gives expository preaching purpose. An expositor thinks in three areas: First, as an *exegete* he struggles with the meanings of the biblical writer. Then as a *man of God* he wrestles with how God wants to change him personally. Finally, as a *preacher*, he ponders what God wants to say to his congregation (Robinson 1980:24-26).

Robinson preaches as an expositor but uses many different forms: dialogical, storytelling, exegetical, narrative, monologue, topical, and expositionally. Many so called expository sermons seemed pieced together by a number of main points that are unrelated to a central thought. Dr. Robinson's sermons may have numerous points within the sermon but all are relating to the central thought in the message. The sermon is

presented in such a way that the message flows in unity from one point to the next never seeming pieced together. Every message Dr. Robinson preaches seem to flow smoothly whether the thought is stated to later be proved or whether the thought is discovered later in the sermon as the sermon builds with each point toward a climax (explanation). Whatever style and method Robinson takes it is an exciting and eye-opening journey. Whether deductive, where the idea appears as part of the introduction and the body explains, proves, or applies it, or inductive, where each new point links to the previous point until the idea emerges in the conclusion and the listeners feel as though they arrived at the idea on their own, Robinson makes sure the message is true to the text and relevant. The sermons are never boring. The messages are presented in such a way that participation from the congregation comes with each sermon as they enter with Robinson into the message as it is preached.

Findings

Each of the proponents chosen to represent traditional expository preaching are similar in that the message prepared and delivered by them is based upon the truth of God as being the message's foundation. Each one is similar with the basic idea for formation of sermon though somewhat different at times in their style of delivery. Each one seems to implement the checklist for Expository Sermons shared in the book by Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* whether consciously or not. The checklist consists of:

- It must be based upon a passage from the Bible. The actual meaning of the passage must be found.
- The meaning must be related to the immediate and general context of the passage.

- The eternal, timeless truths in the passage must be elucidated.
- The truths must be gathered around a compelling theme.
- The main divisions of the sermon must be drawn from the structure of the passage itself.
- Every possible method to apply the truths must be utilized.
- The hearers must be called to obey those truths and to live them out in daily life.

(Vines and Shaddix 1999:31).

Today Expository sermons can come in numerous forms. “Expository sermons used to be based upon the *amount* of biblical material being used, or *where* it was being drawn from – a single verse (textual), passages from different biblical books (topical), or sequential paragraphs through a particular book (expository)” (Sunukjian 2007:13). True expository sermons or as some refer to them as biblical sermons is defined “by *how* the biblical material is treated – that is, faithful to the meaning and flow of the original author and relevant to the contemporary listener” (Sunukjian 2007:13). Sunukjian goes on to say “the purpose of the sermon is not to impart knowledge but to influence behavior – not to inform but to transform. The goal is not to make listeners more educated but more Christlike” (Sunukjian 2007:12). So textual, topical, narrative, and doctrinal can fall under the category of expositional preaching or biblical preaching. Other sermon forms can also involve dialogue whether the preacher is dialoguing with the congregation by talking on behalf of them and their situations and answering with the word of God or whether talking with the audience by asking questions and then giving response from the word of God.

Even though Doug Pagitt is considered by many in the Emerging Movement as one of their premier homileticians, his call for traditional preaching to be replaced by “progressional dialogue” is hard to accept when one sees the importance of expository preaching and the positive effect it has had and is having on society. None-the-less one needs to recognize dialogical preaching and see if and how this style of preaching is affecting the postmodern culture. Some questions to ask in finding out if and how the “progressional dialogical” preaching is affecting the postmodern culture are: “Is dialogical preaching really reaching the postmodern culture with the gospel of Christ? Are people being converted by this style of preaching? Do the people understand what it means to be a Christian? With dialogical preaching, are the postmoderns clearly hearing the absolutes from the Word of God proclaimed? Are the people hearing what the Bible is saying or are they rewriting the Bible with their own opinions? Is this style of preaching creating a real community of believers demonstrating Christ’s way, a different way, before the culture, or are they primarily just dialoguing with one another, sharing opinions, and only blending in with the culture?”

4.2.2 Emerging Preaching

Mark Driscoll

Driscoll is pastor of a growing church in Seattle (Mars Hill Church). He has authored numerous books and seems very knowledgeable. Driscoll was raised Irish Catholic and was converted to Christianity in late 1989. Mark’s church seems to be doing a good job in being church and not just coming to church. The church has grown to over five thousand attendees. Driscoll is mentioned in this paper for a couple of reasons. Driscoll is not the traditional Emerging pastor. Driscoll may preach dialogical at times,

but when he does, it is not what the Emerging Movement classifies as “progressional dialogue.” His is more deductive in that it announces a proposition and then explains it with points. Driscoll frequently uses an overhead projector to help illustrate the points being made during the sermon. It is more of a teaching type of lesson although to stress points He may raise his voice to more than a conversational tone. Driscoll is conservative in his theology and believes in propositional truths being shared. The approach that is taken for the sermon seems to relate more to expositional preaching than dialogical/storytelling. Driscoll uses props and illustrations to help illustrate the points he is making. The sermons are very informative and directional. The church seems to be made up of primarily post moderns. In classifying Driscoll as an Emergent, borrowing the categories from Ed Stetzer, one would probably place him in the *relevant* class. Relevants are those who take the traditional message of Scripture and think of how to make it more relevant to today’s postmodern culture. This usually is best observed in worship, preaching styles, and leadership models (Bock 2009:161).

Dan Kimball

Kimball is pastor of the Santa Cruz Bible Church in Santa Cruz, California. Kimball, is a former youth minister who still relates primary to that age group and the young adults. Kimball has written the book *The Emerging Church*, one of the better books on the Emerging Movement. He seems very organized and intelligent. Kimball would be considered both a *relevant* and a *reconstructionist*. The reconstructionists are generally seen as evangelicals but are dissatisfied with current forms of the church. Reacting against seeker-friendly or purpose-driven contemporary churches they desire to reconstruct the church with more “informal, organic, and incarnational models of

community” (Bock 2000:166). Due to Kimball’s stand on the core doctrines found in the Nicene Creed he could be classified more as a “relevant.” Because of the deconstructional and reconstructional perspective of the church and some of his teachings from the Bible, we will place Kimball in the reconstruction category.

Kimball seems to be basically conservative with core Bible doctrines. His preaching is considered by many to be *dialogical/storytelling*. The time that was spent listening to Kimball preach produced a classification somewhere between dialogical-storytelling-expositional. Kimball loves to use movie clips, art work and other means as illustrations in his sermons. Kimball is more practical than biblical. This is not to say that Kimball does not try to be true to the text. I believe he does. What it does say is that Kimball is taking literally the belief of the Emerging Church that says, “To reach the postmodern one needs to be a dialogical-storyteller with little Bible content.” The Emergents believe that the post moderns are biblically ignorant and therefore one must dumb the message down to reach the culture. Kimball does often take a proposition and expound on it. Most of the preaching is done by way of media. This may be because of his prior ministry with the youth. Kimball seems to be very sincere and well prepared as a preacher. In trying to make the message “so” relevant by using art clips, movie clips, etc the message sometimes is overshadowed and even lost with the illustrations.

Doug Pagitt

Pagitt is founding pastor of Solomon’s Porch in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Pagitt most definitely fits into the *revisionist’s* category. Bock, in *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion Of The Emergent Church Movement*, states that this group is “dissatisfied with the forms of church and argues that new times (postmodern times)

require new approaches, especially as our culture becomes less Christianized in the West and more globalized overall” (Bock 2009:171). Pagitt argues that Christians in the first century were innovative and Christians today need to follow suit making sure we don’t become immovable to the point of not ‘serving the story of God’s action in the world very well’ (Pagitt, Doug and Tony Jones, 2007:77). Pagitt seems to think that propositional preaching comes across as dogmatic, authoritative and ludicrous. He describes Driscoll’s preaching as being “ludicrous assumptions.” The reason Pagitt gives is that Driscoll searches a text for the purpose of correcting others (Bock 2009:162). Pagitt is one who definitely uses the dialogical/storytelling style of preaching. Pagitt has a group who sit on couches and in chairs while he sits on a stool and talks with the listeners. Pagitt tries to initiate discussion by telling a story (biblical or not) or asking a question. The problem with this open ended progressional dialogical/storytelling is that it never arrives at a preestablished conclusion; instead it ends up being an “unexpected and unforeseen” matrix of ideas. There are proper ways to contextualize the gospel message. For example, Paul could issue a scathing condemnation of first-century culture (Rom. 1:18-32), yet address the same culture only to do it in a totally different tone (Acts 17:16-31). The Emergent movement is doing more than trying to contextualize the message, they are recalibrating the message in ways that actually no longer reflect the original message (Bock 2009:172). Pagitt at times illustrates this in his teaching, deconstructing the text and its meaning, and giving it a new meaning, which would be considered by many as biblically incorrect. This seems to be evident in his preaching on Kingdom and Kingdom living. Pagitt has deconstructed terms such as hell, which he reconstructed to no longer mean a literal place. Many of the Emerging community are people who

disagree with the modern way of doing things (in this case church) so they are trying to deconstruct and reconstruct worship, preaching, and the church.

Findings

The Emerging Church leaders talk about their dialogical/storytelling style of preaching as though it is the only style that can reach the post moderns and the only style that is biblical. According to Pagitt monologue preaching (traditional expository preaching style) only came into existence in the last 100 years. Pagitt claims that dialogical preaching was the only style of preaching prior to this time. Pagitt talks about “itinerant preachers” or “evangelists” like Wilbur Chapman, R. A. Torrey, and Billy Graham who went around the country holding meetings in churches and that is when monologue preaching became popular. During the first Great Awakening, such itinerant preachers as John Wesley and George Whitefield existed. In the early thirteenth century itinerant preaching existed in Europe from such groups as the Dominicans and Franciscans. During the early church period a well known non-canonical writing, *Didache*, allowed for traveling teaching. History seems to differ with the hypothesis of Pagitt on when monologue preaching came about (Pagitt 2005:62). History for the last 1900 years has seen, heard, read about, and experienced great preachers of various eras like Chrysostom, Savonarola, Luther, Whitefield, Wesley, Spurgeon, Chapman, Torrey, Graham and others who have all preached to crowds with no obvious evidence of verbal interaction (Barnett, Dissertation, 2007:117).

The dialogical style in preaching may not be new but the progressive dialogical style of the Emerging Church seems to have evolved from what is called the New Homiletic. Clyde Fant in the book, *Preaching for Today* talks of a definite cycle of

preaching that has occurred over the last 2,000 years of history in the area of preaching. The author notes the following stages of occurrence: “search, discovery, excitement, routinization, boredom, and disillusionment” (Fant 1987:30-33). This “routinization” and boredom with traditional preaching methods is believed to have led many preachers to seek out new approaches in homiletics. As a result greater emphasis on the role of the listener was placed in the preaching event. This “New Homiletic” was a movement that focused more on preaching as an event. This movement emphasized that the Bible could become the Word of God but is not inherently the Word of God. In other words the focus was on the listener instead of Revelation as the active agent in the proclamation event. A movement that stemmed from this “New Homiletic” approach was the “seeker-sensitive” movement. Rick Warren and Bill Hybels were two of the main proponents of this movement. Warren developed his message around the perceived of the people. The thought behind this approach was “God desires to reveal Himself to man according to his needs” (Warren 1995:295). Hybel’s perspective on preaching was to start with the listener’s problem and then move them to the text or texts that deal with their problem (Hybel 1988:29-30). The Emerging Church movement with its preaching is a contemporary reaction to the seeker-sensitive movement. Some preachers in the Emerging Church movement are focused on the listener in the preaching event while others see the sermon as a violent act against the will of the people. This view sees preaching as being broken and needing reconstruction. The reconstruction has been demonstrated in the progressive dialogical approach. Pagitt, as one who sees monologue preaching as “a violent act against the will of the people” says, “Preaching is ‘speaching’ and is hardly distinguishable from a one-way speech. Traditional preaching monopolizes

the conversation. The preaching controls the content, speed, and conclusion of the presentation” (Pagitt 2005:11-12). As a result the people are to play a part in the development and delivery of the message. Storytelling and dialogue becomes a medium along with the Bible in preaching. Listeners are elevated to a status of participant in the message.

But in listening to Driscoll, Kimball, and Pagitt speak, the findings were that not any of them was consistent with dialogue/storytelling style of preaching. Even Pagitt at times seems to dominate the worship service with his thoughts about what the passage means rather than allowing the people to formulate their own thoughts about a subject. It becomes at times a preaching (what he calls a speaking) style of delivery. While both Driscoll and Kimball may use more of a speaking style delivery, they both lean more toward expository style of preaching than dialogical/storytelling. They both do most of the talking and explaining. All three heavily rely upon use props in their preaching – overhead film clips, art, commercials, sitcoms, technology from the internet and power points. Kimball at times does so to the point that it could be a distraction. The props used by Driscoll, Kimball, and Pagitt are not used in the same way as illustrations and stories are used by Swindoll and Robinson. With Swindoll and Robinson illustrations smoothly move with the point being made. With Kimball and Driscoll their props are more like teaching props. They don’t seem to be used as smooth transitions from point to story. They seem to be more choppily used throughout the sermons.

4.2.3 Charts (Classifications and Characteristics – Traditional Expository and Emerging Preaching)

CLASSIFICATIONS & CHARACTERISTICS OF EXPOSITORY PREACHERS

	MacArthur	Swindoll	Robinson
Exegetical	+	o	o
Expository	+	+	+
Character Preaching	-	+	o
Narrative/ Story Telling	-	o	+
Dialogue	+	o	o
Use of Stories & Illustrations	o	+	+

KEY: + = Mostly o = Sometimes - = Rarely

CLASSIFICATIONS OF EMERGING PREACHERS

	Driscoll	Kimball	Pagitt
Relevants	✓	✓	
Reconstructionist		✓	
Revisionist			✓

Relevants: Those who take the traditional message of Scripture and are thinking through how to make it relevant to today's postmodern culture in the context of variation in worship and preaching style, as well as leadership models. (Bock)

Reconstructionists: Those who are generally seen as evangelical but are dissatisfied with current forms of the church and have reacted against them. They are seeking to reconstruct the church with more informal, organic, and incarnational models. (Bock)

Revisionists: They are dissatisfied with the current forms of the church and argue that new times (post-modern times) require new approaches. (Bock)

CLASSIFICATIONS & INTERPRETATION OF THE DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS OF EMERGING PREACHERS

	Driscoll	Kimball	Pagitt
Exegetical	o	o	-
Expository	+	o	-
Character Preaching	?	?	?
Narrative/ Story Telling	o	o	?
Dialogue/Story Telling	+	+	+
Use of Stories, Film Clips, Art, & Computer Animation	+	+	+

KEY: + = Mostly o = Sometimes - = Rarely ? = Uncertain

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS OF THE COMPARISON OF THE TWO MODELS OF

PREACHING

It is evident that this postmodern generation is in need of being reached for Christ by the community of believers. In *The Pastor's Manual for Effective Ministry* Win Arn wrote that in the late 1980s, four out of five churches were plateaued or declining (Malphurs 2007:18). Malphurs states that the representation would be 80 percent of America's churches. Malphurs states that Lyle Schaller, a church sociologist, wrote, "An estimated 30,000 congregations ceased to exist sometime during the 1980s" (Malphurs 2007:19). Malphurs goes on to say, "An article in *Ministry* predicted that, of the 350,000 churches in America, as many as 100,000 would close their doors" (Malphurs 2007:19). The number of unchurched people is changing but not the way the church desires to see the change. The unchurched number is growing instead of declining. Malphurs states that pollster George Barna indicates that the number of unchurched Americans has increased 92 percent in the last thirteen years. "Unchurched" are described as "those who are not members of a church or have not attended services in the previous six months other than for special religious holidays, weddings, funerals, or the like" (Malphurs 2007:19). Malphurs goes on to say, "As of March 2005 the Barna Group showed that one-third of all adults, or 34 percent, are unchurched" (Ibid 19). Aubrey shares the percentage of unchurched among different generation groups:

- Builders 1927-1945 46% unchurched
- Boomers 1946-1964 51% unchurched
- Busters 1965-1983 70% unchurched
- Mosaics 1984-2002 62% unchurched

Malphurs continues by saying that Barna research found that 61% of women are churched while only 39% of men are churched. In 2004 a very interesting statistic was brought to people's attention concerning the unchurched. Malphurs states that in a study done by Barna in 2004 "more than one half (54 percent) of unchurched adults considered themselves to be Christians; whereas, in 2000, 11 percent professed to be born-again Christians" (Malphurs 2007:21).

2004 Professing Christians – 54% unchurched

Nonprofessing Christians – 46% unchurched

2000 Born-Again Christians – 11% unchurched

Not Born-Again Christians – 89% of unchurched

Malphurs states that the number of "unchurched Christians or those professing to be Christians is growing, and an increasing number is dropping out of church" (Malphurs 2007:21). In research dated October 10, 2005, Malphurs shares that Barna stated that twenty million unchurched people are Christians. Barna in that report states, "We found that while some people leave the local church and fall away from God altogether, there is a much larger segment of Americans who are currently leaving churches precisely because they want more of God in their life but cannot get what they need from a local church" (Malphurs 2007:21).

Not only does Malphurs state that the number of unchurched people has increased but many cults and religious organizations are growing as well. One group is the Mormons. They have tripled in number from 1,789,175 in 1965 to 5,113,409 in 2001. The Jehovah's Witness is another group that has experienced tremendous growth. From 1988 to 2001 the group increased from 330,358 to 990,340. Islam is another religious group that has increased in number in America. American Muslims have increased 42% from the years 1990-2000. Buddhists also have seen an increase in their number – 109.5% from 1990-2001. Hindus grew 237.4 percent from 1990-2001 and the Wiccans (witches) have grown from 8,000 in 1990 to 134,000 in 2001. That would average out to be a 1,575% increase (Malphurs 2007:23-25).

The Emerging Church is right in that America is becoming post-Christian (now 80% unchurched). They should be commended for seeing this and realizing that the church is not reaching the unchurched in America. They should be commended for being bold enough to step out and not only comment about it but try to do something about it. At the same time their philosophies and approaches to doing church should be tested and examined before accepting them.

For example, the primary premise of the Emerging Church, stated by Hammett in the *Criswell Theological Review* “that churches must change to respond to the postmodern culture” should be thoroughly examined before blindly accepting its premise (Hammett, 2006:35). To examine this premise one needs to start with the question, “Is it accurate to say that churches must change to respond to postmodernism?” This is important to this thesis because if churches need to change to respond to the postmodern culture in order to reach this new generation by deconstructing the way the moderns,

namely traditionals, have been doing church, including preaching, and reconstruct it completely then there are some factors that should be taken into consideration before rashly accepting this premise.

The question that needs to be asked is, “Is America to be completely considered a Postmodern culture?” In other words, “Are there still moderns whom the church should be trying to reach?” From the stats mentioned earlier in this chapter by Malphurs the number of unchurched Americans has increased 92% in the last thirteen years. As of March of 2005 the Barna Group showed that one-third of all adults, or 34%, are unchurched. The unchurched are made up of Builders (46%), Boomers (51%), and Busters (70%) while 62% make up Mosaics (post moderns). Those who attend church on any given Sunday are: Builders (54%), Boomers (49%), Busters (30%), and Mosaics (35%). It appears that America is still in a cultural transition. From this statistic and others it would seem that there needs to be consideration for those who are not labeled of the postmodern culture. Anderson in his book *A Church for the Twenty-First Century* states that “Traditional churches will be one of the major growing segments of the twenty-first century” (Anderson 1992:61).

The claim the Emerging Church is making, “that the Modern (Traditional) church has failed in reaching the postmodern generation by not focusing on their needs” appears to be somewhat misleading. The emergent’s premise seems to represent what some might consider tunnel vision. The premise from the Emerging Church on reaching the culture is somewhat distorted in that it seems to be placing all its “marbles in one basket” when trying to understand and reach the culture. The emergents seem to be leaving out the greatest percentage of unchurched – the moderns.

This would apply to the emerging preaching style. The dominate preaching style of the emerging church is a “progressive dialogical/storytelling” form of preaching. If the majority of people who are unchurched don’t fit into the age of postmoderns, then perhaps there needs to be a re-examination where preaching is concerned. There may be a need for more traditional expository preaching in the churches as opposed to progressive dialogical/storytelling, or perhaps a blending of the two. A preacher would do well in using a variety of preaching styles for reaching a variety of people with mixed cultural needs so as to better cultivate them in Christ.

Another question that needs to be asked is, “Are Emerging Churches, with their style of worship and dialogical/storytelling style of preaching, more effective in reaching the postmodern culture than traditional churches? One claim is that Emerging Churches are deliberately targeting and reaching the postmoderns. But research tells us a different story. Examples reveal that there are churches, not considered to be part of the Emerging Movement, that are effectively reaching their communities which are predominately postmoderns. Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington D. C., classified as a historic church, is composed primarily of those under thirty. The church is located in a city that is deeply influenced by postmodern thought. Another example is Manhattan’s Redeemer Presbyterian Church which is winning thousands of postmodern young people to the Lord with Reformed preaching and worship. Hammett in the *Criswell College Review* speaks of Colleen Carroll Campbell’s study which speaks of “the new faithful,” the young postmodern Americans “who are embracing traditional orthodoxy without postmodern modifications” (Hammett, 2006:36). From these examples emerges a consensus that claims postmoderns are not just attracted to the Emerging Churches with their

dialogical/storytelling style of preaching, that some are drawn to traditional expository preaching. These studies mentioned and others show that some traditional churches still attract postmoderns.

