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Digital and Analog Preaching in a Multi-media World

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DIGITAL AND ANALOG

PREACHING IN A MULTI-MEDIA WORLD

by

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ABSTRACT

DIGITAL AND ANALOG

PREACHING IN A MULTI-MEDIA WORLD

by

Rev. Ramona Hayes

This thesis explores the reception of sermons by two groups: "Analogs," people who were formed primarily through the written page and who gather and process information linearly, and "Digitals," people who were formed by digital communication and who gather and process information in sound bites. Using the Action/Reflection model, a series of sermons was presented: a manuscript sermon, an integrated worship/sermon, a TED Talk style sermon, a participatory sermon, and a multiple learning style sermon. Preaching a sermon which engages both groups has the potential to increase engagement with the biblical text and growth in faith.

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author's family, friend, and community. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge those

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Above all, thanks and praise to the God who created us with inquisitive minds and instilled in me a passion for preaching God's work. Glory and praise to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Living in a Digital World, Preaching as an Analog Girl

The way people gather and process information has changed dramatically over the last fifty years. The internet, electronic devices, social media, and gaming not only have given us different ways of accessing data but are changing the way our brains process that data. In addition, developments in learning theory have determined that people learn in a variety of ways. Yet the craft of preaching remains, for the most part, centered around a spoken message delivered by a single speaker. The monologue format of preaching was designed for a text-based, linguistic learning style and discounts the changes in how information is gathered and processed in the digital age. While this may be acceptable to congregants who grew up in an age where distribution of information was linear, is this method of preaching accessible for our congregants who receive information in a multi-media, non-linear format? This is no idle question. Preachers bear the awesome (and sometimes frightening!) responsibility of proclaiming God's Word, not only through the assigned biblical readings for each Sunday, but in the words of their sermon. Put another way, when the congregation gathers each Sunday and asks, "We wish to see Jesus,"[1] does a text-based, linear preaching style enable an encounter with

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[1] John 12:21 All quotations of Scripture will be from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

God for both those who are used to non-linear, multi-media communication, as well as those who communicate in a linear and text-based style?

My thesis explores the reception of sermons by people whose ways of gathering and processing information is different. This thesis will look at two groups: "Analogs," people who were formed primarily through the written page and who gather and process information linearly, and "Digitals," people who were formed by digital communication and who gather and process information in sound bites. Since most congregations are a mix of Digital and Analog, the focus will be on how various sermon styles are received by members of each group. To be clear, I am not proposing to incorporate various forms of digital media into sermons. I am searching for non-digital ways to craft a sermon that will resonate with Digital listeners and enhance their reception and understanding of the sermon while also appealing to Analog listeners. Using the Action/Reflection model, a series of sermons was presented, with post-sermon questionnaires.

Justification and Rationale

In May of 2017, *Wired* posted "Your Camera Wants to Kill the Keyboard," predicting the demise of the keyboard on smart phones and tablets in favor of vocal and image driven search queries.[2] Digital assistants, such as Siri, Cortana, and Alexa, are ever ready to listen to one's questions and offer an answer. And how simple it is to take a picture and have Google or Safari search for similar items, instead of typing the name of the item (especially in those cases where the item or brand is unidentified), and have

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[2] Elizabeth Stinson, "Your Camera Wants to Kill the Keyboard," On-Line Magazine, WIRED, May 22, 2017, https://www.wired.com/2017/05/camera-wants-kill-keyboard/, accessed May 23, 2017.

necessary information appear. I would say "at your fingertips," but this is exactly the crux of the matter. Fingertips and typing are old school in a world where visual images are fast becoming the primary source of information dissemination and gathering.[3] My personal experience with this change from text to images happened the day I realized that my Facebook feed contained many more posts with pictures and videos than posts strictly with written text. Just in the last few months, I have noticed that some of the shorter written posts have added bright graphic backgrounds which help them to stand out amidst the overwhelmingly visual content.