Brain McLaren of the Emerging Movement states that in modern (traditional) evangelical churches “the pressure to have certainty in . . . beliefs; the controlling attitudes of fellow believers; a rigid and legalistic approach to the Christian life; the treatment of the Christian life as a simple formula and others” are some reasons why postmoderns are not attracted to traditional churches. The problem may not be that simple though. The problem may not stem from characteristics of the modern era found in the traditional church. Smith, in his book *Truth and the New Kind of Christian*, states that the problems don’t lie with modernity, nor are they solved by adapting to postmodernity. Smith believes that the problem lies with grace and humility. This is the reason many postmoderns left the traditional church. They were protesting against churches (traditional) that were preaching biblical truths with presuppositions in an unChrist-like way. There was a period where the battle for the Bible and seeker-sensitive programs with anthropological messages dominated many traditional churches. Many in the Emerging Movement left these traditional churches seeking for a more loving, caring, Bible-taught, and Bible-lived (holistic life) community of believers. Their reason for leaving the traditional church was in protest of a church that was not demonstrating Christ-like characteristics. The Emerging Movement seemed to be seeking a church that emphasized community, love of Christ in serving the community, a safe non-judgmental place where people could find support, and worship that engaged the whole person and brought personal healing to the person. Hammett comments in the *Criswell College*

Journal, “What seemed to make the difference was the gospel, expressed clearly in the preaching of the Word and in the lives of those in the church, communicated lovingly and patiently in worship and witness” (Hammett 2006:37). If this is a reason for some postmoderns joining the Emerging Churches or leaving the traditional churches then one must wonder if preaching styles really matter much in reaching the postmoderns. It seems that the reason for many postmoderns leaving the traditional churches might not be as much over the style of preaching as the character and attitude in preaching.

Preaching in the Emerging Movement is claimed to be more God-centered with dialogical/storytelling and numerous activities involved in the worship service. Preaching is no longer considered the main emphasis of the worship service. The Emerging Movement claims that their style of worship creates spontaneity whereas traditional expository preaching follows a more rigid, boring style of monologue in which the preacher alone shares in the message, therefore limiting worship spontaneity.

Sometimes preaching can be boring and one sided. Often this is due to the preacher and the preparation and not the style of preaching or the different emphasis offered in worship such as the many centers in worship to participate in during the worship service. As Michael J. Quicke in his book *360 Degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word* stated, “Put simply, a sermon ‘works’ when God empowers it” (Quicke 2003:44). Stott also states, “Our task is to enable God’s revealed truth to flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of men and women today” (Stott 1982:138). Indeed, if too many things are going on during the service it can easily become a carnival of events promoting confusion instead of a worship service where people worship and glorify God. Spontaneity can be good but is not essential for

worshipping and experiencing God during service. Some postmoderns desire to find churches that offer an atmosphere of spontaneity where the preaching of the word is not the main focus of the service, but it can be dangerous to categorize all postmoderns as having the same mentality and desire about worship.

Some in Emerging Churches claim that traditional expository preaching, where the preaching is done entirely by the preacher, is unscriptural. For example, Quicke (2003) in his book, *360 Degree Preaching*, references the author Norrington as stating that he finds no evidence in Scripture to support the monologue style of preaching that is identified as the contemporary traditional expositional preaching. He locates the origin of that style of preaching in Greek and Roman rhetoric. Norrington believes that following such pagan sources has had dangerous consequences on worship. He talks about how the above mentioned style of preaching has “beguiled preachers into acting like egotistical primadonnas who inevitably induce listeners to become dependent upon them” (Quicke 2003:36). Quick shares how Norrington claims that “monologue sermons without participation fail to develop listeners’ thinking and analytical skills. This type of communication reinforces passivity, fortifies domination by clergy, and fosters immaturity among believers” (Quicke 2003:37). The problem with Norrington and others in the Emerging Movement is in their definition of preaching. Like Pagitt in his book, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, where preaching is called “speaching,” Norrington also describes preaching as speech. What he seems to overlook is Jesus’ preaching (Luke 4), Peter at Pentecost, and Paul’s preaching. As Norrington shared, Greek homily and Latin rhetoric did have an influence on preaching. We see it that in Origen’s and Augustine’s contributions. The thing that Norrington and others seem to overlook or forget is that

preaching has deeper roots than just those from the Greek and Latin influences. Because of these perceived dangerous influences from the Greeks and Latin the emergents claim to continually return to Jesus as the prime example for preaching. One must ask though is their claim always justified interpretatively? We are told in Mark that “after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, saying, ‘The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14-15 NASB). Jesus’ entire three years of public ministry was characterized by preaching. In Luke we are told, “Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God” (Luke 8:1 NASB). Luke uses both *kerysso* and *euangelizo* to describe Jesus’ ministry of preaching. So Norrington and others seem to overlook the deeper roots in preaching which were before the Greek and Latin influences, the roots that were demonstrated in the public ministry of Jesus.

Norrington also views preaching as mere speech. To primarily view preaching as a speech can lead one to down play the “anointing” in preaching. Anointed preaching deals with the leading and controlling of the Holy Spirit in preparation and delivery of the sermon. It is considered the power of God in the preaching event. Too many sermons and worship services today lack the spiritual vitality called “unction.” Unction speaks of “the seal of God, not in word only but also in power.” It is the authentic divine-human encounter (Quicke 2003:40). Forbes claims that when the preacher enters the pulpit to speak, the speaker is making a statement about the Holy Spirit. Forbes continues by saying, “The preaching event itself . . . is a living, breathing, flesh-and-blood expression of the theology of the Holy Spirit” (Forbes 1989:11).

The impression some Emerging Church leaders leave is that preaching is nothing more than a part of a series of events in a service. It is a mere dialogue where people engage with stories and events. Many times the sermon, when viewed this way becomes just a speech, an act of poetry, or a story among many other stories. Pagitt in his book *Preaching Re-Imagined* states, “In many ways the sermon is less a lecture or motivational speech than it is an act of poetry – of putting words around people’s experiences to allow them to find deeper connection to their lives. As we read through sections of the Bible and see how God has interacted with people in other times and places, we better sense God interacting with us. So our sermons are not lessons that precisely define belief so much as they are stories that welcome our hopes and ideas and participation” (Pagitt 2005:10-11). One needs to realize that for the service to become spontaneous, authentic, directive, encouraging, convicting, filled with passion and meaningful it must be divinely controlled. Emerging Churches need to be careful not to view preaching as mere speech or dialogue. Many in the Emerging Church have claimed that traditional preaching has become a mere intellectual challenge, a sermon full of propositions without any life to it. The Emerging Church and the traditional church would do well to view the sermon needs as a divine event.

Preaching in the Emerging Church is described by those in the movement as holistic. The Emerging leaders describe the traditional expository preaching event as a teaching event. The Emerging leaders share that traditional expository preaching is where the preacher appears to have all the knowledge pertaining to Scripture, therefore teaching it to their members who are only listeners and who usually end up being non-participants in the event except when they respond to manipulation from the preacher.

The dialogical/storytelling style of preaching in the emerging churches may use Scripture where a verse or verses of a certain genre or a narrative story from the Bible is shared with their listeners. The sermon illustrations can consist of movie clips, TV shows, sitcoms, commercials and art work that is usually projected onto a screen during the sermon. Many times these illustrations are accompanied by personal stories, trials, or illustrations given by the listeners. During the sermon time it is not uncommon for participation in different elements of worship such as candle lighting, praying, and the Lord's Supper to be experienced by the community of believers with no specific directive or relation to the sermon. They claim this is what the postmoderns respond best to. The emergents believe that each person should be able to experience God the way they feel led to experience the Lord. When this happens the worship is considered a holistic worship. "Instead of shaping belief through instruction and persuasion, the dialogical approach to preaching depends upon the multiple viewpoints of the participants to change the perspectives of others" (Henard and Greenway 2009:288).

The Emerging Church does not seem to think that traditional services for the most part are holistic because the preacher is the only one participating in the service and if any other person participates it is due to manipulation or persuasion. Traditional services with traditional expository sermons can be one-sided. This can also happen in a dialogical/storytelling style of sermon. No doubt the Emerging Church is correct in observing this with some traditional preaching. It happens probably more than it should. To classify all traditional expositional sermons in this light would be like saying all southerners in America are racists. Blanket statements or assumptions are too often emotionally driven instead of factual or thoughtfully considered.

Holistic preaching can be found with emerging preaching as well as with traditional preaching. Holistic preaching does not mean that preaching has to involve the congregation in verbal dialogue or some fashion of storytelling. Holistic preaching is not limited to just one style of preaching as many emergents seem to think. It can be evident in both dialogue and monologue styles of preaching. To be holistic there must be engagement with Scripture energized by Holy Spirit power which generates genuine passion. Forsyth commented that the sermon “is the Word of the Gospel returning in confession to the God who gave it. It is addressed to men indeed, but in truth it is offered to God. Addressed to man but offered to God – that is the true genius of preaching” (Forsyth, 1907:97). Quicke comments that Isaiah the prophet compared God’s word to “the cycle of rain and snow falling from heaven and returning after they have watered the earth and caused seed to grow” (Quicke 2003:49), “So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). Quicke continues by saying, “Preaching flows from God the Father, who addresses us in Scripture and in Christ, through the responses of the preacher and the people, and then back to God in the form of worship, witness, and service. It involves movement through 360 degrees of eventfulness as God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - speaks through His Word and empowers the preacher and convicts the listeners and transforms the lives of the preacher and the listeners. The preaching involves revealing, preaching, listening, and responsive living. Its dynamic, found in God and driven by God, returns to God as individuals and communities are transformed – all within the grace of the Triune God. Preaching is a God happening” (Quicke 2003:49). Holistic preaching involves a preacher with a message

from God, a message that first changes the speaker who delivers it under the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit to a people who participate by listening and are changed by God in their seats or are changed by participating through stories and personal testimonies as they hear the word of God shared. The event does not stop with the service and the sermon. To be holistic the receivers of God's calling must in obedience follow through with His directives. That is holistic worship and preaching. Both dialogical/storytelling and traditional expository preaching can be used by God in holistic worship.

Traditional and emergent preaching, when done well, use illustrations, stories, and other techniques to help in explaining the Scripture. Traditional preaching primarily uses stories and illustrations in explaining a point. Emerging Church leaders use stories and illustrations but also use film clips, movies, sitcoms, commercials, and other technical means to help illustrate a point or help aid in telling a story. The Emerging Church believes that the problem lies in the style of sermons. Most of the traditional sermons, they claim, are propositional using illustrations to help in making their points whereas the dialogical/storytelling sermons use technological clips and testimonies that help tell the story and tell it by means that the postmoderns can relate to.

Once again a problem with the emergents is lumping all postmoderns into one basket. Another problem the emergents need to address is whether the preacher's imagination, creativity, or energy is making Scripture come alive for the hearer or is it the Word of God (Quicke 2003:52)? In other words does Scripture have its own power to energize the preaching event or is it the speaker with his techniques that energizes it? As Quicke states, "Does Scripture's energy depend on what preachers bring to it? Preachers

do need to be called and gifted, but dynamic preaching requires an expectation and commitment to Scripture's own inimitable power: 'All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness' (2 Tim. 3:16), (Quicke 2003:52). Scripture is "God-breathed" which produces an image that "evokes powerful images of blowing wind and moving Spirit" (Quicke 2003:52). Quicke states that "preachers must not only realize that Scripture *says* things but also *does* things – it is 'useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness' (2 Tim 3:16). Scripture has its own practical agenda to create long-lasting change" (Quicke 2003:53). Adam, in his book *Speaking God's Words: A Practical Theology of Expository Preaching*, states, "While current theological debate about Scripture concentrates on its authority, inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy, the New Testament has a different agenda. Its most important claim about Scripture (in this case the Old Testament) is that it is effective" (Adam 1996:89). Quicke also states that "Biblical preachers live and speak in Scripture's power not contriving to make Scripture come alive but coming alive through God, who reveals and relates in Scripture and in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Quicke 2003:54).

Scripture has its own agenda – effectiveness. Does that mean man should not use illustrations and other means to help illustrate or tell the story? Scripture is "God-breathed" but God still chooses to use preachers with their talents and gifts to communicate the truth of the gospel to others. Sometimes man can forget the power of God's communicated word and rely too much on other means in reaching a certain culture. Sometimes messages brought by the emergents can be seen as overly illustrated with very little truth. It would be wise for emergents and traditionalists to remember

whose word they are proclaiming. It is not wrong for preachers to use illustrations and other means to help communicate the truth but they should always keep a proper perspective of the Word of God with its power and authority.

The predominate theme in preaching for the Emergent Church is the “kingdom of God.” This is very noteworthy. Christ came preaching “the kingdom of God.” Jesus announced in His public ministry “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent” (Luke 4:43). He “*must*” (*dei*) preach indicating divine necessity. As Gordon stated in, *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives On Communicating That Connects*, “This was God’s will, the way it had to be! This is why the Father sent the Son into the world. Preaching was the burden of His public ministry” (Gordon 2004:43). Jesus was committed to the message getting out and that is why He also enlisted His disciples to preach in the villages the same message (Luke9:1-2 NASB). Jesus was not just a preacher but one with a message and theme. The message was the “*gospel*” (*euangelion*) meaning “good news.” What was the “good news’ about? The Scriptures tells us that Jesus proclaimed “the *kingdom* of God.” The biblical meaning of “kingdom” is “reign” or “rule.” The “kingdom of God” simply means “the reign of God or the rule of God. Kingdom involves an active, dynamic rule. Kingdom means ‘an act of God, something He does.’” Simply put, “it is about God’s reign.” Gordon states that “Jesus makes a conscious choice to preach the gospel in terms of the reign of God” (Gordon 2004:46). The exact phrase “kingdom of God” is not found in the Old Testament but the idea is repeatedly mentioned. The idea was expressed in the hope that the Israelites had in God Himself coming and bringing “salvation to his people and judgment/destruction to his enemies” (Gordon 2004:46). The “kingdom of God

concept” was understood by most of the first-century Jews. Gordon states, “Jesus never defines the kingdom of God for them, because they all knew what it meant. Jesus contextualized the gospel to first-century Jews in a way that was faithful to the Bible, meaningful to the hearers, and adequate to carry the new developments in the saving work of God” (Gordon 2004:46-47). In other words Jesus came preaching the “kingdom of God” by “going to the people (by means of the incarnation), was faithful to the biblical message, and spoke the message to them in terms they could understand” (Mark 11:10; 15:43; Luke 1:32; 19:11; 22:51; Acts 1:6), (Gordon 2004:48). Jesus used an image widely known and understood during His day but presented it with a new understanding. He took an already understood concept and gave it new understanding. The Old Testament promise was now to be understood by two elements – present and future. Presently the kingdom had come in Jesus’ own person and ministry in history. Secondly, Jesus taught that there was going to be a future complete coming of his kingdom. Gordon states that “this strange, new perspective on the kingdom of God taught that the Old Testament promises could be fulfilled without being consummated. The coming of God’s reign accomplishes his will and purpose in the world. This redemptive rule brings salvation to his people, but judgment to those who fail to ‘repent and believe.’ The kingdom comes in and through Jesus’ public ministry. His preaching of the kingdom was self evidence that the kingdom was indeed present. The kingdom came in part through Jesus’ preaching” (Gordon 2004:49). Ministers of Christ have the responsibility to continue preaching the “kingdom of God.”

Emergents believe that the main message is “the kingdom of God.” The problem with many emergents is that they stress this to the exclusion of other parts of Scripture,

such as the Pauline epistles. They look at the Bible as not one meta-narrative but many mini-narratives. As Gordon (2004) expressed, the kingdom of God was an Old Testament idea as well as the primary preaching of Christ. But the idea does not stop with Christ for the entire New Testament is written with Christ and the kingdom of God in mind. It is not just the teachings of Christ that are submerged with the idea of the kingdom of God. The whole counsel of God contains the teachings of the kingdom in some form or another. Bock shares that some emergents go as far as seeing the traditional church as viewing Jesus as (1) “a medicinal cure to a lethal infection that plagues humanity” (diagnosing and treating the individual and societal sickness called *sin*). The emergents think that the view of the traditional church “relegates Jesus to practical irrelevance in relationship to human social problems. (2) Bock comments on McLaren, one of the leaders of the emerging movement, as saying “While the emerging view sees God’s primary focus as the transformation and salvation of humanity within history, the conventional view offers relatively little hope for history, but rather anticipates its complete destruction and replacement.” (3) Bock further comments that McLaren describes the comparison between the traditional and emerging preaching as one being more holistic (emergent) while the other (traditional) is more dualistic. In other words the emerging viewpoint of holistic preaching “sees individual and society, soul and body, life and afterlife, humanity and the rest of creation as being inseparably related” (Bock 2009:178-79). The dualistic viewpoint of the traditional preaching camp involves human souls and other ‘spiritual’ things in one category and human bodies and other ‘secular’ things in another. Some emergent leaders say this type of dualistic thinking “steers people away from engagement and divides life into a less than productive set of categories” (Bock 2009:178-79). (4)

With the traditional preaching, the elect is emphasized in such a way that the emergents see it as an us-versus-them attitude of elitism, seeking self-interest with little common good. The Emerging Church preaches that God cares about all people, and the special blessing that come to a person or a group is to be shared with for the common good. (5) The preaching of the emergents focuses on God seeking to save individuals from the suicidal machinery of a society driven by a destructive and false framing story whereas the traditional preaching views God as one day destroying the world because of our sin. The emergents say that because of this view toward wrath, there is little effort to see God involved in transformation. (6) In traditional preaching the Emerging Church views a deteriorating history and such deterioration as God's will and plan. This type of perspective leaves man with the one alternative – join God's plan of deterioration instead of seeking to turn it around. The traditional preaching has a different perspective of their preaching concerning wrath and the end times. Just because the world is deteriorating and this is part of God's plan does not mean that there is no hope. Traditional preaching proclaims that the call of God's saints is to be the salt and light in a deteriorating world offering hope – eternal hope in Christ who will come and set up his final rule and reign one day forever. (7) Another view that some emergents take to task with the traditional preaching of the gospel is the titles that are tied to Jesus. For example, the title "Christ," for some emergents such as McLaren believes that traditional preaching presents Him as the "anointed one," referring to His office. For the traditional preaching "anointed" in the Old Testament referred to "prophets" who were anointed, priests who were anointed, and kings who were anointed. Christ for the traditional preacher was the anointed Prophet (Deut. 18:5) the antitype of Moses; the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, a royal

priest (Psalm 110:4); and the anointed Messianic King who shall subdue the nations and bear universal rule (Psalm 2:6). For McLaren and other emergents, “Christ” means “liberating king promised by God.” In other words, follow me and risk everything, including your life. It meant for some emergents standing up to Caesar and joining Jesus in revolution. This revolution did not include fighting and killing, but being willing to die for him. Another title “the Son of Man” involves liberation found in the book of Daniel. It was a life that did not bow even in hostile imperial conditions. In other words Daniel’s concern was how to stand up to imperial power. Similarly in Jesus’ usage where there is the handing over of the kingdom to the saints they are to do as in Daniel’s teaching – stand up to the imperial power, in this case Rome. In traditional preaching the “Son of Man” is a title that not only testifies to His deity but also His incarnation. The title “Lord” for some of the emergents points to Jesus as “the ultimate sir.” They do not believe that it was used to confess Jesus’ divinity. For these emergents it distinguished Jesus from Caesar as the ultimate authority. The last category (7) is where McLaren and other emergents make a key complaint against the Second Coming Jesus who is described in Revelation. When mentioned that He is coming with sword McLaren and others believe it is a description of Jesus conquering not with violence (traditional preaching view) but with a “message of justice” and the “blood on Jesus’ robe” (Bock 2009: 178-80). The message for the traditional preacher concerning Jesus’ return is found in the context in which it was written, Jesus’ return during the midst of bowl, seal, and trumpet judgments. Bock states that Jesus returns at the end in “a word of final and decisive judgment” (Bock 2009:183). Bock states that, “Jesus is not teaching and judging through how the church lives morally from day to day. This teaching by Jesus and the exercise of His authority

takes place in a return that culminates in the righteous vindication of God's people, who to this point have suffered even unto death. However uncomfortable the idea, the Bible does teach that God will make distinctions one day, with some being accepted into His eternal presence and others tragically failing to do so. This judgment is something Christ performs. He executes it in a decisive victory over evil" (Bock 2009:183-84).

The question is have McLaren and other Emerging preachers really caught the heart of Jesus' gospel message – the kingdom of God? The liberation battle of the gospel that Christ preached was not a liberation from Rome. The gospel message was a liberation of the human heart by the Spirit of God. Rome hardly comes up as an exclusive source of critique in the New Testament. It is only used sixteen times with the references being to a location. Rome is used more in the sense of a cipher of what the world is and what the allegiance to Christ requires believers not to identify with. If McLaren is right about Jesus' message being that of resisting Rome and Caesar, then Scripture must contradict Scripture. In Matthew 22:21 Jesus tells his disciples to render to Caesar what is Caesar's. Jesus was also rendered innocent to the charges of Him not paying taxes to Caesar (Luke 23:2). Not only did Jesus acknowledge the authority of Rome but Paul also remarks about not having done anything against Caesar (Acts 25:8-11). First Peter does the same - "Honor the emperor" (1 Peter 2:11-17). Since Scripture doesn't contradict itself for God does not contradict Himself it could be McLaren and others in the Emerging Movement finding it difficult to correctly interpret these passages concerning the teaching of Jesus.

The gospel message clearly shows that the ones Jesus criticized the most were the religious leaders such as the Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees and not the Roman

government. The reason for this was to show that if the ones who were considered to be the most religious people around, oriented to one God in a polytheistic world, could not walk with God then who could. Jesus' message was that there was a fundamental necessity for all people, even the most religious, to realize their absolute need for God. They needed to see that God was the one who provided what was lacking in everyone's life – forgiveness for their sins before God and a fulfilled life in the Lord. God does seem to teach, as do many in the emerging church, that “kingdom living” is to be a continuous line of moral calls and instructions on how to be a better person and live better in this world making the world better by a better way of life. McLaren and others may say that they do not doubt the disease that eats away at us from within – sin (Mark 7:1-23) but they attempt to “reframe it.” The reframing of the gospel message with the emergents happens in a corporate and largely sociopolitical realm. The emergents are right in saying that Jesus did not merely die for sin. Bock states in the book, *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement* that “the challenge of Jesus aims more at religious affections and impure hearts that lead to the formation of destructive structures than at the structures themselves. He gets at the personal cause that leads to the structures themselves” (Bock 2009:182). The message of the kingdom is that Jesus came to reconcile us to God. Jesus' death opens a way to reestablish a broken relationship with God. The traditional preaching of the kingdom of God found throughout the Bible risks being lost in the move to a more sociopolitical Jesus with the emergents. The message of Jesus does include at its ethical level important social implications indicating how the disciples of Christ are to live in light of the gospel. But, this type of message should be included in, not pitted against the traditional message.

Some dangers that the emergents like McLaren and Pagitt need to take note of in their preaching is “mistaking sociopolitical goals as the ends when it is people’s hearts that desperately need what God alone can supply” (Bock 2009:184). Another danger that Bock points out “involves highlighting practice while being too critical of attempts to think precisely theologically” (Bock 2009:184). At the same time the traditional preachers who think theologically should consistently be examining their heart when preaching. There should always be an attitude of humility. Finally, Bock states, “‘Emergents’ desire to shy away from theological affirmation beyond some of the most basic Christian claims” should be examined and corrected (Bock 2009:185). Some emergents have forsaken the basic Christian claims by replacing them with a postmodern mindset. For instance Smith in his book *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* states, “The postmodern theologian says, ‘We can’t know that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The best we can do is *believe*. Why? Because to know would mean being certain. We know that such certainty is an impossible dream, therefore, we actually lack knowledge. We don’t know; we can only believe, and such faith will always be mysterious and ambiguous. But this isn’t a bad thing; quite to the contrary, it is liberating and just. It is precisely when we think we know something about God that we start erecting boundaries and instituting discipline” (Smith 1993:155). The emphasis that emergents are placing on their preaching and Christian walk is one of faith. But faith in what? What some scholars call “hard postmodernists” (*hard* is describing the postmoderns who set modern/postmodern polarity in sharpest antithesis) believe that we cannot *know* that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. They tell us that the best we can do is *believe*. Carson

in his book *Christ and Culture Revisited* states, “The harder the postmodernism, the more absolute the claim, and the more internally illogical it is. If the postmodern theologian knows that such certainty is impossible, he or she must know it *certainly*. But that means certain knowledge is not impossible after all. On the other hand, if the postmodern theologian merely misspoke, and merely *believes* that such certainty is impossible, then perhaps he or she is mistaken” (Carson 2008:107). Traditional preachers can acknowledge that there is certainty in relative terms and at the same time be able to distance themselves from implicit claims to omniscience. Carson states that:

Biblical writers were not embarrassed to talk about truth, including propositional truth. They were not hesitant about knowing people, knowing God – and knowing things and knowing truths. When Luke introduces his Gospel, he tells Theophilus that he is writing ‘that you may *know the certainty of the things you have been taught*’ (Luke 1:4 emphasis added). After his resurrection, Jesus presented himself to (his disciples) and gave *many convincing proofs* that He was alive’ (Acts 1:3). My point is that they can talk about faith and truth, about believing and knowing. Clearly this knowing is not the knowledge of omniscience; the ‘certainty’ that Luke wants Theophilus to enjoy is not the certainty that belongs to God alone. But it is entirely appropriate to the modes and extent of knowing of which human beings are capable (Carson 2008:108).

Paul asserts that faith without a true object is pitiful asserts. As with some emergents faith has become somewhat mysterious and ambiguous. There is nothing wrong with faith being mysterious if it has to do with true faith. It must be recognized as a gift from God also (Ephesians 2:8). Are there ambiguous elements for the Christian? One might consider faith ambiguous when one trusts in God and His Word even when they cannot see what is ahead. But emergents must remember that in the Bible it is right to trust God with your future. We do this not because of what we do not see or know but because of what we have come to know of our God. Carson (2008) states:

Faith enables us to have confidence in God where we do not *see*, because it is grounded in the immutable character of God that we have come by grace to perceive as utterly reliable. The character of God is found in not only narratives but propositions taught throughout the Word of God. Propositions as some emergents see as unacceptable for reaching a postmodern culture is maybe just what the postmodern culture either desires to hear or needs to hear or both. Propositions are not to be pit against the biblical narrative, but that the sweeping narrative includes propositions that cannot be ignored by appealing to the narrative.

For example Carson shares that “McLaren is inclined to say that Jesus is the truth, and thus the truth is personal and relational. That is one way that truth is used by one New Testament writer. But that same writer nevertheless uses “truth” and related terms to refer as well, and more commonly to *propositions*” (Carson 2008:104). In the book *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement* Bock quotes McLaren as saying, “Believe this good news, and defect from all human imperial narratives, counternarratives, dual narratives, and withdrawal narratives. Open your minds and hearts like children to see things freshly in this new way, follow me and my words, and enter into this new way of thinking” (Bock 2009:180). The question one needs to ask is where are the emergents like McLaren leading? It is not wrong to desire reaching a culture that seems in some ways opposed to authoritative preaching, absolutes, meta-narrative, propositions, and truth. But in reaching the culture the Bible, God’s Word should never be compromised. In trying to reach a postmodern culture both traditional and emergent preaching should not compromise with the culture by doing away with absolutes. Chapell states that “the secular conclusion of today’s culture is that peace will come between all people – not with the end of all religion but with the *blend* of all religion” (Chapell 2004:61). Chapell goes on to quote Daniel Clendenin, “For two hundred years Christians have defended their worldview against the attacks of atheism

that argued all religions are false. How ironic that now we face the opposite extreme, a theological pluralism that claims all religions are true” (Chapell 2004:61). One might wonder what has caused this dilemma. Chapell shares that “the causes of the current acceptance of religious pluralism parallel the intellectual and technological advances of Western culture. The Reformation movements that freed the church from accommodations to medieval culture, materialistic values, and monarchical control faced new challenges in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Seeking the endorsement and following the methodology of Enlightenment thought, the church unwittingly adopted many of the influences of surrounding culture. The progeny of these adoptions were the ‘Christian’ philosophies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who made science the arbiter of Scripture and declared the independence of nature and humanity from divine first causes. This absence of the necessity of the divine in modern thought, however did not rob the culture of religiosity” (Chapell 2004:62). Chapell comments on what G. K. Chesterton once said about a people who deny the God of Scripture. Chapell quotes Chesterton’s observation that states, “People who deny the God of Scripture will *not* believe nothing – they will believe anything” (Chapell 2004:62). This is seen with the rise in number in spiritism, the pursuits of transcendental consciousness, New Age explosion, cults, and other world religions. These amalgamated forms of faith have not come about merely as a product of political and philosophical movements. “Advances of transportation and communication technologies (accelerated by world wars and global markets) in the twentieth century has compressed the world’s people into a global village” (Chapell 2004:62). This village has brought about new thinking among the Westerners. A thinking that makes it impossible “to think of other people or their

religions as disembodied abstractions” (Chapell 2004:62). Chapell goes on to say that “Cultural intolerance of bigotry and discrimination, personal qualms against pride and insensitivity, and the simple need to live together are making our culture more and more resistant to religious claims that privilege any truth having potential to separate or infuriate people” (Chapell 2004:62). The Emergent Church’s claim that traditional churches and preaching failed in reaching out to the culture and influencing them by kingdom living is partially true. The modern church (traditional with expository preaching) significantly yielded to the cultural displeasure by becoming religiously exclusive. The traditional turned inward, becoming more concerned about defending the Bible and less concerned about living the Bible before others. The attitude demonstrated itself as “who cares we have all the answers” instead of one of humility and love. It has appeared to be exclusive at times. This was not true for all traditional churches. But with saying that the relativistic orthodoxies of the late-twentieth-century mainline denominations can be summarized as Chapell says by the Vancouver statement of the World Council of Churches – “In the end the great communities of faith will not have disappeared. None will have ‘won’ over the others. Jews will still be Jews; Muslims still Muslims; and those of the great Eastern faiths, still Buddhists or Hindus or Taoists. Africa will still witness to its traditional life view; China to its inheritance. People will come from the east and the west, the north and the south, and sit down in the *kingdom of God* (emphasis added), without having first become ‘Christians’ like us” (Chapell 2004:63). Chapell states that “John Paul II repeatedly endorsed *semina Verbi*, seeds of the Word, a teaching of Vatican II that allows for the salvation of people in non-Christian religions who profess a respect for their Creator without acknowledging Christ as their

Redeemer” (Chapell 2004:63). With pressures from without (tolerance) and pressures from within (families and friends to be kind and all inclusive) difference in religions have come to not really matter. Some evangelicals (almost a third of all evangelicals believe that good Muslims and Hindus will go to heaven) as well as some emergents are accepting the thought that “we all worship the same God. We are just arriving in the kingdom of God by different beliefs and ways.” This belief has to do with “an ancient *filioque* controversy over denial of the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son of God. By denying this it allows persons the possibility of saving truth and grace apart from the work of Jesus Christ” (Chapell 2004: 64).

The problem is evident in, but unfortunately not limited to, emergent preaching. It is also found in some evangelical traditional churches, perhaps less noticeable in the traditional evangelical churches and especially in their preaching, but it is still there. Both emergents and traditional evangelicals must guard against listening to the cry of the culture for determining what is true and what is not Christian. Instead, both must find what God says to be true. Does the Bible expect such distinctions to be made? The monotheism of the Israelites was consistently at odds with polytheism of other nations like Egypt, Canaan, Assyria, and Babylon. Did God feel an obligation to answer the cries of the priests of Baal in their duel with Elijah? No, not even if they were sincere in their intents and worship (1 Kings 18). Daniel respected the king he served and did his job well, yet refused to bow to him as a god. Was he unloving in refusing to worship the king? Was he wrong in testifying of his belief and service to the Most High God? Is the situation taught any differently in the New Testament? The situation does not change in the New Testament. Was Peter wrong when he pointedly confessed Christ’s unique

divinity at Caesarea Philippi in the presence of Christ and before the shadow of the great shrines of Roman polytheism (Matthew 16)? When in Ephesus, a cultural melting pot of the ancient world for many things including bizarre cults and organized religions, did Paul back away from telling the elders of the Ephesian church that Jews and Gentiles were required to turn to God in repentance and have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ if they were to experience the kingdom of God (Acts 20:21)? In Acts 17:24 Paul stood on Mars Hill and gestured to the sacred Acropolis of the Greeks gods and said, “The God who made the world . . . does not live in temples built by hands.” In other words the gospel message of the kingdom of God that was echoed throughout both Old Testament and New was, “Christ alone was the hope of all races” (Eph. 2:11-22) and “He was the only true Lord for human salvation despite the claims of others” (Gal. 1:6-9; Isa. 45:14-25), (Chapell 2004:65-66). Chapell goes on to say, “Proclaiming the message of eternal salvation in Christ alone unquestionably evidences undiluted arrogance, gross insensitivity and religious bigotry – *unless the message is true* (emphasis added). The determination of whether evangelical traditional preachers or emergent preachers who proclaim salvation through Christ alone are guilty of religious bigotry or are admirable of religious altruism hinges entirely on the question of *the truth of their message* (emphasis added). That question Jesus answers with clarity: ‘I am the way the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me’ (John 14:6 NASB). The apostles faithfully maintain this message: ‘Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved’ (Acts 4:12 NASB). Through our Lord’s Word He makes it clear that the kingdom of God can only come about in a person’s life by salvation in Christ and He alone. In our teaching on the kingdom of God

it is important to appreciate why Jesus was not only followed as a teacher but was worshiped with the Father. Pagitt in his book *Preaching Re-Imagined* states that our preaching “ought to be judged by their effects on our communities.” The way this is to happen according to Pagitt is to abandon traditional preaching. The main reason for abandoning traditional preaching is due to the employment of *knowledge* (emphasis added) as the agent of transformation. Pagitt continues by saying, “I have become convinced that our misguided belief that life change can come through proper knowledge acquired through education has failed to produce the kind of radical commitment to life in harmony with God and the way of Jesus that we are called to . . . I truly believe progressional dialogue is necessary to move people into fuller, richer lives of faith. People’s lives are not changed by information they get. Lives are changed by new situations, new practices, and new ways of experiencing the world” (Pagitt 2005:21, 163). Pagitt and other emergents need to understand that Christ came preaching “the Kingdom of God.” Christ taught by personal example and by message. He preached for change in people’s lives which depended solely upon the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit as the changing agents.

PREACHING STYLE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

	TRADITIONAL EXPOSITORY PREACHING		EMERGING DIALOGUE/ STORYTELLING PREACHING	
	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
Styles of Preaching	Variety (Expository – Exegetical, Expository, Narrative, Topical, Character Preaching, Dialogue)	Mostly Expository and Propositional	Dialogue, Storytelling	Not enough variety
Usage of Illustrations	Personal/generic word used illustrations. Blends well with sermon points. Helps to illustrate or reinforce points made in sermon.	Very little technology use	Uses technology which is familiar to postmodern generation.	Often too much technology is used. Makes the presentation choppy, more like a teaching classroom presentation. Takes away the emphasis of the Message in Word.
Homiletical Presentation	Demonstrates a need to be true to text. Brings the message of the writer over into the contemporary culture without reconstructing its message.	Can become too informational	Attempts to involve the listener, their life, and their experiences into the message.	Too much involvement from the listeners and their experiences can distort and rewrite the message.
Message Focus	Message concerns the kingdom of God.	Sometimes becomes more about the kingdom than living the kingdom.	Emphasis on the kingdom of God	Kingdom of God is incomplete and misconstrued at times.
Preaching That Connects	Does not limit its message to one culture age.	Needs to be more informed about post modern culture.	Reaches out to the post modern culture	Limits itself primarily to the post modern culture

**TRADITIONAL EXPOSITORY
PREACHING**

Strengths

Weaknesses

**EMERGING DIALOGUE/
STORYTELLING PREACHING**

Strengths

Weaknesses

Message Perspective	More Christological in approach	Needs to be aware of the needs of the people	Tries hard to understand the needs of the people	Becomes too anthropological
Explanation	Uses Biblical terminology	Sometimes assumes audience is knowledgeable of the terminology	Tries to communicate in language that post moderns understand	Deconstructs and reconstructs words and sometimes passages to mean something other than what was intended
Sermon Focal Point	Focal point is that preaching is the Word of God	Sometimes the importance of the entire worship service is not demonstrated	Recognizes other parts of the service can be a contribution to the service	Message becomes one of many parts in the worship service taking away from the focal point of the Word of God
Effects of Preaching Delivery	Primary message is propositional truths that teach discipleship	Sometimes message becomes dualistic-holy versus secular	Tries to involve the whole life – holistic	Holistic and missional living without propositional truths can produce socio-political living.
Preaching That Makes A Difference	Understands that the Holy Spirit must be in the making of the sermon and the preacher and the people for it to be effective	Sometimes preaching becomes just a teaching time	Understands the message needs to go out into the world	Views the sermon as a speech.
Preaching in View of Scripture	Has a high view of Scripture. Believes that Scripture is God's infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of God	Sometimes Scripture instead of God becomes the main focus.	Tries to involve the whole story from the fall of man to present day.	The intent of the writer of Scripture cannot fully be understood by modern culture, so the story must be re-written by the culture.

CHAPTER SIX

A MODEL FOR EXPOSITORY PREACHING IN THE TRADITIONAL EVANGELICAL CHURCH FOR POSTMODERN CHRISTIANS

This dissertation has sought to offer an informative, semi-comprehensive description of the Emerging Movement with its preaching as compared to the traditional evangelical church and its preaching. In doing so, there has been an attempt to evaluate some of the characteristics of preaching in the Emerging Church with that of expositional preaching in the traditional Evangelical church therewith comparing the characteristics of both models with respect to the needs of the post-modern generation.

Chapter one defined and described the diverse movement (EC movement) that arose within Protestant Christianity due to a reaction to modernism in Western Christianity. Chapter two provided a literature study consisting of research information such as definitions and analysis from books and articles from a diversified group of people. Also included in this chapter is a section on preaching with characteristics consisting within the different styles – emerging style and expositional style. Chapter three contained the methodology of the interpretation of practice of the two church models and their preaching with charts, definitions, and descriptions, comparing the modern and postmodern movement's characteristics and values, purposes, and homiletics of the movements. Findings of the comparison of the two models of preaching are discussed in chapter four with a discussion as to what extent has preaching in the emerging church differed from that of expositional preaching in the traditional Evangelical church and what success have both had, if any in reaching the postmodern

culture. Chapter five contained a critical analysis of the homiletics in both the emerging church and the traditional evangelical church.

The reason for this work is in response to the many Emerging church leaders who claim that the Bible is not viewed the same way it once was; therefore, there needs to be a rethinking as to how one should go about preaching and communicating the gospel. The emerging church leaders are proposing that there needs to be a new way of describing, defining, and defending the gospel if the postmodern age is to be reached.

In evaluating both the Emerging church, its preaching, and its effects, and the traditional Evangelical church, with its preaching and effects this chapter (chapter six) will propose for the traditional Evangelical church with its expository preaching style what is necessary to effectively preach to postmodern congregation with their needs. The proposal will contain suggestions for implementing expository preaching for multiple cultures within a church in the postmodern era.

The expository preaching model for postmodern Christians will be compared to an analogy of American football. The analogy will demonstrate that in football there are certain fundamentals that must be taught, learned, and practiced before a team will be successful. Also, it must be understood that though there are multiple plays used in American football, these numerous plays all contain certain basic elements for success. Likewise, all forms of preaching should contain certain basic elements and fundamentals for successful results to occur.

Hirsch (2006), in his book *The Forgotten Ways*, shares a story about a seminar he attended on the missional church. He relates a story where the speaker asked the question “How many Christians do you think there were in the year 100?” The speaker goes on to

share that there were about 25,000 Christians in the year AD 100. The speaker followed that question and answer with another question, “How many Christians do you think there were just before Constantine came on the scene around AD 300?” The answer was “as many as 20,000,000 Christians.” Those questions and answers were amazing but the one question that really haunted Hirsch was “How did they do this?” According to Hirsch before Mao Tse-tung took power and tried to extinguish Christianity from China, there were about 2 million adherents. When he died and the Bamboo Curtain was lifted in the early 1980s, to many foreign missionaries’ surprise, the count of Christians had flourished to over 60 million believers. Hirsch then asks the question, “How could this have happened?” Hirsch describes phenomenon that happened in these dangerous stories as the “Apostolic Genius (the built-in life force and guiding mechanism of God’s people), and the elements that make it up – mDNA (missional DNA)” (Hirsch 2006:20). Hirsch continues by stating, “Persecution drove both the early Christian movement and the Chinese church to discover their truest nature as an apostolic people. Persecution forced them away from any possible reliance on any form of centralized religious institution and caused them to live closer to, and more consistently with, their primal message, namely the gospel. This persecution, under the sovereignty of God, acted as a means to keep these movements true to their faith and reliant on God – it purified them from the dross and any unnecessary churchly paraphernalia. It was *by being true to the gospel* (emphasis mine) that they unleashed the power of Apostolic Genius” (Hirsch 2006:20-21). Hirsch continues by saying that he is convinced that the same power that manifested itself during those dangerous stories is also available to us today. The awakening of that power has something to do with “the strange mixture of the passionate love of God, prayer, and

incarnational practice” (Hirsch 2006:21). Hirsch shares six simple but interrelating elements of mDNA, forming a complex and living structure:

- *Jesus is Lord*: At the center and circumference of every significant Jesus movement there exists a very simple confession.
- *Disciple Making*: This involves the irreplaceable and life long task of becoming like Jesus by embodying his message. This is perhaps where many of our efforts fail.
- *Missional-Incarnational Impulse*: This is the exploration of the twin impulses of remarkable missional movements, namely, the dynamic outward thrust and the related deepening impulse, which together seed and embeds the gospel into different cultures and people groups.
- *Apostolic Environments*: This is the apostolic influence and the fertile environment that this creates in initiating and maintaining the phenomenal movements required to sustain metabolic growth and impact.
- *Organic Systems*: This explores the next element in mDNA, the idea of appropriate structures for metabolic growth. Phenomenal Jesus movements grow precisely because they do not have centralized institutions to block growth through control.
- *Communitas, Not Community*: These are communities that come together and define themselves as a group with a mission that lies beyond themselves – thus initiating a risky journey. Too much concern

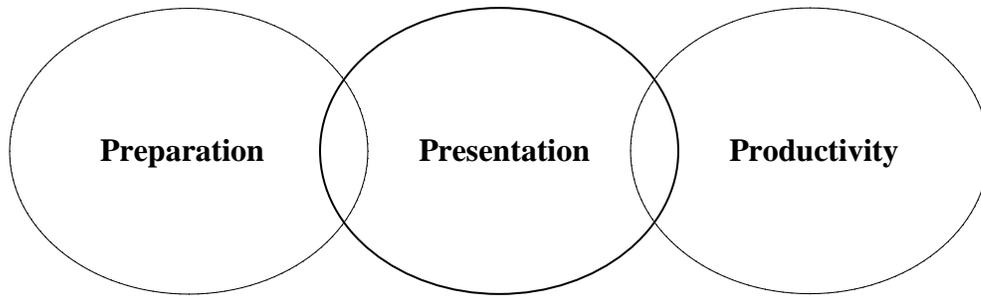
with safety and security, combined with comfort and convenience, has lulled us out of our true calling and purpose.