Technology changes and those changes impact how people interact with technology. I am reminded of a scene from *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*. Traveling back to the twenty-first century with the mission to bring two humpback whales to the twenty-third century to save Earth from destruction, Scottie needs to input a mathematical formula on a computer. He says, "Computer? Computer?" He gets no response. When handed a mouse, he tries talking to it. Finally, he is directed to the keyboard, which he looks at with derision and says "Keyboard? How quaint!" before he begins to hunt and peck out the equation.[4] While much of the technology envisioned for the twenty-third century Federation of Planets is still in embryonic stages in the early twenty-first century, computers that listen, see, and respond are already here. We interact sensually with our technology: We touch our screens, we speak to a digital assistant, and

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[3] Karyn Wiseman, *I Refuse to Preach a Boring Sermon! Engaging the 21st Century Listener* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2013), 70.

[4] Leonard Nimoy, *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, DVD Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1986).

we listen for a response.[5] The phone camera becomes a third eye by which we see and experience not only the world, but our own selves (both figuratively and literally, via the ubiquitous selfie).

Technology changes how we do things. Walter Ong, in his book, *Orality and Literacy,* recounts the shift in patterns of thinking form "primary oral" cultures to the "literate" cultures of the written word.[6] Those cultures prior to the invention of writing used rhyme and rhythm, patterns, imagery, tone, inflection, gestures to communicate and to make memories. The advent of the written word allowed for the development of a linear, logical way of thinking and speaking, at least among those who could read and write. Ong reminds us that Plato in his day spoke out against the horrors of the written word, stating that writing (and reading!) would lead to decreased intelligence, fearing that the ease of having things written down would decrease capacity for memory and result in intellectual laziness.[7] Despite Plato's fears, (many of which are quite similar to the fears expressed at the changes brought by digital media use), the written word was here to stay. Communication had a foot in both camps: the written word spawned new ways of thinking and speaking for those who were literate, while a strong oral tradition remained to communicate with those who were not.

The oral/aural/visual-based society of pre-printing press days gave way to the text-based society that flourished after the mid-fifteenth century invention of the

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[5] Point of interest: part of this paper was written using a dictation software during recuperation from surgery on my hand.

[6] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Methuen & Co., 1982), 35-36.

[7] Ibid., 79.

moveable type printing press made printed books widely accessible.[8] These changes

impacted the church. Biblical texts, once only available through public proclamation

from the pulpit (and often illustrated by richly detailed stained-glass windows), were now

available for personal consumption, to be read silently by an increasingly literate

congregation. There may have been theological reason for the iconoclasts smashing the

stained-glass windows of so many cathedrals, but I wonder if it wasn't also a way of

throwing out the old technology (oral storytelling and artistic visuals) in favor of the new

text technology (the printed text).

In the same way, in this age of digital media, the printed page is becoming less

important for information dissemination and data gathering. Blogs and posts often have a

"tl;dr" warning at the top, an acronym for "too long; didn't read," that indicates that the

post is long and often offers a summary if you don't want to read the entire piece. If a

picture is worth a thousand words, think of the power of a picture combined with a pithy

caption! In the age of digital media, where a vast amount of information is available, the

caption often becomes the tl;dr version of the article as one skims to the next information

byte.

Digital communication is the primary means of communication in our current

cultural context. To be sure, there are varying degrees of fluency in this form of

communication, ranging from the non-digitally literate to the those for whom digital

communication is their first language. Like a tourist who doesn't speak the native

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[8] Clay Shirky, "Means," in *The Digital Divide: Arguments for and Against Facebook, Google, Texting and the Age of Social Networking*, Kindle e-book (New York: The Penguin Group, 2011).

language, the church often resorts to just speaking louder and slower, sure that the "digital natives" will then understand the message.