Hirsch has offered six basic sources (Apostolic Genius) from which all elements (mDNA) should function in order to operate properly within the church. In essence Hirsch is shedding all the unnecessary baggage and getting back to some basics that allow God to work according to His power, by His grace, and for His glory.

Similar to Hirsch and his analogy with the Apostolic Genius and mDNA, this chapter will propose a model for expository preaching in reaching the postmodern Christians' needs by using an analogy of American football. The analogy of football will be used with the intent to help identify the three basic areas in which preaching operates, as well as the basic characteristics that should be evident for making the preaching of the traditional evangelical church effective for ministering to the postmodern Christian audience and their needs.

In American football, there are three basic areas to recognize, understand, and implement for success to happen. These areas involve: (1) Preparation/Practice, (2) Presentation/Game Day, and finally (3) Productivity/Results, Outcomes, and effects.

Just as in football, preaching has three basic areas to be recognized and adhered to if success is to occur. These areas involve: (1) Preparation – Spiritual (personal) Formation, Prayer and Proper Study, (2) Presentation – Preaching/Worship, and finally (3) Productivity/Results – Changed Lives (incarnational).



AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Preparation/Practice

Preparation is a time when coaches and team members prepare for success. There are a number of basic things that must to be taught, discovered, understood, learned, developed, and incarnated if a team expects to be successful. Some general activities evident in the preparation period:

- Weight Training - Players not only get stronger and bigger but learn the importance of being in shape.
- Proper Equipment – Players need the proper equipment to play the game.
- Proper Understanding – Players need to be taught both the basics and their roles in the game. This is done by way of films, dry boards, or over head projection where the coaches teach the players what is expected of them. Players are taught their positions and what is required of them when playing their positions. It is also a time when they are taught plays which the team will run during game time. There are ten basic **offensive** plays from which all other plays develop (five running plays and five passing plays). The basic running plays are: (1) The dive play which includes off tackle, and Quarterback sneak. (2) The draw play which is similar to the

dive play. (3) The Counter/Misdirect play which deals with changing directions. (4) The sweep which involves outside running. (5) The option (options deal with who is to run the ball – quarterback or running back) is considered the last of the five basic running plays. The five passing plays are: (1) Play action pass, (2) Go pattern (3) Down and Out/In pattern, (4) Flag pattern, and (5) Screen pass. On **defense** there are three basic things to learn: (1) Everyone on defense is responsible for someone on the offensive side. (2) Gap control (closing down running lanes), and (3) Closing down passing lane. Three basic ways – zone play, man to man, and a combination.

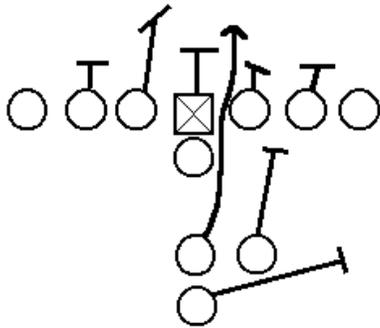
- Practice on the field – This is when the coaches have players get in certain groups for running, blocking, ball handling, passing-receiving, punting, field goals, and tackling. In practice players come together to execute the plays by scrimmaging (offense against defense).
- Exercise and sprints – Before and at the end of practice is usually when this happens.

(Edelstein 2010:2-3).

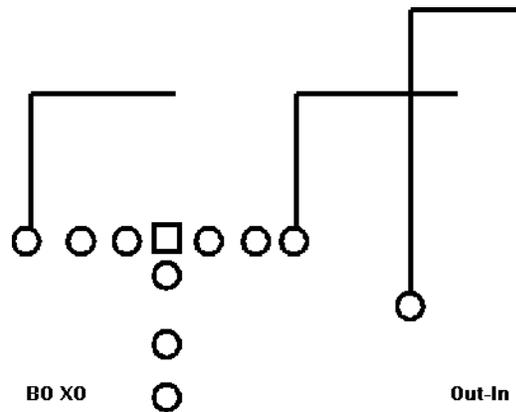
Two offensive examples are listed below - one running and one passing play - to illustrate the concept that from two basic plays on offense all other offensive plays are developed – Running and Passing. Below are the two examples - (1) Running (Dive) and (2) Passing (Down and Out/In):

Dive Running Play

32 Dive



Down-and-out/in Passing Play



In looking at all the play books of football on formations and schemes one would think that they could never learn everything needed to play and win. These formations and schemes may sometimes change seasonally, due to personnel, and to the circumstances they face. No matter how complicated a playbook may seem, underneath all the complications are the basics. No team will win consistently unless the fundamentals are present. Of all the basic fundamentals that are required for a team to operate and consistently be successful, these must be present – blocking, tackling, running, passing, covering, and kicking. Learning plays is important but only as important as having the basic fundamentals of blocking, tackling, running, passing, covering, and kicking down. Playing the game well requires these basic fundamentals. When players are comfortable with these basics, they can perform well. These basics become a part of their performance. Teams and fans begin to visualize the learning and preparation stage as they are actualized in the team's presentation (performance) and

eventually in their progressive season (weekly productivity). Subsequently, the team will be recognized as an authentic contender. Other teams try to imitate the team and its success. Players begin to develop into more than just athletes. They become athletes with character, confidence, and hope. In other words the basics become incarnational.

Like American football, for preaching to be successful it must consist of certain fundamentals. Football teams will line up in various formations thus confusing opponents. Basics must be relied upon. Different cultures and times may confuse the preacher. In trying to reach that culture in that age, the preacher may be informed that certain things must change if the culture is to be reached. Confusion, compromise, and frustration can occur when attempting to change and conform to the culture. The preacher must never let the culture's needs override the fundamentals in preaching. In relation to the postmodern culture, fundamentals should be implemented in the adopted form of preaching in order to reach the postmodern Christians.

Some emergents believe traditional evangelical expository preaching is outdated and in-effective for postmodern culture. As in football where some play designs may need "fine tuning" or adjusting a bit to relate to the needs of the opponents, so it can be with preaching to different cultures. But if there are any adjustments to be made these adjustments should never deviate from the basics.

Arthurs (2004) in the book *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating That Connects* edited by Scott Gibson comments that "people of the modern generation and people of the postmodern generation (and for that matter people of the premodern generation) are more similar than dissimilar. The essential qualities that define humanity have not changed and presumably will not change. We are created in the

image of God, yet we have fallen. We are created to fellowship with God, yet we make idols to try to fill the God-shaped vacuum in our lives. All of us need to repent and accept by faith the grace offered in Jesus Christ. Our real needs have not changed nor has the gospel, the solution to our needs. The Word has power to convict (Heb. 4:12), convert (1 Peter 1:23), and transform (John 17:17) people of all times and places, and our job is simply to herald it. In many ways, postmodernism is simply an extension of modernism. Thomas C. Oden calls it ‘ultra-modernism’ – modernism which has born fruit and gone to seed. Modernism was characterized by humanism, individualism, and anti-authoritarianism, and these ‘isms’ have not waned in postmodernism. Postmodernism also reasserts some premodern ideas. Two examples are Protagoras of Abdera (481-411 BC) who said, ‘man is the measure of all things’ and Gorgias of Sicily (485-380 BC) who said, ‘nothing exists; if anything does exists it cannot be known; if it can be known, it cannot be communicated’” (Arthurs 2004:177-178).

Does this mean that cultural changes in North America have not occurred and that we should not pay any attention to such thoughts as that? No. In his book *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church*, Reggie McNeal asserts that “the current culture in North America is on life support. It is living off the work, money, and energy of previous generations from a previous world order.” He maintains that “the death of the church culture as we know it will not be the death of the church. The church that Jesus founded is good; it is right. The imminent demise under discussion is the collapse of the unique culture in North America that has come to be called the ‘church’” (McNeal 2003:1). McNeal calls the church culture today in North America “an institutional expression of religion that is part a civil religion and in part a club where religious people

can hang out with other people whose politics, worldview, and lifestyle match theirs” (McNeal 2003:1). McNeal also states that “a growing number of people are leaving the institutional church for a new reason – to preserve their faith” (McNeal 2003:1). In other words, the institutional church is no longer contributing to their spiritual development. McNeal believes that “the postmodern world will demand a new church expression, just as did the rise of the modern world” (McNeal 2003:5). The author also believes that there is a new reformation on the horizon, that of recapturing the mission of the church as God designed it, or getting back to the basics as God designed them. The same is true with preaching. If the traditional evangelical church with its expository preaching is to be effective, it must make sure the basics are being implemented.

Long, one of the editors of *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice: A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy*, states that “the main purpose of the book is to call for a change in how Christian preaching is taught today. We are not talking merely about the kind of change that routinely occurs in homiletics, that is the constant search for new teaching techniques, innovative ways to employ the latest electronic media, or fresh pedagogical exercises designed to nurture styles of preaching currently in vogue. Changes of this sort are nothing new in the homiletics classroom. Rather, we are talking about a change that is deeper than surface alterations to the syllabus or to classroom teaching techniques. The ministry of preaching should be understood as a Christian practice and that the whole task of teaching preaching be reenvisioned from this perspective.” (Long & Tisdale 2008:3). The definition highlights certain key elements of preaching: (1) A practice is a *constellation of action*. In other words preaching involves actions such as sermon preparation, sermon structure, sermon delivery, and sermon

reception. (2) The actions of a practice have been *performed over time*. Long is emphasizing that preaching is not new. It has been done over a period of time, and valuable insights can and should be gained from the past. (3) The actions of a practice are *common*. The context of Christian preaching always occurs in Christian community. That means that preachers should shape their sermons to fit the immediate context in which they are speaking. (4) A practice is *meaningful*. Preaching is not an act of just talking about the message and its theology; it must embody the teachings. Preaching does not just consist of technical matters; it must have meaning. (5) A practice is strategic and purposeful. Preaching is for hearers to hear the word of God and come into an encounter with the living God where they are called to a closer walk with God, and where they respond to God's calling – discipleship (Long & Tisdale 2008:11-14). Long is saying that preaching consists of preparation and presentation, but also needs to involve practice (being - incarnational). All the basics of preaching are needed, but the one neglected, the one highlighted in the chapter written by Long, is “practice.”

Keifert, in the book *We Are Here Now (A New Missional Era): A Missional Journey of Spiritual Discovery*, states “that the question of faithfulness is not past vs. future but finding a useable past for our faithfulness to God's preferred and promised future” (Keifert 2006:66). In other words, stay with the basics which have and will glorify God and adapt them to the culture you are in. With football it would be staying with the basic fundamentals and plays and adapting plays to penetrate your opponents. In preaching it would be taking the fundamental message and making it relevant to the congregation and culture you are addressing, without compromising its intended meaning. The analogy of football breaks down somewhat at this point because the

congregation is not considered by the preacher as the opponent. Due to analogy purposes the congregation in its culture will be identified in that way in this chapter for illustrative purposes.

Tisdale, in *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice – A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy*, states in the chapter “Exegeting the Congregation” that there are some basic universal needs all preachers can rely upon whether change takes place in location, time, or culture. The author shares that James A. Wallace identifies “three hungers that homilies seek to satisfy: a hunger for wholeness, a hunger for meaning, and a hunger for community and belonging.” Tisdale states that Craddock believes “that all listeners long to be brought into the presence of God, long to be reminded that they are the ‘crowning achievement of God’s creation,’ and long to find a place to stand ‘that feels like home’” (Tisdale 2008:79). Tisdale believes these universals can comfort the preacher by assuring the messenger that there are some basics to build upon no matter how diverse the congregation may be, or in what culture the speaker may be speaking. It is important to know and practice the basics in preaching no matter what the culture may look like.

This chapter stresses the need for basics, the foundations for preaching to be present for the message to be effective in this postmodern culture or any culture. Some questions concerning the basics need to be addressed first. What are the basics of preaching that are analogized with the basics in football for preaching to be effective? What are the basics of traditional expository preaching for it to be effective for postmodern Christianity? What is the model for expository preaching in the traditional evangelical church that is needed to reach postmodern Christian needs? Is there such a

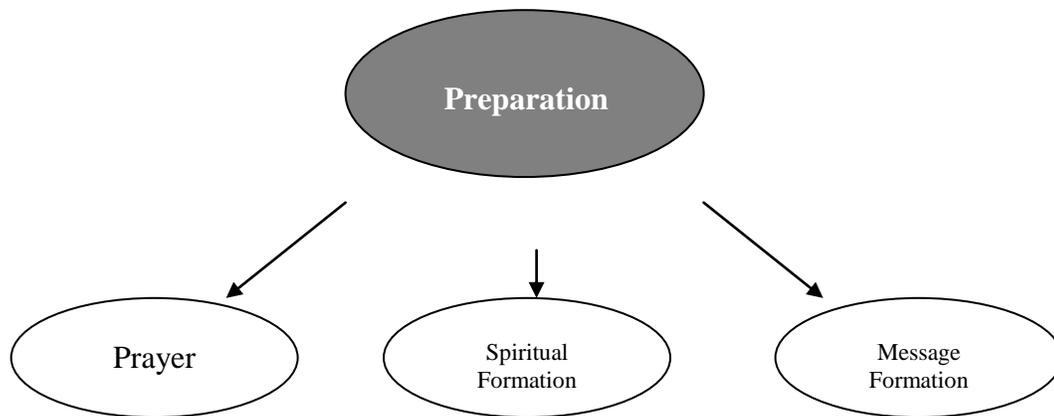
thing as expository preaching from the traditional evangelical church that is relevant to postmodern Christians' needs?

Some would argue that it does not exist. This chapter will propose a model in expository preaching using the fundamentals of preaching to show that expositional preaching is still relevant in this postmodern age. Listed below are some basic fundamentals for preaching that are needed in every form of successful preaching. The basics will be used only in the traditional expositional preaching form in this chapter. The form for traditional expository preaching within the postmodern congregation will operate in the three basic areas used in football analogy: preparation, presentation, and productivity/being.

3 Basic Fundamentals of Preaching



Preparation in preaching involves such basics as *spiritual formation, prayer, and proper study*. For the church to incarnate the message into its members' lives it must first begin in preparation with the preacher, the messenger.



- *Spiritual formation* - is where the preacher is first being **changed** by the Word. The emerging leaders complain that expository preaching of the modern era was too mechanical in disseminating ideas and propositions. The emergents are right in part with their diagnoses. This certainly was the case at times but not always. Many expositional preachers of the modern era understood that the message was more than just praying over a passage and preparing a message in a certain form so as to disseminate certain propositions. Though it may have been evident in some preaching, never was it the practice of all preachers. With the preachers with whom it did happen there was a spiritual formation happening in the life of the preacher. This needs to be understood by all preachers in all cultures at all times. Whether emerging or traditional preaching for the message to be effective it must be affecting the preacher.

Scharf in his book *Prepared to Preach: God's Work and Ours in Proclaiming His Word* commented that preparing to preach is good "but it would be a serious mistake to think that God would leave the preparation of preachers to the preachers themselves. We

have vital responsibilities, but the task of preparing preachers begins with God himself. He has countless messengers called angels to whom he could entrust his message. On occasion he speaks directly to people by means of dreams and visions. But as history unfolded, God saw fit to speak through prophets, who were to speak to his people as his own mouth, speaking his word so it could be obeyed. The prophets prepared the way for the Father's definitive word, his unique Son, the incarnate Word. Just before his ascension he opened the minds of his followers to understand the Scriptures and charged them to preach" (Scharf 2005:15-16). Since Pentecost God has "done similar things for all who minister in his name, not just those who preach" (Scharf 2005:16).

According to Scharf (2005) God makes, calls, gifts, equips, affirms through the church, and empowers preachers by His Holy Spirit. He deploys preachers in answer to prayer, gives words to preachers, and accompanies preachers. Though God does all of the above, Scharf comments that we still need to prepare ourselves by way of prayer, right relationship with God, right relationship with others (Scharf 2005:15-23).

Lawson, in his book *Famine in the Land*, shares that we are to examine our lives. Lawson states that Paul, in 1 Timothy 4:12, "solemnly charged Timothy to 'pay close attention to yourself' (*epeche seauto*), to be totally absorbed with maintaining a strong spiritual life as he preached. Timothy was to watch over his entire life, specifically his outward actions, inner thoughts, and unseen attitudes" (Lawson 2003:122). Lawson continues to describe the preparation of a preacher by quoting Ralph Earle, a Bible commentator who said, "No matter how straight a person may be in his doctrine or how effective he may be in his teaching, if there is a flaw in his inner or outer life, it will ruin him" (Lawson 2003:122). The author continues by stating "every preacher must model

his message” (Lawson 2003:122). According to Lawson the preacher should be continuously allowing the message to both speak to and change the minister’s life.

The author, Fabarez (2002), in his book *Preaching That Changes Lives* states that “the personal life of the preacher is the foundation upon which his every sermon stands. He certainly cannot expect to be used of God to change lives if his own life is stagnant. An effective teaching ministry cannot be realized until the teacher is committed to practice the lessons he attempts to teach” (Fabarez 2002:25-27).

One main point of complaint that the emerging church has made concerning expository preaching of the modern era is that it consisted primarily of propositions with no practice. In other words it taught theology and truths without the truth becoming incarnational. The cause for this many times may not have been the message as much as the messenger. If the word is not first changing the preacher then the message will probably come across as stiff, unreal, and lifeless - in other words just another speech.

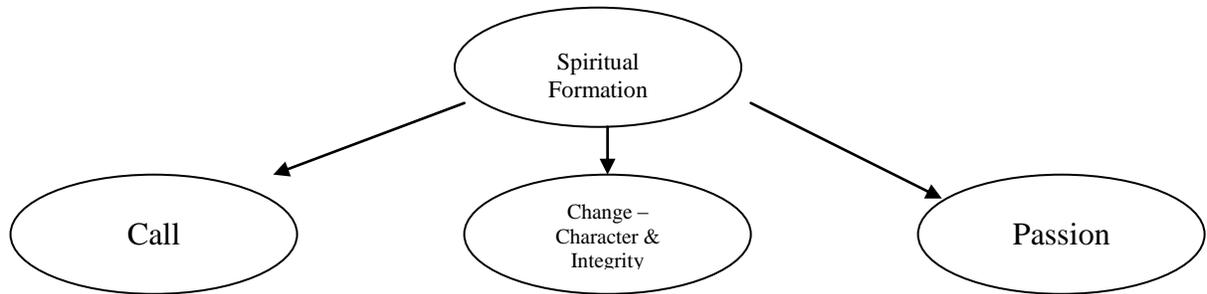
Fabarez states that “if we are to remain useful tools for changing lives, we must continue to follow even the most elementary disciplines taught to the newest of Christians. We are quick to coach from the pulpit and the counseling office that biblical faith can only flourish if consistently nourished. We reiterate that spiritual growth requires our determined cooperation with the sanctifying work of God’s Spirit. Yet, knowing all of this, it is easy for the average preacher himself to suffer from spiritual malnutrition. This sad state is not due to a lack of time in the Word each week. Rather it develops because he has neglected the Word as the source of spiritual vibrancy for his own soul” (Fabarez 2002:32). Fabarez shares that nothing can replace a continuous intimate time with God. In other words there needs to be a continuous spiritual formation

taking place in the preacher's life, otherwise the message will have little effect because it will come across as unreal and lifeless. The postmodern world is looking for character and credibility.

This may sound elementary, but for spiritual formation to take place there must first be a **conversion**. Change comes about by way of conversion. Heisler (2007) comments that there can be no Spirit-led preaching unless the preacher is completely confident that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God resides in the life of the messenger. Conversion came by hearing the Word of God and experiencing the conviction of the Holy Spirit - repenting and believing. This is the beginning of the storytelling which is personal and life-long in experience. The apostle Paul continuously told the story of his conversion in preaching, "But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might *preach him*" (Gal. 1:15-16, emphasis mine). For the Word of God to be incarnational with the messenger there must be a continuous change occurring. For this continuous change to occur there needs to first be a conversion.