Preaching is firmly rooted in the print/analog culture. Seminary students are taught to write outlines and manuscripts. The title of Paul Scott Wilson's book *Four Pages of the Sermon* illustrates just how enmeshed preaching is with text-based ways of gathering and processing data. In his book *Mediating Faith,* Clint Schnekloth says, "For most pastors, the sermon is an ancient communicative technology that they inhabit more regularly than any other."[9]

Even the organization of our worship spaces is reminiscent of text on the page of a book: all straight lines, facing in one direction. I had never made this connection between the printed page and the typical worship space layout until I attended a synod assembly workshop presented by Jay Gamelin and Justin Rimbo comparing modern and postmodern worldviews. I remember Gamelin drawing a very rudimentary rendition of the printed page on an easel pad. He talked about how the printed page organized the way moderns see the world. Then he drew a cross at the center top, added some lines to indicate a pulpit and turned around.[10]

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[9] Clint Schnekloth, *Mediating Faith: Faith Formation in a Trans-Media Era* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 17.

[10] Jay Gamelin, and Justin Rimbo, "Pre-Synod Assembly Workshop on Postmodernism," South Dakota Synod Assembly, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD, June 8, 2012.

Figure 1. Layout of the Printed Page as Compared to Layout of the Sanctuary[11]

The entire group was stunned by how the church is so "text-bound" that even the physical

space appears to be organized to reflect the printed page! Gamelin talked about the

differences between traditional classroom teaching methods – the lecture – and how

postmodern people learn by experience, group work, and kinetic processing. I thought of

my own children's classrooms, which had been arranged in seating around tables and in

small groups rather than the traditional rows with a teacher lecturing up front. And I

began to wonder if the generational differences were as broad as the cultural differences

between people of different countries.

In his book *Flickering Pixels,* Shane Hipps discusses how the technology we use

affects the way we think and organize the world around us.[12] He notes that not only did

the organization of the worship space change after the introduction of the printing press,

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[11] I created this diagram using Microsoft Publisher.

[12] Shane Hipps, *Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith*, ePub format (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 44-48.

but the way Christians thought about and proclaimed the Gospel began to change as well. As the printed text, with its sequential presentation of information, became more accessible, "linear reasoning became the primary means of understanding and propagating faith. This led to a belief that the gospel could be established and received only through reason and fact."[13] Belief became intellectual to doctrines, rather than a thing of the heart.

After attending Gamelin and Rimbo's workshop, I began to pay more attention to news articles, podcasts, and books that discussed generational differences. As I listened and read, I noticed that most of the prevailing literature, as well as my own observation of practices, recommended establishing generation-specific ministries, a luxury that pastors in small rural contexts such as mine do not have. I started thinking about the people sitting in the pews on any given Sunday morning: the gray-haired matriarch or patriarch, the middle-aged faithfuls, the younger adults (most with families). Was my preaching accessible to everyone in the pews, or was I simply hoping I was speaking loudly and slowly enough that the ones who didn't speak the church-cultural language would understand?

One afternoon, I had a conversation with a confirmation student. I had asked him what activities he would like to see the youth group do. Our conversation led to a discussion of the confirmation program and what changes he thought would make it more meaningful to the students. He then shifted the conversation to worship on Sunday morning and suggested my sermons could be more "exciting." When I asked him what he

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[13] Ibid., 49.

meant by "exciting," he had trouble articulating exactly what he meant. It was clear, however, that the way I preached did not engage him or the other younger members of the congregation. I started to pay more attention to the younger adults in my congregation—a small minority to be sure. I thought about the high school and middle school youth, who are learning in classrooms in vastly different ways from the classrooms of forty or more years ago, and who are accessing the internet and using smart phones and social media in ways never dreamed of when the oldest members of our congregations were young. While writing this thesis, I asked my current confirmation students how many were bored by the sermon. Every single one raised their hands.

As I continued to read and study, I realized that the understanding of the generational divide I was observing was in some ways too simplistic and in others much too complicated. While generational categories provide a shorthand way of speaking of differing worldviews, the reality is that there are members of the Boomer and earlier generations who have a post-modern worldview, and there are Gen Xers and later with modern worldviews.

In addition, the advances in recognition of learning styles further complicate the modern/postmodern dichotomy. Traditional preaching is by its very nature an oral presentation, which works well for the listening learning style.[14] In some churches, a visual aid or a sermon outline might be presented that reaches out to the visual learners. But what about the kinesthetic learners, or those familiar with the other learning styles? Are those who learn by other means than listening to be

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[14] Thomas H. Troeger and H. Edward Everding Jr., *So That All Might Know: Preaching That Engages the Whole Congregation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 5.

ignored? As I have talked about my doctoral work with congregants, those in the

education field responded emphatically that the traditional sermon does nothing to

address these different ways of learning.

The last piece of the puzzle fell into place as I began to see news stories

about how the use of digital media may be changing the very way we think. Tex

Sample, in 1998, made the observation that many in our world seem to be moving

into a post-written text society,[15] where images reign supreme. My research led me

into the world of hyperlinks, multitasking, and the intense multi-sensory experiences

of gaming. One of the questions that this thesis will address: How does a sermon

compete with such enticements?

I decided to focus on the differences between digital versus analog

information processing and its impact on the reception of various sermon styles. I

have borrowed the term "Digital" from Marc Prensky,[16] whose work delineates the

differences between "digital natives" (the Gen X and Millennial generations who

have never known a world without digital media) and "digital immigrants"

(Boomers and those older who have learned to navigate the digital world).[17] I have

added the term "Analog" to designate those who do not use digital media in any

significant way. This is a significant distinction for this thesis since brain research

shows that while the brains of digital immigrants will develop some of the same

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[15] Tex Sample, *The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World: Electronic Culture and the Gathered People of God* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 23.

[16] Marc Prensky, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," *On the Horizon,* 9, no. 5 (October 2001).

[17] Ibid., 8.

neural pathways as digital natives over time,[18] analogs will not have similar development. The preferences and worldviews of each group loosely correspond with the dichotomy between modern and postmodern worldviews and generational differences. The use of the categories "Digital" and "Analog" also takes into consideration learning style research, because the analog method of information gathering puts a premium on the linguistic learning style, while the digital method accommodates multiple learning styles.

How do we preach in a way that connects with both groups? How do we preach digitally, not necessarily using technology, but in ways that engage and move the digital members of a congregation without leaving the analog members of our congregations behind?

What I am proposing goes beyond bringing PowerPoint into the sanctuary. Sure, there are churches that use PowerPoint, some quite successfully, but the Digital natives are way beyond the addition of PowerPoint and other superficial nods to digital technology.

In addition to the Digital natives' dismissal of the meager attempt to bring technology to worship, there are objections from the Analog side as well. There are many congregations that, for a variety of reasons, cannot bring in technology. Perhaps the building structure of the worship space prohibits the addition of screens. Perhaps the financial outlay for the necessary equipment is beyond the congregation's resources. Perhaps they don't have the people to do the work necessary for a digital multi-media

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[18] Gary Small and Gigi Vorgan, *IBrain: Surviving the Technological Alteration of the Modern Mind*, Harper Collins e-books (New York: Harper Collins, 2008). Chapter 1, "Your Brain on Google."

worship service. Perhaps the congregation itself is resistant to bringing in digital

technology. After all, Analogs (at least in the congregations I have served or have

otherwise participated in) appear quite happy with the way things are and usually don't

see a need for digital bells and whistles.

I am sure I am not the only pastor facing this dilemma. Across the United

States, myriad pastors face the daunting task of preaching a sermon that is both

digital and analog. It is my hope that this thesis will provide a way forward for them

as well as for me.

This thesis will examine how various preaching styles, using low-tech methods

(as opposed to using digital technology), can reach both the Analog and Digital in a

congregation. In the next chapter, there will be a discussion of the theological reasons for

adapting preaching styles. Knowing that the medium becomes part of the message, and

that the way people gather and access data has changed, what is the biblical precedent for

adapting the medium to the context in which one is preaching?

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Would Jesus Preach Digitally?

Would Jesus preach digitally? Absolutely.