With the spiritual formation of the preacher there must also be a **calling** from God to preach. Heisler states that "the fact that a person is saved and converted does not make him an automatic candidate for the pulpit. First, there must be a divine call to preach that is firmly grounded in God's sovereign initiative, and that comes from the Spirit's inward prompting" (Heisler 2007:71). Also concerning the preacher's call Lawson states in his book, *Famine In the Land: A Passionate Call for Expository Preaching*, that "the power of biblical preaching is rooted and grounded in God's sovereign calling of His chosen servant. This heavenly summons is foundational to powerful preaching. Those whom

God calls to preach His Word must know they are divinely selected to carry out His assignment” (Lawson 2003:58-59). Scharf (2005) states that “although the word *call* has a range of meanings in Scripture, I use it here to underscore the fact that God will let you know that you are being prepared and authorized to preach. What the writer to the Hebrews says of high priests is true of preachers, ‘No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was’ called (Heb. 5:4),” (Scharf 2005:17). The author describes the call as sometimes being dramatic like that of the apostle Paul yet more times than not just “the sum total of all the things God does to prepare us” for the task (Scharf 2005:17). Some preachers, according to the calling from God that is needed to preach, present the message in a powerless way because they look at their position as just another corporate position which they, not God, have chosen for themselves. Heisler (2007) comments that “One of the problems caused by the fall of so many prominent ministers in recent years is that people became convinced that men were choosing the ministry the way people sometimes choose a profession – to make the most money. Professions are careers that people choose; preaching is a calling to which we surrender. We do not preach because we have nothing else to do; we preach because the call of God will not allow us to do anything else” (Heisler 2007:71). A minister must understand that preaching is a calling from God and not a personal preference or human choosing. As Paul stated in Ephesians 3:7-9 “Of which (the gospel) I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me according to the working of his power. To me the very least of all saints, this grace was given to me; to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things (NASV).”



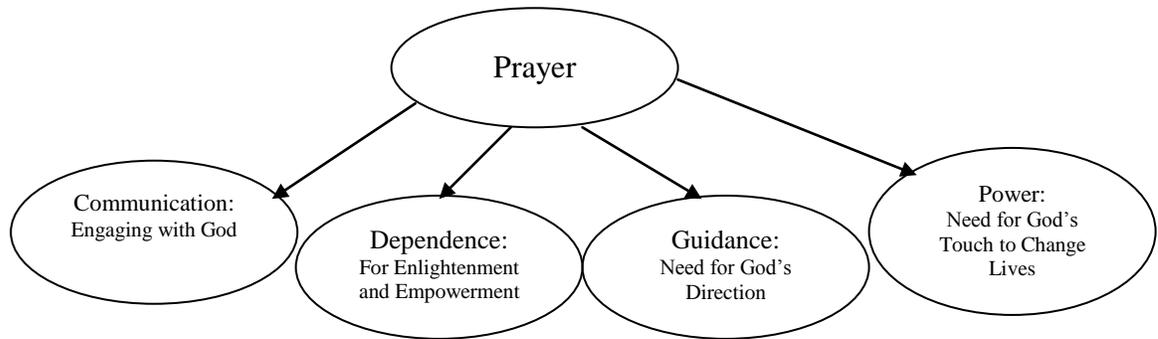
- *Prayer* – Scharf (2005) states that preaching is to be taken seriously. To take preaching seriously means to take the call seriously. Taking the call seriously helps the preacher understand that preaching is much more than mere oratory. When the preacher understands that preaching involves “God speaking as the messenger speaks in His name, on His behalf, by His authority, and for the good of people to whom He has sent the messenger” then the message is seen as more than mere communication. It is viewed as God’s message (Scharf 2005:33). For it to be God’s message it must be biblical. It must come from the Word of God. To understand this concept, accept this concept, and practice this concept, the preacher needs to not only study God’s Word but speak to God and allow God to speak to the messenger (prayer and meditation) on a consistent basis.

Fabarez (2002) states that “If you only consider Sunday’s text in light of your audience and its spiritual needs, you may be edified, but only in areas of common need. Engaging in regular times of undistracted communion with God through prayer is perhaps the most difficult spiritual discipline of all. In our world of endless distractions, few things are harder than kneeling to talk with our Maker for thirty minutes each day. But we must. To “pour out our hearts before Him (Ps. 62:8) is the privilege and

responsibility of those who would speak on His behalf here on earth. The ambassador must be intimately engaged with the One who sent him, or the distance between the two will soon become evident to all. Since the empowerment gained from time spent in prayer cannot be successfully manufactured, any pretense of intimacy will come across as artificial” (Fabarez 2002:33).

Evans (2003) states that “Prayer is that which causes all the parts of the Christian life to relate properly to one another, because prayer is the primary means by which we relate to God. Prayer is relational communication with God. The key word here is *relational*, by which I mean that prayer is a dialogue between two people who are intimately related, not a monologue in which one person does all the talking and the other does all the listening. Prayer is part of a relationship to be cultivated” (Evans 2003:137).

Prayer is a basic fundamental that is needed for preaching to be effective. If one thinks they are to reach others with the message of God then God must be reaching them first. This is why prayer is so necessary and vital in preaching. If it is not evident in ones’ life the product (message) will come across artificial. Shaddix shares, “If preaching is the act of giving the Bible a voice, then the Bible could be described as giving God a voice. So if the Bible is God’s voice, and preaching is the Bible’s voice, then the sermon by necessity and integrity must reflect the very voice of God” (Shaddix 2003:126). Without proper preparation (consistent prayer) preaching will become at its best a method for revealing information. With proper preparation in prayer, preaching becomes a process of explaining revelation (God’s Word) instead of just revealing information.



- *Proper Study* – is like learning plays in football. Here you are trying to understand the biblical passage for the message. To do this *proper hermeneutics, proper homiletics, and proper application* is needed. Arthurs states in his book that John Stott’s model for preaching is “standing between two worlds’ – the world of the text and the world of the listeners. As such, preaching is a bridge that carries the Word into the twenty-first century. Preachers are heralds who speak on behalf of the King, and their job is to faithfully and skillfully recommunicate what has already been communicated” (Arthurs 2007:14). Arthurs summarizes by saying, “I believe that a sermon’s *content* should explain and apply the Word of God as it is found in a biblical text, and a sermon’s *form* should unleash the impact of that text. We should be biblical in how we preach not just what we preach” (Arthurs 2007:13).

Preaching involves both *inductive* and *deductive* movements. Deductive movement is when the preacher moves in his message from the general to the particular. This movement was the predominant plan for most sermon forms in the twentieth century. The distinctive characteristic

for this deductive movement form was its rational approach. Cahill states “that classical homiletics was predominantly rationalistic preaching. Argument and explanation were primary. The appeal was first to the intellect. The strength of the classical homiletical form was its clarity and its ability to communicate the doctrines of the church. Traditional sermon forms are especially useful for communication information and ideas. The traditional form often fills a longing for biblical content (Cahill 2007:27).” The traditional form has weaknesses. “The traditional form often fails to connect with the form of the text itself. Often the literary form of the text is left behind in the process of sermon design. The genre of the text is engaged in the task of exegesis but discarded in the design phase. The traditional form also fails to connect with the listener. People live in a narrative world. That is especially true today. Inductive and narrative forms reign in modern communication. The attempt to reach the contemporary world using exclusively traditional forms may fail to engage the narrative character of our day” (Cahill 2007:28).

The form that has gained popularity in recent years is the inductive sermon form. Cahill comments that Fred Craddock in *As One Without Authority*, believes that the pulpit has lost its power. Cahill quotes Craddock as saying, “No longer can the preacher presuppose the general recognition of his authority as a clergyman, or the authority of his institution, or the authority of Scripture” (Cahill 2007:29). Cahill goes on to say that Craddock’s answer to “the loss of pulpit effectiveness is the inductive

method” (Cahill 2007:29). Inductive preaching movement starts with the particulars of life and experience and moves toward conclusion. Cahill states that “Inductive preaching is concerned with the movement of the sermon. In an inductive sermon the subject is introduced in the introduction but the entire idea is not given. The sermon begins with the need of the listener and moves toward the answer of the gospel. Inductive preaching raises the question and then seeks to answer it. Whereas deduction tends to move in a straight line, induction is more likely to zig and zag. Inductive preaching forms seem to make use of different forms of logic, such as contrast or cause-and-effect (Cahill 2007:30). Cahill shares some advantages of the inductive form: (1) it creates interest through a sense of anticipation or suspense; (2) it elicits participation; (3) it respects the listener’s ability to think on their own; (4) it expects the listener to complete the sermon. The problem is when matters are so open-ended that people do not know what to do with the message.

The inductive preaching form is “first of all grounded in the shape of human experience. Induction is how people naturally live and listen. Much of life and learning is accomplished inductively. Learning is often a series of inductive discoveries. Modern homiletical development has shown a concern not just for the text but for the listener as well. Americans have been raised on the inductive method” (Cahill 2007:32-33).

Many emerging preachers practice narrative preaching/storytelling or dialogical/storytelling because they believe the postmodern Christians are more inductive in their thinking and approaches in life. Some emergent leaders dismiss expository preaching all together because they classify it as modernistic, deductive, propositional preaching. Quicke states that “Narrative preachers respond to narratives in Scripture that can be preached inductively by stories. But, of course, Scripture does not present either/or choices. It contains ideas and stories, words and representations, deductive and inductive approaches. It comprises a fertile diversity of genres that should stimulate preachers to explore a range of preaching options” (Quicke 2003:105). Long (1989), in his book *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*, emphasizes the importance of giving proper attention to the texts’ literary and rhetorical shape. Long shares that “Just as original writers sought to find the most effective rhetorical forms (as in Luke 1:1), so preacher must be aware of the form of the content and not just the content itself. Different genres of Scripture require different responses. Otherwise preachers treat Scripture as a box of ideas, simply throwing the text into an exegetical winepress, squeezing out the ideational matter” (Long 1989:12). Quicke (2003) quotes Mike Graves as saying, ‘One of the biggest limitations of narrative preaching is the tendency to restrict the canon to narrative passages alone.’ Quicke continues by stating that “Didactic material may be preached narratively, and narrative material may be preached didactically” (Quicke 2003:105).

Proper Hermeneutics is very important because it is “the method and techniques used to make a text understandable in a world different from the one in which the text originated” (Quicke 2003:155). Plummer shares that interpreting a document involves

“expressing its meaning through speaking or writing. To engage in interpretation assumes that there is, in fact, a proper and improper meaning of the text and that care must be taken to not misrepresent the meaning. When dealing with the Scriptures, to properly interpret a text is to faithfully convey the inspired human author’s meaning of the text, while not neglecting divine intent” (Plummer 2010:79). Quicke shares that hermeneutics answers the “so what” question. There are gaps between the time of writing and the present world that must be bridged along with gaps within the text itself. Quicke shares that great care must be given to even the most apparent straightforward text. Quicke also points out that preachers with their different personalities, experiences, and outside influences need to be aware of this when entering the realm of interpretation. These areas can play a big part in influencing one’s interpretation either positively and negatively. Plummer states that “Careful interpretation is important because assumed theological presuppositions often can drive interpretations. Through careful biblical interpretation, the student of Scripture can become aware of others’ biases, as well as coming to acknowledge and assess the student’s own hermeneutical predilections” (Plummer 2010:82). Plummer also shares that proper hermeneutics is necessary for finding out what the intent of the writer was when writing the divinely inspired word from God and also in keeping one from having a reader-response approach where biases dictate the interpretation of the passage thereby resulting in wrong application. .

Poythress gives three steps in understanding a biblical text: (1) Understand what God said to the writer’s original audience. (2) Understand how God has preserved the book of the Bible being studied. (3) Understand what God says to us now. Poythress states that “the steps we have distinguished are not, in practice, isolated from one another.

In all this work, we are not on our own. God gives us direction by sending the Spirit to guide us. Author focus, discourse focus, and reader focus coinhere. Hence we cannot take any one of the three steps without tacitly involving the others. Godly interpretation always takes place in the presence of God, and hence involves present fellowship with him, even when we are consciously focusing on the past. We cannot dispense with an overall understanding of history. Action in the present presupposes knowledge of the past” (Poythress 1999:116-117).

Sunukjian states that for biblical preaching to occur the process of interpretation (presenting the true and exact meaning of the biblical text) should involve the sermon unfolding “according to the natural flow of thought of the biblical author. If Isaiah was listening to a sermon from his writings, he should be thinking to himself, ‘Yes, that’s what I was saying, and that’s how it fits this crowd’” (Sunukjian 2007:10). Sunukjian continues by stating that “This true and exact meaning must then be presented in a manner that is relevant to the contemporary listener. God revealing truth, not simply to a previous generation, but also to us, right now, right where we live. God intends his Scriptures to span the centuries, addressing each generation in its immediate context” (Sunukjian 2007:11).

A basic in preaching should be *proper hermeneutics*. Proper hermeneutics involves *proper interpretation*. Proper interpretation is as Sunukjian stated, “God revealing truth, not simply to a previous generation, but also to us, right now, right where we live” (Sunukjian 2007:11). This involves, as Polythress shared, bridging the gap from the biblical world to the present world without distorting the intent the message had for its original hearers. This also means that the present day application should not distort the

meaning that the writer had for his original audience. In other words, the application for today should have something to do with its original meaning. How does one accomplish this? Sunukjian gives some basics for proper interpretation:

- Read the surrounding context for an overview.
- Flag the things you don't fully understand.
- Use your skills and resources in the original languages.
- Consult good commentaries.

(Sunukjian 2007:19).

After reading, reread, and read again the surrounding context to get an overview. After praying over the passage, ask for divine guidance in properly understanding the passage. Ask for any biases to be removed as you study the passage and flag any difficult parts. Work through the passage in the original language (using grammar helps if necessary). Consult good commentaries and journals. At the end of this process the author's flow of thought should begin to take form in the preacher's mind. This flow of thought should then be put into *outline form*. The goal, states Sunukjian, "is to identify the writer's 'big hunk' ideas and his smaller supporting concepts" (Sunukjian 2007:27).

Robinson states that biblical preaching is "explanation, interpretation, or application of a *single dominant idea* (emphasis mine) supported by other ideas, all drawn from one passage or several passages of Scripture" (Robinson 1980:33). Robinson uses two diagnostic questions in hermeneutics to help find the CT or BI (central thought or big idea) for the passage (single dominant idea): (1) What is the text talking about (subject)? (2) What is the text saying about the subject (complement)? (Robinson 1998:17). Willhite, in the book *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible*

to *People*, states that the hermeneutical process where the two diagnostic questions are answered is the “exegetical process.” The answer to the two questions is the exegetical *idea* or *proposition* (emphasis mine). Willhite states that the “exegetical proposition uses language of the text, perhaps including the biblical writer’s name and the name(s) of the original audience. The proposition uses language that is timeless and applicable to God’s people at any time. The proposition is usually stated as a timeless principle. The exegete who seeks to represent the biblical writer’s or text’s intent must strive for synthesis. Otherwise, the exegete is left with a long list of lexical, grammatical, syntactical, or biblical-theological data and the burning, unanswered question, ‘What’s the point?’” (Willhite & Gibson 1998:16-19). Willhite continues by saying that seeking proper interpretation for proper homiletics requires the preacher to “‘say what God says’ by representing the text of Scripture accurately or in line with its intention for its original readers. Developing a single idea or proposition grows from these evangelical hermeneutical commitments. Every sermon, however, requires a series of communicative choices, not the least of which focuses on the sermon’s ‘big idea.’ Every sermon should be a reasoned argument that advances a single claim. This claim gains support from warranted evidence that either leads (inductively) to the acceptance of the claim or underpins (deductively) the acceptance of the claim. Though a text may say many things, listeners need to hear the synthesis of what was intended. A single bullet is much more powerful than a small piece of shot or even the collective effect of many shots” (Willhite 1998:19-22).

The first step in proper hermeneutics is proper *exegesis* or proper *textual* preparation. This process by Sunukjian is called *passage outline*,” what happened or

what was the author's original intent for writing the passage. Sunukjian states that "the benefit of the passage outline is that it anchors the speaker to the text and thus to the intent of the original inspired author. It commits the eventual sermon to the basic content and structure of 'what God is saying.' The goal of the passage outline is to identify the author's 'big hunk' ideas and to show how they progressively unfold through the passage" (Sunukjian 2007:42).

In the hermeneutical process the preacher should move from the exegetical preparation to the *theological* process. Sunukjian states that "a good outline anchors you to the text, but it's not usually something you can preach. It is often past tense, ancient history, something that happened long ago. It's not in language that expresses eternal truth; its spiritual value may not be apparent. And it lacks any concrete application to contemporary life. The passage outline needs to be turned into a truth outline. We need to go from history to theology. You do this by modifying the passage outline in two ways: (1) We turn its historical statements into timeless, universal ones. (2) We put its concepts in the author's original thought order" (Sunukjian 2007:50-51).

The process of turning the historical statements into timeless, universal ones happens as the big thoughts, the thought flow of the writer is put into a more general, universal language. It is said in a more abstract way. This is taking the "big chunks" of thoughts from the original writer and rewording them without changing the meaning and describing them in ways that different centuries and cultures might be able to relate to them. Sunukjian illustrates with the passage from Exodus 13 that says, "'God didn't take Israel on a direct route to Canaan because some situation of war along that route would prevent them from reaching their destination.'" Moving up the ladder of abstraction to

timeless truth, we might say, ‘Sometimes God doesn’t take us on a direct route to the good plans he has for us because some obstacle along that route would prevent us from reaching that goal.’ The language is now sufficiently timeless to cover not only Exodus 13, but also such contemporary obstacles as a corporate vice president who would be an obstacle to our career path, a premature monetary windfall that would derail us from growth in godliness, or a past hurt that would prevent us from entering into a stable and lasting marriage” (Sunukjian 2007:52). In other words the wording has changed from the biblical setting to the general or timeless so as to be able to deal with everyone, everywhere, any time.

Sunukjian shares that the second step of moving from the passage outline to the truth outline occurs by making sure that the concepts of the original author are in the original thought order “even though this might not necessarily be the written order of the phrases or sentences in the text” (Sunukjian 2007:56). Sunukjian continues by saying, “As you move from the passage outline to the truth outline, you need to put the phrases in the author’s original thought order so that your expanded paragraphs will follow his original reasoning process. This modification – putting the concepts in the author’s original thought order – does not in any way change the meaning of the text. It simply recognizes the difference between reading a concept in succinct form or hearing a concept in an expanded form” (Sunukjian 2007:56).

In this theological preparation stage the preacher should come up with the central thought of the passage. Willhite states that in forming the sermonic thought, the big idea or the central thought, for the passage the preacher must ask two diagnostic questions: (1) “What am I talking about? (2) What am I saying about the subject?” The answers will not

be the same as the hermeneutical questions “What is the text talking about (subject)? What is the text saying about the subject (complement)?” The reason for the difference in answers is because “the hermeneutical questions were asked in light of the biblical audience and time” whereas “the homiletical questions are asked in light of the preacher’s audience and time. The correlation between the answers must be unmistakable however, lest the preacher say something other than what the Bible says” (Willhite & Gibson 1998:17).

The above practice is similar to the next practice which, according to Sunukjian, involves the “take-home truth.” Sunukjian states that “it is essential that your sermon have this take-home truth. At some deep mental and emotional level, the listeners are searching for it. As they listen to what you preach they are subconsciously asking, ‘What is it you want me to get from this message? What do you want me to take home from this sermon?’ If the preacher doesn’t have a single sentence, the listeners will do one of two things: (1) They will create a sentence of their own. (2) Or, they will simply leave the service in a contented fog, mentally blank but unconcerned about it. Our sermons must not be a series of isolated comments or unconnected truths. Instead, they should have a progressive and orderly flow of ideas (the outline) and be embodied in a single sentence (the take-home truth)” (Sunukjian 1998:66, 69).

Gibson, in the book *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People*, states that “The big idea (central thought) preaching is built on a long accepted strategy of rhetorical theory and practice combined with a solid evangelical hermeneutic. The result is clarity. The single idea of the text is communicated to listeners whom the preacher understands. The idea is brought from the ancient world to the modern world

through the preacher's perception, appreciation, and understanding of the audience. Effective preaching is like this – it is clear and it connects. Whether the genre is history, letter, narrative, poetry, or prophecy, the method remains the same. Appreciation of genre and context is key to responsible preaching. But study in the genres and backgrounds takes work. What we find is that no matter what genre we wade through, we can discover the idea. Sermon form is debatable. Content is not. The shape of the sermon varies. Sermon form is flexible, depending on the type of passage and its flow, its purpose, and its audience. The sermon can take on many shapes – deductive, inductive, or a little of both. Preaching requires study and careful analysis of the text and its context. A central idea sermon adapts to the various genres of the Bible and finds flexibility in the way it is shaped. Sermon form helps communicate the intention of the text. However, one of the strongest influences on sermon form is the audience. The big idea provides a focus. It gives clarity for the preacher and listener. Not only this, but we discover that the biblical author wrote with a purpose. The purpose describes what the truth is intended to accomplish. The challenge to preachers is to understand the purpose of the author and then determine the purpose of the sermon to the listeners. Once this is established, the sermon can be formed. The focus of the single idea sermon allows the preacher to ask how the text might be applied to specific listeners. What we discover is that big idea preaching has the potential to adjust to the audience and occasion of singular clarity. It helps the preacher understand his or her listeners and allows for clear application and connection with listeners because it is understandable” (Willhite & Gibson 1998:164-171).

The outline is usually formed according to the form that the sermon takes – either deductive or inductive. With the deductive pattern the central thought, the “take-home” truth is stated somewhere in the beginning of the message (introduction) whereas in the inductive pattern the central thought or “take-home” truth is found in the body of the message. The inductive message gradually builds toward the central truth of the message. It is like a narrative that builds toward the climax. The strength of the deductive pattern is that the central thought or “take-home” truth emerges early, therefore it is easy to see where the message is going. With the inductive method you usually have to stay with the message in order to get the central take-home truth. Tension or suspense usually builds and then the central thought is revealed. The inductive message usually requires greater attention. “Most messages can be structured either deductively or inductively” (Sunukjuian 2007:155).