When Jesus calls the first disciples as recorded in Matthew 4:12-23, he uses

language to which they can relate. He does not say, "Follow me and I will make you

great preachers, able to proclaim the kingdom of heaven to all." If he had, would Peter,

Andrew, James, and John have been so quick to leave their nets and their families?

Instead Jesus uses language that resonates with them and their skill set: "Follow me and I

will make you fish for people."[1] What does it mean to fish for people? Even if the

disciples don't understand all that is involved, they do know that they will be in some

way fishing, using the skills they have learned on the sea and in the boats. Jesus reaches

them where they are, using familiar language and thought patterns to lead them to

something new and unexpected.

> Joseph Jeter and Ronald Allen expand on Jesus' call to fish for people:
>
> People who know how to fish know that different kinds of bait attract different
> kinds of fish.. . . Making an approximate parallel between fishing and arranging
> material on one of his theological works, the second-century theologian Clement
> of Alexandria offered a comment that elucidates the situation of the preacher.
> "We must provide a large variety of baits owing to the varieties of fish."

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[1] Matthew 4:19.

Preaching called for variety that corresponds to the variegation in the listening community.[2]

Jesus' call to the disciples to fish for people may have been more than a clever word play. Like a good fisherman, Jesus knew what bait appeals to each fish. Jesus' parables use the ordinary everyday experiences of his listeners to challenge their thinking and illustrate principles of the kingdom of heaven. Illustrations from farming, bread-making, housekeeping, and business provide an easily relatable entry point into the deeper meanings of the parables. Just as Jesus spoke of the common experiences of his listeners, preachers also must craft sermons in ways that speak to their listeners where they are.

The Apostle Paul demonstrates a remarkable understanding of this principle, which is perhaps why he was an apostle to the Gentiles par excellence. In 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, Paul explains the importance of tailoring the means of the message to the audience:

> For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.

In his famous sermon at Athens, Paul demonstrates just how he uses the culture and context to craft his message. Noting the extreme religiosity of the Athenians, he uses this observation to immediately engage his hearers:

> Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and

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[2] Joseph R. Jeter Jr. and Ronald J. Allen, *One Gospel, Many Ears: Preaching for Different Listeners in the Congregation* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002), 6.

looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands . . .." [3]

The good news of the gospel never changes. But when we conflate the medium, the way of presenting the gospel with the message of the gospel, we no longer are following the example of Jesus, or of Paul.

David Buttrick, in *Preaching Jesus Christ*, discusses the necessity of translating biblical concepts such as "sin" and "salvation" into language that is relatable to current listeners. This work is highly contextual, tied not only to a preacher's geographical location, but also to the social-cultural location where meaning is made.[4] Located firmly in the digital culture, the preacher of today is tasked with translating biblical truths into words and methods that are meaningful to her listeners.

The Word Spoken, the Word Embodied

In Genesis 1:1, the act of creation is oral: God spoke, and it was. Likewise, in John 1:1, we hear emphasis on the word: "In the beginning was the Word." These two passages might appear to give preferential treatment for the sermon as an oral event. In the theology of preaching, there is an emphasis on the spoken word as proclamation of the Living Word of God.[5] In this school of thought, any non-oral addition to the

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[3] Acts 17:22-24.

[4] David G. Buttrick, *Preaching Jesus Christ: An Exercise in Homiletic Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 17.

[5] Alison Witte, "Preaching and Technology: A Study of Attitudes and Practices" PhD. Thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2013), 4, 154-156.

preaching event, such as visual aids or the use of digital media, detracts from the power and authority of the Word.