After deciding which form to use (deductive or inductive), then the outline can be formed accordingly. The modern day application can be placed at the end of the message, interspersed throughout the message, or included within the main points of the message.

In football the coaches and teams study the films of their opponents. They try to learn their strengths, weaknesses, and style of play in order to know how best to confront them. They discover what will work and what won’t work. Likewise, preaching requires more than sharing biblical information to the congregation. For this to happen the preacher needs to know the congregation/audience. An exegeting of the people in the pews must take place for the Word of God “to be fitting and transformative for a particular place and time” (Long & Tisdale 2008:75). Tisdale in the book *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice: A New Homiletical Pedagogy*, states that “if students

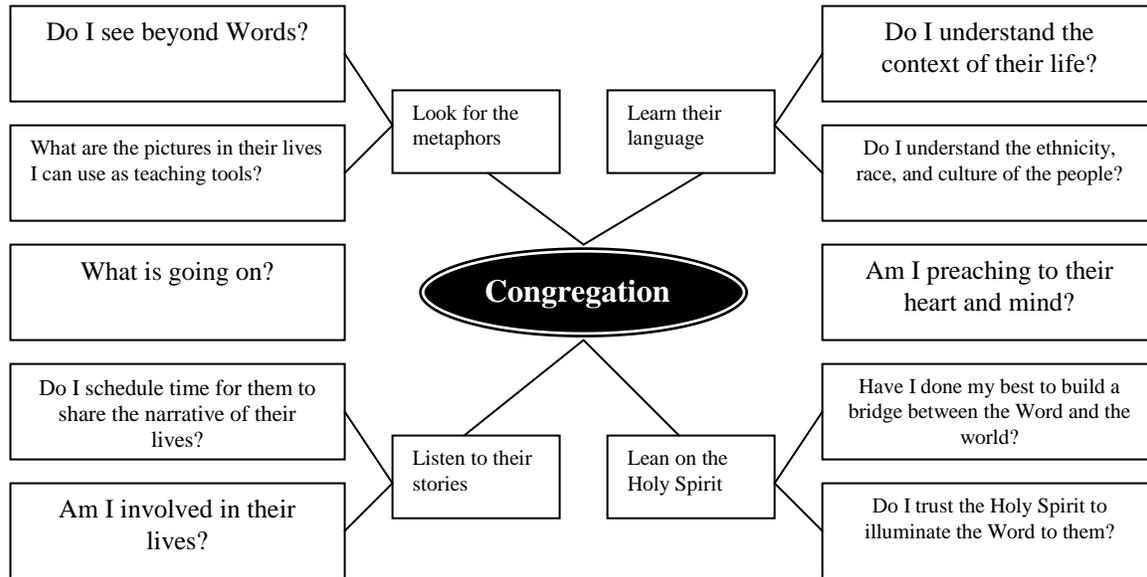
are going to preach to people with respect and understanding, it is important to address them as they are, and not as the student assumes or imagines them to be. If preachers are to bring a fitting and relevant word from the pulpit, it is imperative that they first become aware of the concerns, questions, heartaches, and dreams that members of particular faith communities bring to the preaching event. Preaching is at heart a theological act. If pastors are going to proclaim theology that is transformative for local congregations, it is important that they first become aware of what their people already believe and value. Finally, preaching should be seriously imaginable to a particular people in a particular time and place. That is, people should be able to envision their own daily lives lived in accordance with the gospel” (Long & Tisdale 2008:75-76).

Milco in the book *The Moody Handbook of Preaching*, edited by Koessler, states that:

“After many years in ministry, I now understand the importance of exegeting the people in the pews. Each week they work for hours in environments filled with stress. They are weighed down by baggage from their past. They strive to live meaningful lives according to biblical principles. Imagine how different our messages would be if we worked to understand our people in the same way we work to understand the biblical text? James says that we who are teachers of the Word will be held more accountable than others (3:1). I believe James is referring not just to what we teach, but to how passionately and accurately we encourage our flocks. Preaching should not just be about the Word of God, but also about the people of God. In so doing, we will handle our people with the same understanding that we handle the text – diligently, patiently, and accurately” (Milco 2008:352).

CONGREGATIONAL HERMENEUTIC

Below is a chart that Milco offers to help in exegeting the congregation. It is called Congregational Hermeneutic:



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Four main points in Milco’s chart are:

- Listen to their stories – Life experiences provide a means of establishing both interest and relevance. Listening is a gift that must be cultivated if we are to influence a world that desperately needs to know the relevance of God’s Word to the stories of their lives.
- Learning their language – Graham Johnston states in *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, “People get bored when not involved, and won’t listen when they fail to see the importance of the message. In fact, they’ll go a step further and tune out when the message fails to connect with their interest” (Johnston 2001:73). Milco states that learning their language means we speak in a way that connects, with words that capture their hearts and minds. In today’s postmodern mind-set, people

want to know what it looks like in the context of their lives. Congregational exegesis enables me to correctly read the context of my listener's lives. My understanding of their lives must be translated into language that they can feel, see, and touch.

- Looking for Metaphors – As with Jesus we are to use metaphors to build a bridge between the physical and the spiritual. Regardless of the cultural, theological, or worship trends in the church, understanding our congregation will open the arteries of hearts that desperately need to be made fully alive.
- Leaning on the Holy Spirit – Some preachers develop a mindset that the Word is all the audience needs to grow and they teach without regard for how that Word is delivered. We become so familiar with the routine that we sometimes forget or neglect to let the Holy Spirit invade our lives and messages. In a day when people assume that bigger is better and corporate strategy invades the church, we desperately need to remember that the real work is done through the power of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our people.

The preparation of sermons is not only to be studied and interpreted in a sterile environment called the office, but is to be lived out in community where the preaching of the Word has influence and relevance.

(Milco 2008:252-60).

Stowell, in the book *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching* edited by Willhite and Gibson, comments that “preparing a sermon is like preparing a meal. We get the recipe out, shop for the necessary ingredients, and bring home bags full of all the right stuff. At that point, having set the ingredients on the counter, we are not at the end of the process.

We don't ask our guests to grab a can of tomatoes and a little cream and make soup for themselves. Nevertheless, that's what happens in many of our sermons when we stop at the end of our exegesis and then lay out the message in its informational form, making little or no effort to connect the truth to life. The challenge to every sermon preparer is the challenge of making an accurate transition from the exegesis stage to the applicational stage, from the scientific work to the artistry of the sermon. The transition begins by restating the central idea and the exegetical outline in terms of the real-life situations of the listener" (Stowell1998:129).

In football, it is one thing to learn plays and another to run them. To prepare for the game you must also watch films to see what to expect from your opponents. There is a time to study your opponents on film so you will be better prepared when you meet them. The team will also run their opponents' plays during practice. Studying films of the opponent plus running the plays during practice helps the team get better acquainted with the team they will be facing at game time.

In preaching the preacher will not only go through the basics in rightly dividing the word of God – exegeting the passage correctly - but will also try to exegete his audience correctly so as to effectively deliver the message of God. In the epistle of Second Timothy chapter four verse two “Paul told Timothy to be committed to patient instruction” (Stowell 1998:131). Stowell states that “instruction is the art of taking the listener through the process that leads to change. In quality control, we're more concerned with the process than we are with the product. If the process is right the product is guaranteed. Crafting process-friendly instructions will enable and empower people to grow. Process-oriented proclaimers ask the question as they study the text,

‘What does this text say about how I can accomplish the spiritual goal in this text?’

Aligning our sermons with the transformational dynamics of the purposes and process of the text will inevitably result in changed lives. Not only does transformation depend on the quality of the proclaimer’s life and a clear alignment with the intentions of Scripture, but it also gains power from the preacher’s understanding of the context into which he preaches. The key issue here is how well sermons connect with the world in which parishioners live. Effectiveness demands that we as preachers go beyond the text to the context of the culture and our congregation. This is the point in the process where the preacher moves the changeless Word of God into the face of the real issues of the listeners. Every listener has three distinct contexts: personal, local, and universal. All three compete to form the attitudes, perceptions, and actions of the congregation” (Stowell 1998:132-33).

In football the opponent will have a variety of players. They come in different sizes, shapes, talents, quickness, and mentality. Coaches and teams must not just study plays of the opposing teams but also study the players in order to be effective.

In preparing a message the preacher needs to study his congregation. The messenger needs to understand that to relay the message effectively to a variety of people within the congregation with a diversity of needs, there needs to be some type of congregational exegeting.

In the book edited by Duduit, *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, Massey comments on this issue of exegeting the congregation, “In homiletics, ‘application’ involves the work of linking the import of the truth stated in the text and sermon with a hearer’s situation and need. It is that section or sentence in the sermon that urges the

acceptance of what has been stated, so the hearer will act upon its counsel. Simply put, ‘application’ in the sermon points out the relation of what has been said to the hearer’s life; it calls attention to how what has been spoken is to be used, and why it is important to do so. Massey continues by giving four guidelines for application:

- First, any true application will be related – (a) to what has been said, and (b) to those who heard it.
- Whether intermediate or final, application in a sermon should always *summon to a decisive action*.
- The application, whether a sentence or larger section, should *grip and motivate the hearer*.
- The application may either be *indirect* or *direct*.

(Duduit 1992:209-12)

Chapell, in the book *Christ-Centered Preaching*, shares this about exegeting the congregation, “Preachers must translate what the text means. This is more than an exegetical task. We must make the meaning of the text concrete for contemporary people in contemporary situations. Expository messages require preachers to ensure that the application they make will answer four key questions: What does God now require of me? Where does he require it of me? Why must I do what he requires? and, How can I do what God requires?” (Chapell 1994:204).

Broadus, in the book *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, comments, “Application, in the strict sense, is that part, or those parts, of the discourse in which we show how the subject applies to the persons addressed, what practical instructions it

offers them, what practical demands it makes upon them” (Broadus 1994:211). In other words part of sermon preparation must be where the congregation is exegeted.

Continuing the football analogy, coaches of opposing teams may study the films of their opponents differently and may even go about getting familiar with their opponents in practice differently, but the purpose is the same - studying to get better acquainted with the opposing team in order to be prepared and effective. Preachers may go about exegeting their congregations differently but the purpose should be the same – to be effective in touching people’s lives for God’s kingdom. There are some things that should be guarded against. Robinson in the book, *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating That Connect*, edited by Gibson, comments that preachers often feel “caught in the tension between the text and their audience. They want to be biblical, of course, but they also want to help their listeners to live more productive lives. People attend church because they want help in practical living. Preachers want to speak to those felt needs, and those needs in turn drive their sermons. While many preachers may salt and pepper their messages with Bible verses, the actual substance of what they say lies outside the Scriptures. Their sermons may be up-to-date, compelling, and even effective in moving listeners toward worthwhile goals. But the Bible only occupies an incidental place in their messages. These preachers do not take the people into the text to explore its meaning, understand its concerns, gain its perspective, or work through its application to their hearers’ lives. As a result the Bible has little chance to work its power in the listeners’ experience because it is used merely as a springboard into what the minister wanted to say. The insights, illustrations, and practical points that undergird the ideas in the sermon come from other authorities, but the text

itself is given little chance to be heard. The problem is not that other sources are used in the message; it's that they dominate and drive the sermon's intentions and applications" (Robinson 2004:80-81).

In exegeting the congregation the preacher needs to realize that there will be singles, happily and unhappily married couples, single parents, divorcees, widows and widowers, well adjusted children, dysfunctional children, abused children, secret abusers, lust strugglers, alcoholics both recovering and struggling, cheaters in business, cheaters on their spouses, disappointed believers, doubters, successful in life, self-sufficient, proud, those being humbled, and those experiencing a successful walk with the Lord. The preacher needs to keep a list of the various personal contexts within the congregation. This should be done for a number of reasons: to make sure we understand better the congregation; to help with sensitivity toward the congregation when preaching; to make sure the application is on target as far as the text and the help needed: and to make sure the remedy comes from the text and not humanistic disciplines.

Coaches exegete and prepare for their opponents by way of viewing films and running the plays of opponents during practice. Preachers can exegete their congregation in numerous ways. The different ways depend on certain factors: the pastor and his gifts and habits; the size of the church; the type of church; and the way the pastor operates the church (CEO or pastor).

- The pastor and his gifts and talents – Some pastors have gifts and talents that seem to give them the ability to talk with members during meeting times at the church and gain enough knowledge about the individual members to apply biblical messages to their needs and circumstances. The pastor's talents and gifts

also allow him the place of acceptance as a real, genuine, and concerned pastor. Other pastors need to call and visit the members on a regular basis over a period of time before they are accepted by the congregation. They also need time during those regular visits to exegete their congregation in order to apply the message to their needs and circumstances. Others like Haddon Robinson can envision the congregation with certain needs and situations therefore exegeting them according to the teaching of the biblical passage without talking or visiting with them.

- The size of the church - if the church is very large, more than likely the pastor will need assistance in reaching and knowing the people. It might happen by way of their Sunday School/Bible Studies, or deacons – deacon family ministries, or administrative teams. Many times the smaller the church the less dependence on others will be needed to know the congregation.
- The type of church – deals more with what age group the congregation is made up of. Younger adults demand less from their pastor in the area of visiting them. This means that the pastor will need to make special emphasis to know his congregation, so as to be able to deliver a message that will touch their lives. Older churches sometimes demand more. They wait and watch to see if the pastor is real. It usually takes a little longer time in exegeting the older congregations.
- The way the pastor operates the church (CEO – pastor). Some pastors operate the church as a CEO. This may be because of the size of the church. If this is the operation style of the pastor there needs to be some way that the pastor is able to know and exegete the congregation. It might come from teams. Sometimes pastors will use a questionnaire with a team that is made up of mature Christians

representing different age groups (children workers, youth, young adults, middle age adults, and older adults). The questionnaire will consist of questions relating to the needs of the different groups within the church.

The pastor who operates the church more as a shepherd may use a pastor/preaching team but more than likely will use the personal visitation method. Whatever method the pastor chooses to use it would be good to keep records of the needs and the situations that the church body is facing.

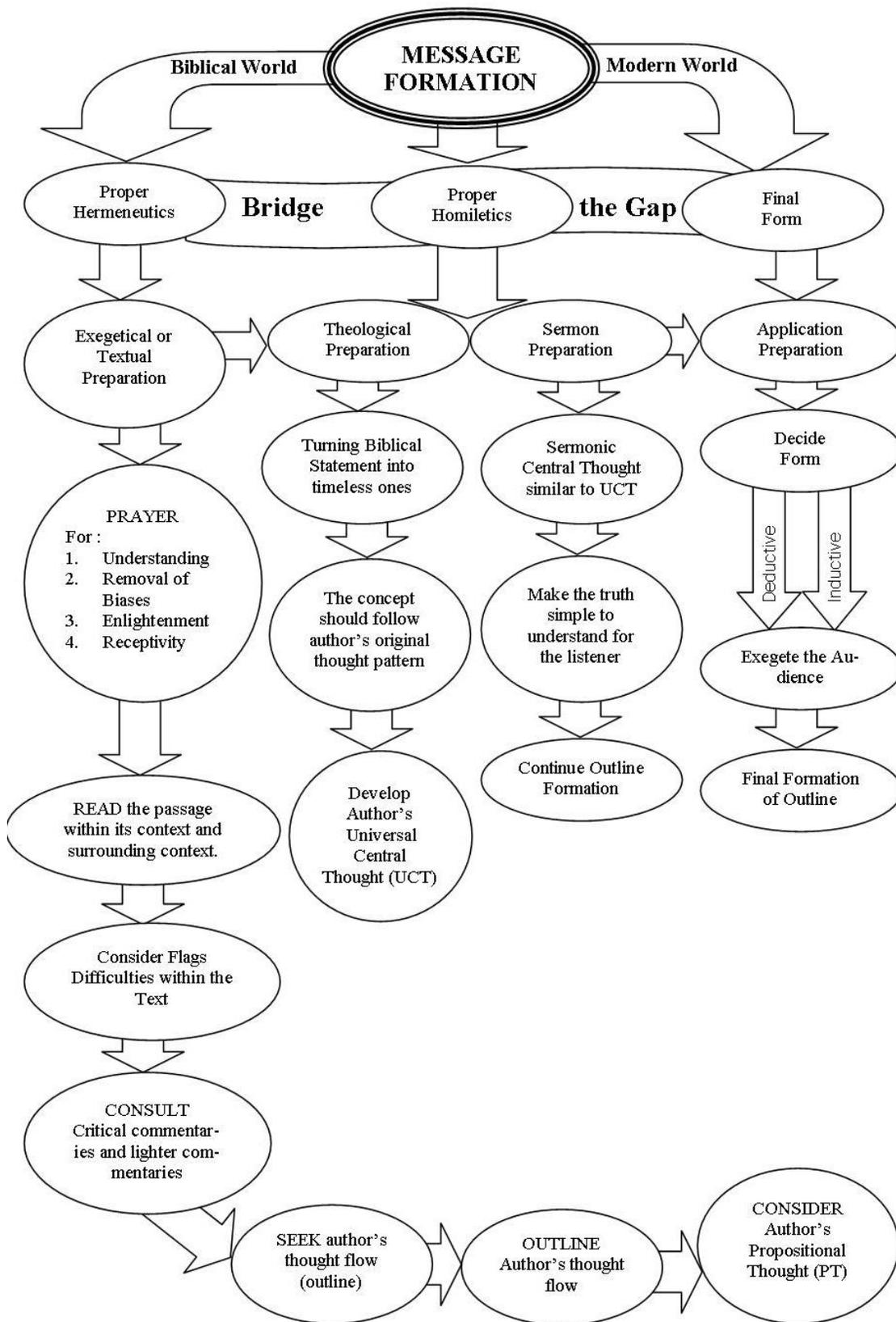
Stowell III shares in the book *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People* edited by Gibson, three contexts in which to exegete the congregation: personal contexts, local contexts (deals with such things as race, class, gender, politics and the like), and universal contexts (deals with such things as greed, lust, impatience, guilt, anger, and the like). Stowell continues by stating that, “A context-sensitive preacher sees all of his applicational ammunition through the real-life settings that his listeners deal with on a day-to-day basis” (Stowell 1998:135).

The football coach watches the films of their opponents, exegetes them by going over the films with the team and even running through the plays in practice for better acquainting themselves with the opponent. Like the football coach, the preacher should study his congregation by exegeting them. Exegeting the congregation can be done by envisioning them and their needs. To accomplish this task one needs to implement personal visitation to understand the needs. Another way is to meet with teams such as deacons, Sunday School leaders, age-group representatives, and pastor leadership teams to recognize the needs. Whether a combination of the above methods is used for finding out the needs and situations of the congregation or just one method is used the pastor

must be faithful in exegeting his congregation if the message is to be effective. The sources to meet these needs must come from the passage and not be dominated by other sources. The Bible is to govern the sermons not sources or experiences. As Robinson asked the question in *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating That Connects*, “Do I subject my thought to the Scriptures, or do I subject the Scriptures to my thought?” preachers must ask the same question if they intend to exegete the passage and their congregation effectively (Robinson 2004:82). There must be a proper exegesis of the passage first, then an exegesis of the congregation which coincides with the passage and its meaning. One must not work independently of the meaning of the message.

In the analogy of football, the last step in preparation before game day might be film watching and running through the plays in practice. In preaching, after deciding which form to use for the message along with what shape the message should take, a final step needed is making sure the congregation is exegeted correctly. With exegeting the congregation properly comes the final form of the sermon outline.

Diagram for message formation on following page:



Presentation

The next step after sermon preparation is sermon presentation. Presentation must first have proper preparation. Proper sermon presentation can only come about with proper sermon preparation. They are like two sides of the same coin. Preparation in preaching is much like that of football. For the presentation to be effective, there must be proper preparation.

Learning and staying with the basics in football is a big part of preparation for performing or playing successfully on game day. It is vital to have these fundamentals in operation prior to and during game day. Some of the fundamentals are learning to tackle, run, block, pass, and kick along with learning your positions and what is expected with each position. As you learn those fundamentals you learn the basic plays that your team runs during game day. As mentioned earlier, there are basically five offensive running plays and five offensive passing plays that all other formations build upon. On defense, there are just a few basic schemes from which all other schemes are built upon. In other words, there is only offense or defense that a team will be operating from during the game. The offense has basic running and passing plays to learn for game day. The defense operates off the basic schemes learned in practice for game day. After preparing one's team for the game the team must then put into action (presentation/performance) on game day what they have prepared for so diligently during the week.

In preaching, as in football you practice basics during the week in order to “rightly divide the Word of God” during worship. You need to approach the passage in

an expositional way. This means the preacher should examine the context, the surrounding context, the grammar, the biblical background, doctrine, and the genre in order to properly find out what the author's intent was when writing the message. The preacher then tries to formulate the author's thoughts into some outline form. Next the preacher tries to come up with the 'central thought' that the author had when writing the passage. In football, this is similar to the basics of learning to tackle, pass, run, and block. Without these basics a football team won't be very successful. As in football, preaching without the basics involved in finding the author's original intent and thought for the passage will cause the sermon to be ineffective before God and with his audience. This is called expositional preparation for preaching the sermon.

In football, you either have offense or defense within which all plays operate. In preaching you have two basic shapes to consider - inductive and deductive. All shapes of sermons and forms of preaching come from those two basic patterns. Whether it is textual (exegetical), topical, narrative, storytelling, dialogical or doctrinal preaching they all fit into the two preaching patterns called deductive and inductive patterns.

In football, there are also five basic running plays and five basic passing plays from which all other formations are formed. In preaching it would seem that there is one proper form of preaching from which all other sermons can and should fit. That preaching form is expositional or what some call biblical. A textual sermon, a topical sermon, a dialogical sermon, a storytelling sermon, and a narrative sermon can and should be expositional or biblical in form. One might ask why. What makes expositional preaching so necessary and so important?

In the book, *The Moody Handbook of Preaching*, edited by John Koessler, Easley shares about moving to Chicago and having different churches come to him and ask for pastor recommendations. Their lament was, “We cannot find a man who teaches the Bible.” Easley continued by stating that:

I no longer wonder if this is simply a trend. I believe it is an epidemic. It is not as if exposition has been carefully analyzed, appreciated for its strengths and criticized for its weakness. It has been abandoned. Western culture is forever developing ‘isms’ and ‘ologies.’ In my lifetime, a new Christianese has developed. We now loathe terms like ‘saved,’ ‘sin,’ or ‘repent,’ preferring less offensive and innocuous terms like ‘seeker,’ ‘emerging,’ ‘orality,’ ‘narrative,’ ‘storytelling,’ ‘parabolic,’ and more. Some blame our shift away from exposition on ‘postmodernity,’ ‘emerging’ trends, or this culture’s entertainment-oriented, MTV-conditioned attention span. A survey of articles, journals, abstracts, and recent books on preaching is telling. This literature points to a seismic shift that is reflected in a new vocabulary. Academicians call for a greater emphasis on narrative, orality, or the like. This is not merely a matter of semantics. This change in emphasis has resulted in frenetic jumble that is less grounded in Scripture and more focused on ‘tickling ears’ (2 Tim. 4:3), (Easley 2008:27-28).

Easley continues by saying that at times changes are needed. Some preaching has become boring and out of touch with the world “but no preacher can afford to forsake the text of Scripture” (Easley 2008:29). Easley states that he is convinced that expository preaching is the most effective way to communicate God’s Word. Easley shares that “Expository preaching relies on the authority of the Word of God. Eloquence, craft, and creative methodologies can help package a message. But without the authority of God’s Word, a sermon will at best be a persuasive or entertaining speech. I believe in expository preaching because it is a method that can accommodate all the genres of biblical literature and be adapted to a variety of learning styles. I believe in expository preaching because it is a dependable vehicle for communication to others about the person and work of Jesus

Christ. In short I remain committed to expository preaching because I remain committed to the authority of God's Word" (Easley 2008:30).

Chapell, in the book *Christ-Centered Preaching*, states that:

Ultimately preaching accomplishes its purposes, its spiritual purposes not because of the skills of the preacher, but because of the power of Scripture proclaimed. Preachers will minister with greater zeal, confidence, and freedom when they realize God has taken from their backs the monkey of spiritual manipulation. When preachers perceive the power the Word holds, confidence in their calling grows even as pride in their performance withers. Credit, honor, and glory for preaching's effects belong to Christ alone because his Word alone causes spiritual renewal. Expository preaching attempts to present and apply the truths of a specific biblical passage. Biblical preaching binds the preacher and the people to the only source of true spiritual change. Expository preachers are committed to saying what God says. We are not concerned to convey our opinions, others' philosophies, or speculative meditations. Truths of God proclaimed in such a way that people can see that the concepts derive from Scripture and apply to their lives preoccupy the expository preacher's efforts. Such preaching puts people in immediate contact with the power of the Word. Though we live in an age hostile to authority, everyday struggles for significance, security, and acceptance force every individual to ask, 'Who has the right to tell me what to do?' This question typically posed as a challenge is really a plea for help. Without an ultimate authority for truth all human striving has no ultimate value and life itself becomes futile. The answer to the radical relativism of our culture with its accompanying uncertainties is the Bible's claim of authority. When preachers approach the Bible as God's very Word, questions about what we have a right to say vanish. Scripture obligates preachers to make sure others understand what God says. We have no biblical authority to say anything else. Only preachers committed to proclaiming what God says have the Bible's imprimatur on their preaching. Thus, expository preaching endeavors to discover and convey the precise meaning of the Word (Chapell 1994:18-23).

Mohler, in *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World*, states that:

Preaching the Word is central, irreducible, and non-negotiable to authentic worship that pleases God. But if preaching is central to Christian worship, what kind of preaching are we talking about? When the pulpit ministry lacks substance, the church is severed from the Word of God, and its health and faithfulness are immediately diminished. Much of what happens in pulpits across America today is not preaching. Preaching is not

the task of saying something interesting about God, nor is it delivering a religious discourse or narrating a story. What we mean (when we refer to preaching) is very simply, reading the text and explaining it – reproof, rebuking, exhorting, and patiently teaching directly from the text of Scripture. If you are not doing that, then you are not preaching. I believe that the central problem in our crisis of preaching today is that somehow we believe this has changed. We no longer believe that hearing and responding to the Word of God is a matter of crucial importance. That is the only plausible reason I can offer for why expositional preaching is in decline, or even absent, in so many pulpits. Before the decline in expository preaching, there was the abandonment of the conviction that the Word of God comes as a matter of life and death. Preaching is therefore always a matter of life and death. The people in our churches depend for their very lives on the ministry of the Word; therefore our preaching had better be nothing less – and nothing other – than the exposition of the Bible (Mohler 2008:50-52, 54, 63).

Mohler states the reason for true expositional preaching being so crucial is because “According to the Bible, exposition is preaching. And preaching is exposition” (Mohler 2008:50). Why then is expositional preaching so important? Easley comments, “Expository preaching reveals clear lines, moored to biblical text. Exposition begins with the Scripture. Applying exegetical skills, Bible study methods, and systematic theology, the student determines to let the *text govern the message* (emphasis mine). The Scripture, not the speaker, determines the message. We are students in search of the meaning of the text, not students in search of a proof text” (Koessler 2008:36). In other words true expositional preaching is bridging the gap from the biblical world and what the author intended to say to his audience to the twenty-first century and what it has to say to the audience today without distorting the intended meaning.

Expositional preaching can come in many different forms and shapes. As in football where you have ten basic offensive plays (five running and five passing) and from those ten plays numerous other plays are derived, preaching should be

expositional/biblically founded with numerous forms of preaching categorized as expositional – textual, topical/thematic, narrative, storytelling, dialogical, doctrinal etc.

The thought is that one type of expositional sermon should not be the only form of preaching presented. In football, the coach may use one game plan for certain teams while feeling the need to change the game plan for other teams. Schemes often change according to the game being played. In preparing the message for a certain setting, the preacher decides the game plan for that Sunday/setting. In other words, the minister approaches the passage and message deductively or inductively. The preacher determines whether to deliver the message as a textual message, a topical message, a narrative message, a storytelling style of message, a dialogical message or doctrinal message. Whether it is narrative or doctrinal or some other sermon in shape the message should be expositional in its approach.

An example of an expositional sermon with both a deductive and inductive approach is illustrated in this work by Sunukjian, professor at Tabot Theological Seminary in California. Sunukjian writes in the book *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People*, edited by Willhite & Gibson that “Having studied the chosen passage, outlined the author’s thought, and formed the big idea, the speaker is ready to prepare the message for the contemporary audience” (Willhite & Gibson 1998:111). Sunukjian continues by illustrating the development of the sermon to be delivered: Exodus 13:17-22.

- First is the outlining the text’s flow of thought and forming the big idea (or Central Thought). Pharaoh has just consented to let the Israelites go. They have been in Egyptian bondage for hundreds of years. About three to four million

Israelites were preparing to leave Goshen. Destination for them is Canaan, the Promised Land. This was the home of their ancestors. The straight route from where they were to the Promised Land would take about six to eight days (following the international trade route runs straight northeasterly direction). This route ran along the Mediterranean coastline, through the Philistine territory, and into Canaan. Exodus 13:17-18 tells us that God doesn't send them that route. Instead God leads them around the southern desert and the Red Sea. Why? God has a purpose for his chosen people and He knew that if they went the straight route they would run into a military threat (the Philistines or from Egyptian's divisions stationed along this invasion corridor) which would change their minds and they would return to Egypt. The text also points out two particular features involved in this departure. One is a coffin that contained the bones of Joseph (Ex. 13:19), and another was the cloud capable of guiding them by day or night (Ex. 13:20-22). The coffin was a visible reminder of the promise given to the Israelites and promise reemphasized when Joseph asked that his bones be carried back with the Israelites when they returned to their home land of Canaan (Gen. 50:24-26). The coffin was a daily reminder of their destination even though they were headed in the opposite direction. The second thing – the cloud – becomes their guide (Num. 9:15-23), their protection (Exod. 14:19-20) from Pharaoh's chariots and the desert heat (Ps. 105:39;; Isa. 4:5-6). It also let them know of God's presence with them (Exod. 33:7-10; Num. 12:5; Ps. 99:6-7). With the author's flow of thoughts the preacher can now put it in outline form.

I. God led Israel purposefully by means of an indirect route.

- II. The reasons for leading the Israelites on an indirect route was for their safety and because they would never have made it on a straight route.
- III. On this journey God encourages the Israelites in two ways.
 - A. He gives them a visible reminder of his good intentions.
 - B. He gives them a palpable sense of his presence.

(Sunukjian 1998:112-113).
- What the preacher now does is allow the “big idea” to take shape from the flow of the sermon. Sunukjian states that the main idea or “big idea” could be something like this, “God leads Israel on an indirect route to get them safely to his promised destination, along the way providing continual reminders of his good intentions and a palpable sense of his presence” (Sunukjian 1998:113).
- Sunukjian then states, “While focusing on the early part of this sentence, and considering how to form the big idea into its final, and hopefully memorable, *homiletic form* (emphasis mine), the speaker suddenly thinks of a contradictory variation of the well-known geometric axiom: ‘The shortest distance between two points is a zigzag.’” (Sunukjian 1998:113)
- The speaker is now ready to put together the final sermon outline.

Introduction

“Early in Geometry we learned, ‘The shortest distance between two points is a straight line.’ As you and I consider what God is doing in our lives, we wonder if God doesn’t think, ‘The shortest distance between two points is a zigzag.’” We sometimes are convinced that God is taking us from point A to point B which is a straight line but as we begin our journey we find God taking us on a zigzag path

heading to point B. Personal applications and examples to illustrate this point can and should be used here to help involve the audience in the sermon.

“Today, I want you to see that sometimes, with God, the shortest distance between two points is a zigzag (deductive statement of the big idea). (Preview) I want you to see that sometimes God deliberately takes us on a zigzag path (deductive). I want you to see why he does this (inductive). And I want you to see the good encouragement he gives along the way (inductive)” (Sunukjian 1998:114).

- I. In order to see that God sometimes deliberately leads us on a zigzag path, we’ll look at a time in Israel’s history when God deliberately takes them on a zigzag path (deductive).
 - A. They are at Point A – Goshen, where they have been slaves for hundreds of years. (Review the plagues briefly.)
 - B. Their destiny is Point B – Canaan, the Land of Promise.
 - C. The shortest distance between Point A and Point B is a straight-line route along the Mediterranean coast and through the Philistine territory.
 - D. But we read Exodus 13:17-18 that God does not lead them on this direct route, but instead takes them on a zigzag path in the opposite direction (Exod. 13:17-18).
- II. The reason God takes us on a zigzag is because there is something in the straight-line path that would prevent us from ever reaching our destination (deductive).

- A. God knows that if he takes the Israelites on the direct route they will never make it (explain v18).
 - B. God knows there is something in our straight-line path that would prevent us from safely arriving at his intended destination (share some of the illustrations given in the introduction and expand on them or talk about new ones).
- III. Because we might become dismayed in the midst of the zig and zags, God encourages us in two ways (inductive).
- A. God give us continual reminders of his good intentions (deductive).
 - 1. As Israel embarks on an uncharted route, God uses a coffin to remind them of their ultimate destination (explain v19).
 - 2. In the midst of our zigs and zags, God will find some way to remind us of his good intentions (might speak of how some innocent comment might unknowingly touch us and encourage us, reminding us that God has a plan for us).
 - B. God gives us a palpable sense of his presence (deductive).
 - 1. As Israel embarks on an uncharted path, a pillar of cloud and fire appears, which guides, protects, and accompanies them the length of their travel (explain vv 20-22).
 - 2. In the midst of our zigs and zags, we will experience the guidance, protection, and nearness of our God.

The sermon example was taken from the book, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching*, prepared by Donald Sunukjian (Sunukjian 1998:113-115).

In the book *Finally Comes The Poet*, Brueggemann states:

The gospel is too readily heard and taken for granted, as though it contained no unsettling news and no unwelcome threat. What began as news in the gospel is easily assumed, slotted, and conveniently dismissed. We depart having heard, but without noticing the urge to transformation that is not readily compatible with our comfortable believing that asks little and receives less. The gospel is thus a truth widely held, but a truth greatly reduced. It is a truth that has been flattened, trivialized, and rendered inane. Partly, the gospel is simply an old habit among us, neither valued nor questioned. Preaching among us happens in this context in which truth is greatly reduced. The issues facing the church and its preachers may be put this way: Is there another way to speak? Is there another voice to be voiced? Is there an alternative universe of discourse to be practiced that will struggle with the truth in ways unreduced? In the sermon – and in the life of the church, more generally, I propose – we are to practice another way of communication that makes another shaping of life possible; unembarrassed about another rationality, not anxious about accommodating the *reason of this age* (emphasis mine). The task and possibility of preaching to open out the good news of the gospel with alternative modes of speech – speech that is dramatic, artistic, capable of inviting persons to join in another conversation, free of reason of technique, unencumbered by ontologies that grow abstract, unembarrassed about concreteness (Brueggemann 1989:1-3).

Brueggemann emphasizes in his book a need to get back to the basics or get back to the Word of God. This is where the preacher gets back to the message and tells it as a poet fresh, passion-filled, and incarnational. The same old story that is told lifelessly by many should be told in a believing dynamic way. The preacher can accomplish this by expositional preaching as illustrated by Don Sunukjian in the passage Exodus 13:17-22 entitled – “The Shortest Distance Between Two Points is a Zig-Zag”.

Returning to the football analogy, there are a few basic plays from which all others form. In a game it is decided ahead of time what plays will be run during the game.

In preaching there is one form of preaching from which all other shapes and styles can come - that is expositional preaching. True expositional preaching will be biblical. Expository preaching does not occur where verses are only read and not expounded upon. Expositional preaching is speaking on God's behalf about God. As the preacher stands before a group of people that speaker should become God's mouthpiece.

Expositional preaching involves both deductive and inductive approaches. Therefore the sermons don't necessarily resemble one another. Robinson in the book, entitled *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating That Connects* comments that "When we shove a passage under some broad theological abstraction without interacting with its specificity, we will end up with sermons as much alike as the repeated patterns on wallpaper. Sermons built on Scriptures will assume *varied* (emphasis mine) forms just as the literature of the Bible makes use of many different genres" (Robinson 2004:83). With expositional preaching comes different forms in preaching – topical, doctrinal, narrative, storytelling, textual, dialogical, and others. The variety in preaching should be determined somewhat from the form of the passage. In the book edited by Gibson, *Preaching To A Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives On Communicating That Connects*, Robinson states that "It is part of expository preaching, therefore, to ask in what form – story, poetry, reasoned argument, listing of ways we should serve the Lord – does this text present the truth? If the form of our sermon differs significantly from the form of the passage, then our sermon will carry a different emphasis. Effective biblical preaching honors that development" (Robinson 2004:88). The key is making sure it is expositional. Expositional preaching not only tells what the passage means but how it relates to people today. The preaching can mix up the forms of

preaching and touch the postmodern Christians as well as modern Christians. Expository preaching offers variety in preaching while it stays true to the text. Expository preaching not only stays true to the text but allows the text to be true to the congregational needs.



This work has examined the preparation of preaching, the presentation of preaching and now will speak to the productivity of preaching. Going back to the analogy of football, every coach expects respect from the team as well as cooperation. Without respect and cooperation teams will not learn and perform well. For the team to respect the coach it must first see that the coach believes in what he/she is teaching the players. The team must acknowledge that the coach is knowledgeable about football and knows what works. It must believe in the coach and his approach. As the team believes in its coach and his/her approach it will learn to cooperate and respect the leader, method, and message. This will result in changed lives in the team members as well as other teams. One might ask how one team is changed by what coaches of other teams do? Coaches and teams will be recognized by their performance. Their attitudes, methods, and actions will be learned from and imitated.

Much like the relationship between the football coach and the team, in preaching there must be acceptance and respect for the preacher in order for cooperation and participation of the congregation to happen. The congregation needs to see the preacher

as a real person who understands what is happening, who believes in what is being preached, and therefore is authentic in the lifestyle that is being exemplified before them. The minister must be a person who is constantly changed by what is being shared in the pulpit. As mentioned earlier in the work, for the message to make a difference with the congregation the preacher must not just prepare the message but live the message. In order to be listened to and received the preacher must be authentic.

Fabarez in *Preaching That Changes Lives* states, “The personal life of the preacher is the foundation upon which his every sermon stands. He certainly cannot be used of God to change lives if his own life is stagnant. If you are to preach life-changing sermons, you must be able to say with 1 Corinthians 11:1, ‘Imitate me, just as I also am of Christ’ (NASV). That is why Paul tells the young preacher Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16 to watch his life and doctrine closely” (Fabarez 2002:25).

Green, in *The Moody Handbook of Preaching*, shared a story about a masterful preacher, Phillips Brooks, rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Boston in the 1870s. Green states that “during his tenure there, he was invited to speak at the annual Yale Lectures, where he delivered the still highly respected *Lectures on Preaching*, later published in 1877. Brooks was a colleague of evangelist D. L. Moody and ministered effectively alongside him during evangelistic crusades. When Brooks died in 1893, Boston mourned as if the entire city had been a member of his parish. Perhaps the greatest hallmark of Brook’s preaching was the intimate tie between his personal spiritual life and his power in the pulpit. As he explained during one of his lectures: ‘Nothing but fire kindles fire; to know in one’s whole nature what it is to live by Christ; to be His and not our own; to be so occupied by gratitude for what He did for us and for what He

continually is to us that His will and His glory shall be the sole desires of our life . . . that is the first necessity of the preacher.’ Brooks characterized the preacher as a messenger – and a witness. As a witness, the preacher must speak from experience. Today we would probably use the word ‘incarnational’ to describe his philosophy” (Green 2008:109-10).

For the preacher to be more than just an orator there must be change taking place in the life of the messenger. Change that cries out, “The message is real. Look at me and see.” In other words, the Word of God must first become incarnational in the preacher’s life. There must be an ever-deepening relationship between the preacher, the Word of God, and God. Green comments that “Those who wish to connect spiritually with a congregation must first be intimately connected with the Lord” (Green 2008:110).

There first needs to be an ongoing change in the preacher’s life that evidences itself to the congregation allowing what is being spoken to affect their lives. Second, listeners must cooperate. One is drawn into the message by way of the word and the application. This can happen during the message by examples and illustrations, questions, dialogue, storytelling, movie clips, and other means. Even with the application, the preacher and the congregation must remember as Ortberg states:

The core value of preaching that changes lives is that it’s biblical. You and I don’t change lives. For two thousand years, God has used the power of His Word to convict stubborn hearts of sin, to move cold spirits to repentance, and to lift faltering lives to hope. To be biblical does not mean that the preacher follows a particular form that, after all, human beings created. ‘Biblical preaching is when listeners are enabled to see how their world, like the biblical world, is addressed by the Word of God.’ Biblical preaching occurs when people listen, are able to hear that God is addressing them as God addressed the world of the Scriptures, and are enabled to respond. Far too many sermons have lots of information about the Bible but are not really biblical preaching because they do not call and enable the people to respond to the Word. The goal is not to get vast amounts of exegetical information into people. My goal is not to get the

people all the way through the Bible. My goal is to get the Bible all the way through the people (Ortberg 2005:452).

The first thing that the pastor must do for the congregation to be productive in their Christian lives is to be authentic. The second thing the preacher must do for the congregation to grow from God's Word is as Ortberg shared have a goal, a purpose with the message. As Ortberg commented, "The goal is not to get vast amounts of exegetical information into the people . . . but to get the Bible all the way through the people" (Ortberg 2005:452). The goal should be to allow the central thought of the text to penetrate and change the lives of the congregation.

How does a preacher prepare for this task? First, preachers must remember as stated by Ortberg earlier that, "You and I don't change lives; God changes lives (Ortberg 2005:451)" This is very important. When preachers try too hard to change lives different things can occur. For one thing, preachers will place too much emphasis on the style and form of a sermon and not enough on the goal of the sermon. Another problem that can surface is that certain forms of preaching become the only method applicable to certain cultures. Finally exegeting the congregation can become the main emphasis in preparing and preaching the message. In essence what happens is the preacher becomes the main source for reaching and changing the congregation instead of the Word of God and the Spirit of God; the main emphasis of the message is exegeting the congregation instead of it exegeting the Word of God. The preacher must not take on the responsibility of trying to reach and change a congregation but instead realize that it is God who changes lives.

This does not exempt the preacher from properly preparing and presenting the message. What can the preacher do other than properly prepare and deliver the message that will help in changing the congregation? There are a few things which can occur.

Ortberg states that “Biblical preaching answers three questions: What must hearers know, feel, and do? To that I ask three questions. What do I want people to know? What do I want people to feel? What do I want people to do? I think about these questions for every message I preach because if I don’t address the mind and heart and will – if I can’t answer those questions – then I need not deliver this message because it’s not going to wash their minds in the Word” (Ortberg 2005:453). The preacher can ask these questions to help in making sure that the sermon is on target.

The second thing a preacher can do in helping the congregation receive the message is, as Quicke states in the book *360 degree preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word*, “too few listeners understand their essential role in 360-degree preaching, preachers must *find ways to alert them* (emphasis mine)” (Quicke 2003:195). In other words preachers should teach their congregation how to receive the message. One method Quicke suggests is to teach the congregation to “prepare for worship expectantly” (Quicke 2003:195). Quicke continues by stating that “True Worshipers will worship the Father in ‘Spirit and in Truth.’ Spiritual insensitivity to God before worship promotes spiritual insensitivity during worship. Rather, expectations should be raised that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are at work. The more preachers practice the presence of God in 360-degree preaching, the more listeners will prepare with them” (Quicke 2003:195-96).

The second suggestion Quicke makes is that listeners need to “listen with all your mind” (Quicke 2003:196). Quicke continues by saying that “Active listening involves a willingness to participate mentally with a speaker, to question and interact with a sermon’s points and flow” (Quicke 2003:196).

Quicke's third suggestion is, "to listen with all your heart and soul. Spiritual engagement always involves more than cognitive and intellectual responses" (Quicke 2003:196). The message needs to be taken to heart as well as mind.

The final suggestion offered by Quicke is "Listen with all your strength, for full conviction should lead to behavioral change. Effective preaching is about long-term formation of Christ-shaped individuals and communities within the mystery of God's triune grace" (Quicke 2003:196-197). Change is not just about a decision that is made at the altar of the church during services. Change may be made there but if so that is just the beginning. Change is an ongoing process in the Christian life.

What Quicke suggest is that the preacher teach the congregation what it means to worship, how to prepare themselves for listening to the message, how to listen to the message, and how to participate in worship and with the message. In summary, the second thing a preacher needs to do in assisting the congregation's productivity with the message is teach them how to listen and accept the message.

The third thing a preacher can do to assist the congregation in receiving and applying the message is through the use of listening. The pastor can select spiritual individuals to represent the church according to age, race, economic status, and any other way that might be helpful. With this group or groups the preacher can meet after the message and ask questions as to how the message was heard and received. The spiritual team/s can then conduct Bible Study groups during the week to help their age group in understanding the message and its application. These study groups can talk about how the message spoke to them and what can be done to help make it incarnational in the congregation's lives. The leaders will continually meet with the pastor to let the preacher

know what progress is being made and make suggestions as to what might improve the incarnational process.

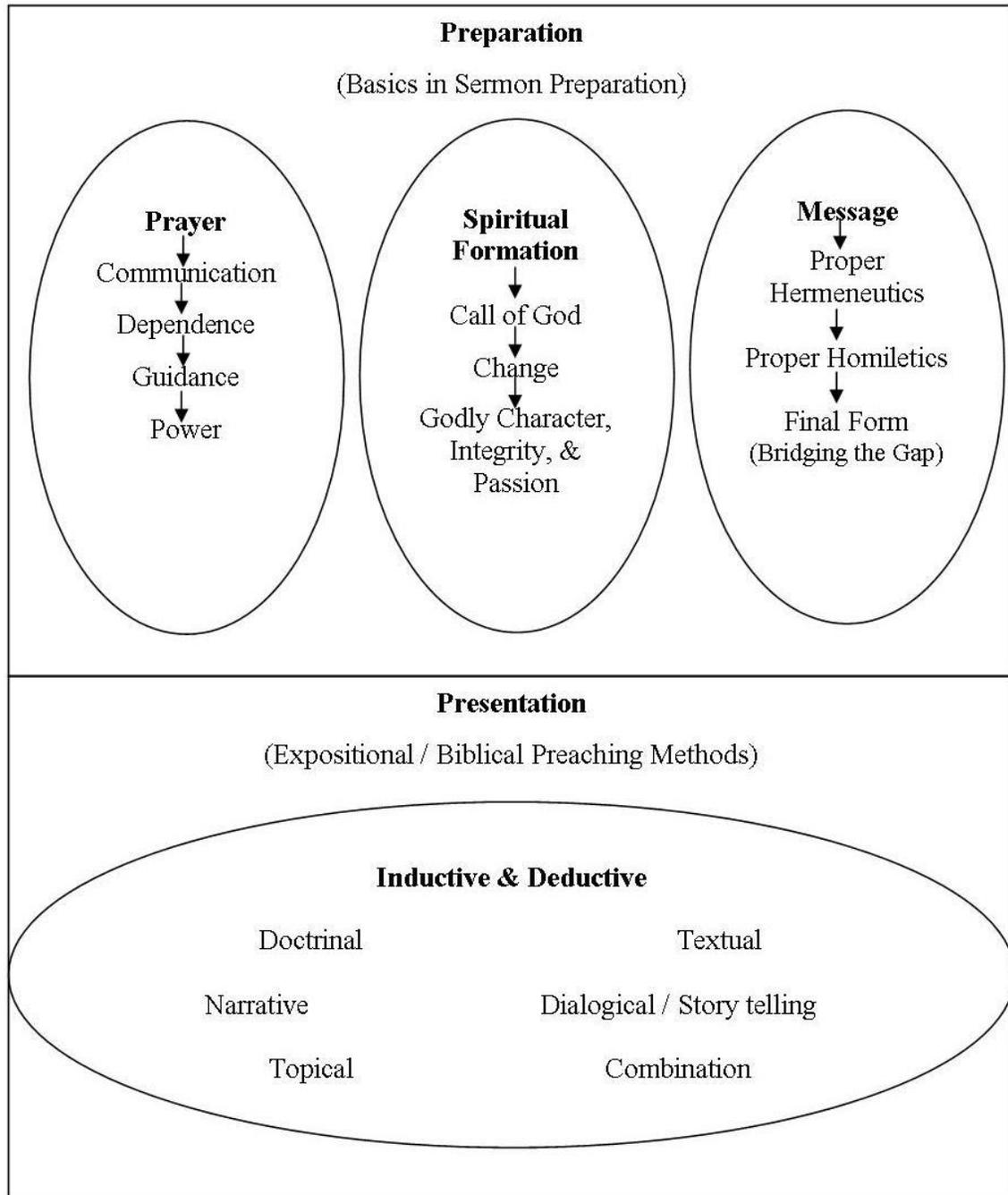
Another way to accomplish this ministry is during the mid-week services or Sunday evening services. The preacher and church may decide to use that time for the message to be discussed. Incarnational suggestions and testimonies can be shared at that time. The congregation as a whole can give feedback to the pastor about the message and how it has been received and incarnated into the congregation's life.

At times the preacher may choose to use someone in the congregation who is being changed by the message. The preacher can either use that person in the morning worship hour to testify to what has happened and is happening in their life or use the person and others at other times designated for incarnational purposes.

There are creative ways in which the pastor and church can make sure that productivity is happening within the congregation. The church must seek to find what is best for that particular church. Each church is different therefore what works for one congregation might not work for another at least not at a certain point in time. The pastor and congregation must always realize that whatever is discussed concerning ways to help with productivity must never compromise the message and its biblical meaning. The preacher and church should take immediate steps in dismissing such discussions. In preparation and presentation the fundamentals need to be adhered to for the message to remain true to the biblical teaching and purpose of the passage.

BRIDGING THE GAP FOR CHANGE

(From the biblical world to modern day)



Productivity

(Application)

Examples - Preacher

Power of the Holy Spirit and the Word

Pastor teaching; how to for incarnational results

Participation of others

(group, team, one on one, weekly services, etc.)

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

A Model for Expository Preaching in the Traditional Evangelical Church for Postmodern Christians

Many in the emerging church movement have testified that the needs of postmodern Christians are not being met by the traditional evangelical church. These emerging leaders have diagnosed a problem and valiantly sought a solution. Sometimes in seeking solutions the end result is not any different from the one being remedied. Emerging leaders have diagnosed some areas with traditional expository preaching that needed to be flagged and changed. Emergents see a need for change in the following areas: awareness of people's needs; using understandable terminology and recognizing the importance of other elements of worship. Emergents believe the message can be too dualistic and sometimes preaching becomes merely a teaching time. Sometimes Scripture replaces God as the main focus. Unfortunately, there are occasions when problems are not so much solved as replaced.

The emerging movement has often been critical of the traditional evangelical church as only preaching one way. The form they refer to is usually identified as traditional expositional preaching. It is viewed by many emerging leaders to be outdated and out-of-touch, therefore not reaching the postmodern culture. The emerging leaders claim that the style of preaching they perform which is narrative, dialogical/storytelling, and conversational is received more readily by the postmodern Christians than that of the traditional expository preaching. One such problem with this perspective is that it

attempts to lump most postmoderns into one category, assuming that all postmoderns think the same way and desire the same thing. Another problem is assuming all traditional expository preaching is the same in style and presentation.

As proposed in the last chapter of this work, traditional expositional preaching when done properly can and should be the most efficient method for reaching postmodern Christian needs. The expository preaching model proposed in chapter six is one of variety, and if done properly can be presented as Brueggemann suggests like “a poet” sharing the story in a passion filled way. Traditional expository preaching done properly should be making the “old, old” story alive and relevant.

The Emergents view traditional preaching as lifeless and sterile. They believe traditional expositional preaching only presents propositional truths without moving the congregation to incarnational living.

Traditional expositional preaching, if done properly, can and will move the congregation to incarnational living. Proper expositional preaching is not only teaching the congregation the propositional truths from the Bible. Expositional preaching if done properly does more than just preach facts. Proper expository preaching is biblical. It moves the congregation from the meaning of the passage in the biblical world to the meaning for the congregation in the modern world *without changing the author’s original intent for writing* (emphasis mine). The key is moving from the biblical world to the present world without losing the original meaning and intent while still applying it to the present world. The best method for this is the expositional method. Expositional preaching involves both the exegeting of the text and the exegeting of the congregation. This method allows the message to become alive for the congregation if done properly.

With the expositional method one can use both deductive and inductive methods of preparation. From these two methods the one can decide what form of preaching best fits the passage and genre. This is where variety comes in. One can do a message doctrinal in style or narrative in style and still remain expositional (biblical).

One of the keys to expositional preaching is determining the central thought of the writer and moving that thought into the present world. The central thought may change in wording but not in meaning as the preacher applies it to the congregation.

Bringing the message into the modern (present) world involves exegeting the congregation. Exegeting the congregation can be done in a number of ways, but for the preacher to handle it properly there needs to be an awareness of the people with whom the preacher is speaking. However the awareness is determined will be left for the preacher to decide. The message should always be exegeted first in the biblical setting and then applied to the present setting. To properly apply it to the present setting the preacher must be exegeting the congregation at all times.

Proper expositional preaching prepares the preacher for the presentation time. The preacher may give a great speech but it will only be a speech if he/she has not applied the Word of God to his/her life during the week. Not only must the Word of God and the message become incarnational with the preacher but the congregation must see the incarnational as proof in such ways as a life of belief, integrity, and love if they are to believe and accept the message. The message will not have the desired effect until the congregation knows the preacher is sincere. For this to happen, the preacher's personal life must reflect the message.

When the message is preached in the proper expositional way the Holy Spirit can more readily use it to change the lives of the congregation. It is not the preacher's responsibility to change lives but to preach the word in such a way that the Word and the Holy Spirit have every opportunity to work in the lives of the congregation. The process involves teaching the congregation how to receive the Word of God properly.

As proposed in chapter six there are numerous ways to do this. One important way is from the pulpit with instructions and messages. This part of the preaching formula is called productivity. In the football analogy it might be called film day (after the game is played) when coaches watch, examine, and learn from the films what needs to be concentrated on to improve the team. After the coaches examine and critique the game-day performance, the coaches and team meet to view and further discuss the game. In the same way preachers, pastor team leaders, and congregation can talk about the sermon after it has been preached and whether or not it has been applied in their lives. Productivity is an ongoing process. Changing and becoming more like Christ is a process and not an instant act. For this reason team meetings, services, and one-on-one meetings can be used to help make sure the effects of the sermon are being implemented for continuing development.

Traditional expository (biblical) preaching is needed today in an anti-authority age, just as biblical preaching by the apostles was needed in their day to combat a culture hostile to the Word of God. As Gibson, editor of *Preaching To A Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating That Connects*, states "Throughout the centuries biblical preaching has been rejected. Paul's own apostolic authority was constantly challenged. Maybe we see in the day in which we live particular dangers. For it does seem that in a

day in which people reject authority of any type that these are wilderness days crying for a voice – but not necessarily biblical preaching” (Gibson 2004:216). Is biblical preaching what this anti-authority age needs? The answer is yes, because biblical expository preaching “has authority and relevance for man and woman to live in an anti-authority age. The Bible is self authenticating. By the power of the Word of God through the Holy Spirit these God-breathed words change the lives of men and women. If we preach it, we will not be put to shame. Preachers are called to proclaim the powerful, authoritative Word in the midst of a culture that is looking for a voice in its wilderness. Biblical preaching is needed today because the Bible has authority and relevance for men and women to live in an anti-authority age” (Gibson 2004:226). Traditional expository preaching done properly can present to the postmoderns an authority that is being rejected but needed. For the culture to be introduced to this authority the preacher must first believe and live as though the Bible is the authority for lives and also relevant for lives. When this happens the greatness of God (the author of the Bible) will be evident in the preacher’s life and the message. John Piper, in the book *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, states that “God himself is the necessary subject matter of our preaching” (Piper 1990:12). Piper is not suggesting that the message should not be practical but that the practical should not be placed before the holy presence of God. In other words, the practical should not be placed in a position of preeminence over God and His Word. The primary means by which one learns and worships God is through His Word. It is God’s authority which makes great preaching. Proper expositional preaching rests on God’s authority, not man’s authority.

At times, the emerging church seems to place more emphasis on the different aspects of service and the different experiences in the service rather than the Word of God. The emerging church is right in trying to make all aspects of the worship a part of worship. The problem arises when that which is used in the worship distracts from and de-centralizes the preaching of the Word of God. With some emerging churches the focal point is not on the preaching of God's word. The emerging service may have many different involvements (movements of worship) going on during worship as the sermon is being shared. The worship center may have the preacher seated among the congregation as just another participant. With some emergents, the reason the preacher is placed among the congregation is to de-emphasize the preeminence of preaching the word of God. Some emergents feel that, preaching the message should not be the central point of worship. Mohler states that "Any consideration of Christian preaching must begin with the realization that *preaching is essentially an act of worship*. The norm of our worship must be the *Word of God* (emphasis mine)" (Mohler 2008:24, 28). Traditional expository preaching done properly prepares and presents the message as the central point of the worship believing that "hearing and responding to the Word of God is a matter of crucial importance . . . of life and death" (Mohler 2008:54).

Traditional expository preaching done properly will expound the Word of God in such a way as to be true to both text and congregation. It does not mean that properly done, the text won't be abused at times by illustrations and application, but more likely than not if expository preaching is properly attempted, it will stay true to the text and the congregation. The Emerging Church needs to be careful in the area of illustrations. Too many illustrations and application will lose the emphasis of the central thought in the

message therefore losing the purpose of the message. Russell reminds us that, “There can be no spiritual transforming apart from the true meaning of the biblical text” (Russell 2000:43). Easley in the book *The Moody Handbook of Preaching*, states:

When we illustrate a point, we explain it with something the audience can identify with and understand. We may tell a story that elaborates and illustrates the point. Be careful though not to let the illustration overpower the point or become the point. In other words, let the Bible guide your use of illustrations, rather than finding a great story and building the message around it. The use of DVD clips provides a good example of this danger. These clips can be powerful. But if the clip becomes the centerpiece or the main idea or takes a large chunk of time to develop, it is probably taking away from the passage. If the illustration becomes the foundation of the message with a few principles tacked on to make it a sermon, then our audience is left with a nice preview of cool clip. But can they easily find their way to the biblical passage or point? When the DVD illustration overshadows the scriptural passage, we’ve moved from the exposition to entertainment. To toss up a DVD clip is easy. The video image supplants the need to do the tough work of exegesis and exposition (Easley 2008:34).

The emerging church and their worship illustrations how using over-heads, video clips, DVDs, power-points and congregational participation too often and too much can cause confusion and distract from the message and its purpose if not careful. The reason may be a lack of diligence on the preacher’s part in exegeting the passage properly and the congregation properly. Another reason might be an inappropriate mindset concerning the authority of the Scriptures. A third reason might be approaching the passage anthropologically instead of Christologically. A final reason may be that when trying so hard to reach a certain group like the postmoderns the preacher can underestimate the audience in which they are addressing. For example Easley states in *The Moody Handbook of Preaching* that “The difficulty postmodern audiences have in listening to propositional truth has been grossly overstated” (Easley 2008:34). In other words, not all postmoderns are anti-propositional.

When the emerging church leaders misread the culture in which they serve they can easily go to extremes in another area while trying to reach the congregation. In this case it might be using too many illustrations and application thereby taking away from the message and its purpose.

Hunt, in the book, *The Vanishing Word: The Veneration of Visual Imagery In the Postmodern World* states:

Technology, progress, and the future are all synonyms in contemporary American culture. Contrary to popular thinking, technology is not neutral. It has the propensity to change our beliefs and behavior. Pictures have a way of pushing rational discourse – linear logic – into the background. The devaluation of the word and its hostile supplanting by image is a direct assault upon ‘the religion of the Book.’ In accordance to this thought, we are all in danger of becoming pagans. Not just pagans, but mindless and defenseless pagans who would prefer to have someone tell us how to think and behave. Paganism never really died in modern western culture; it was only restrained. Realizing that I am not the first to suggest that we are entering a high-tech version of the Dark Ages (who relied heavily on images). I suggest that the emergence of postmodernism is actually a by-product of two tandem occurrences – the rapid rise of the image and the denunciation of objectivity exemplified in the death throes of modernism. The traditional conventions of worship are being obliterated . . . and our church services are being shriveled to shallow spectacles. A church cut from its word-based heritage and a nation stripped of word-based modes of learning do not have the rhetorical or mental resources to guard against despotism. Our image-saturated culture is at risk of being preyed upon by a tyrant in waiting (Hunt 2003:13-14, 21, 26).

Hunt warns the church that images and numerous other aspects of the service can be used as a tyrant hindering the authority of the message, the message itself, and the purpose of the message. Becoming more image oriented can lead to a lazy mind and therefore a misinformed heart. Hunt illustrates by comparing the church of the Postmodern age with the church of the Dark Ages in that both are illiterate, often misinformed and image prone. Hunt talks about how during the Dark Ages many believers, not knowing how to

read depended not only on the speaker for truth but images and shared stories. Many times the believers, according to Hunt, would end up distorting the message from the Word of God because of the part images played in their lives as well as the part ignorance played.

Today the emerging church must be careful not to put experiences and relationships above the Truth. They must not rely too much on images for telling the story of God. God and the Word in the message needs to be the center of worship and all other aspects of the sermon must only be used as a means or tool for the Holy Spirit to use in drawing the congregation into God's presence to be touched and changed. The original message must be discovered, protected, preached and applied. If done properly traditional expository preaching will be the means by which God accomplishes this goal.

Emerging dialogical/storytelling, narrative conversational preaching:

Emerging conversational preaching allows \longrightarrow *experience*, not necessarily the Word to influence the *behavior* which in turns \longrightarrow influences *how one believes* many times.

Traditional expository preaching:

Traditional expositional preaching, if done properly, will allow the *Truth*, not experience to influence how one believes \longrightarrow therefore \longrightarrow influencing \longrightarrow application therefore influencing behavior.

Traditional expository preaching done properly is effective preaching. Expository preaching involves understanding the text, forming the sermon, and engaging the audience. As Mohler stated, "Expository preaching is that mode of Christian preaching that takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible. All other issues and concerns are subordinated to the central task of presenting the

biblical text. As the Word of God, the text of Scripture has the rights to establish both the substance and the structure of the sermon. Genuine exposition takes place when the preacher sets forth the meaning and message of the biblical text and makes clear how the Word of God establishes the identity and worldview of the church as the people of God” (Mohler 2008:65). Proper or genuine traditional expository preaching can be used in every culture because it remains true to the biblical text and directs the congregation into not just knowing what God desires to teach them but how to live what is being taught to them. Traditional expositional preaching comes not in just one form but a variety of forms according to the genre of the Bible and sermon preparation. Traditional expositional preaching prepared and presented properly can and will produce godly results for the postmodern Christians and Christians in any age.

The pyramid illustration of Traditional Evangelical Expository preaching on the following page demonstrates how the preacher can build the bridge from the biblical world into the present world by taking the proper steps. One needs to understand that if the process is short-changed, inverted, or reversed the results could be damaging. Just like in football, teams can run fascinating and disguised plays which may appear effective at first but with time, weaknesses will reveal themselves if coaches and players have forsaken the basics or fundamentals of the game. Without the fundamentals a football team will not be effective very long. Without the fundamentals the preacher will not be effective very long either. As with the pyramid all steps (preparation – presentation – productivity) needs to be in place for the preacher to effectively move from the biblical world into the modern world. When the steps of the pyramid are properly followed the results can be and should be beneficial for God and His kingdom.

TRADITIONAL EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING PYRAMID
(Getting Back to the Basics)



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