However, viewing preaching as only an oral event appears to discount the implications of John 1:14. The Word became flesh, became embodied. Therefore, our preaching needs also to be embodied, drawing on all the senses, on all the ways we gather and process data in our culture. In addition to the parables Jesus taught, he also used the senses to reveal God. Perhaps the best-known example is when Jesus took the bread and blessed it, proclaiming it "his body," then taking the cup, blessing it, and proclaiming it "his blood" (Matthew 26:26-29). But there were many other times Jesus taught using multi-sensory methods. Water turned into vast quantities of the best wine (John 2) demonstrated the sweetness and abundance of God's grace. Healing was accomplished through simple words, as well as by touch, active participation (Jesus' command to "take up your mat and walk" in John 5:8), and the use of tactile materials (putting mud on the blind man's eyes, John 9:6). The Hebrew Bible prophets often used dramatic object lessons to preach God's word to the people: Jeremiah taking on a yoke (Jer. 27-28), Ezekiel eating a scroll (Ezek. 2:8:3:6), Isaiah walking naked and barefoot (Isa. 20:2). There is a biblical precedent for engaging the senses when proclaiming God's word.

By using methods that are multisensory, we acknowledge human diversity is God-given and good. Robert Fortner observes, "Honoring other people's ways of knowing is a way of honoring their humanity, their identity, the unique way in which God has created them."[6] Each of us is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), and that God-image is

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[6] Troeger and Everding, *So That All Might Know: Preaching That Engages the Whole Congregation,* 7-8.

manifest in a variety of ways. Paul expressed this diversity in his teaching on the Body of Christ (1 Cor.12). Considering how congregation members gather and process data, how they best learn, and the generational life experiences they bring as the preacher prepares to proclaim God's Word not only allows her to recognize the Word made flesh and living among us, but also demonstrates a commitment to Jesus' teaching to love the neighbor as oneself.[7]

Not only did the Word become flesh, but the Word dwelt among us. The Word is relational, participating in our life. Our preaching methods need to invite the congregation into active relationship with the Word. The current model of preaching is very similar to Parker Palmer's model of truth-knowing/truth-telling (Fig. 2a, found on page 17), with an expert (the preacher) possessing knowledge of an object (the biblical text). The expert (preacher) then disseminates this knowledge to the amateur (the congregation).

In Palmer's community of truth (Fig. 2b, found on page 18), the subject (the biblical text) interacts with each of the knowers (congregation and preacher). In the model, the preacher-knower acts as facilitator in the interaction of the congregation-knowers and the text, providing guidance and insight as part of the communal conversation. In her article "What Difference Does It Make," Mary Hess argues that the perichoresis[8] of the Trinity leads us as Christians to more naturally gravitate toward Parker Palmer's second model of multi-directional learning rather than Palmer's first

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[7] Ibid., 18-19.

[8] Perichoresis is the intra-relational, mutual indwelling of the Three Persons of the Trinity.

model of truth-knowing, truth-telling teaching.[9] While Hess' observations are directed at the examination of how digital media can enhance Christian education as faith formation, her observation also applies to the sermon as a method of faith formation. Sermon styles that allow for this type of interaction in the "community of truth" could encourage both the preacher and the congregation into the Trinity's perichoretic dance.

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[9] Mary Hess, "What Difference Does It Make? E-Learning and Faith Community," *Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry* 30, no. 3 (July 1, 2010): 281-90.

Figure 2a and 2b. Models of Teaching [10]

       The prophets, preachers, and teachers in the Bible relied on not only the spoken word, but also on visual, kinesthetic, participatory, and relational methods of proclaiming God's word. Having examined a strong argument that our medium of spreading the Gospel can and indeed must change, we will now turn to look at what the literature says about how people gather and interpret data, how the field of education (which is ahead of preaching in this regard) has changed to accommodate new understandings of both learning styles and data gathering/interpreting processes, and how generational differences make it difficult for congregations and preachers to see the need to adapt to the digital reality in which we now live.

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[10] Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass: a Wiley Imprint, 1997), 156.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Learning to Speak Digitally

In this section, there is a review of the literature that I have examined that relates

to the investigation of how congregational members think and learn. The first area of

examination is of generational differences and how the generational distribution of most

congregations affects perception of the need to respond to the new ways people think and

learn. The next area of examination is the effect the change from printed text to digital

resources has made in the way people gather and process data. The final area of

examination is multiple learning styles and how the sermon might be crafted to engage

more than the oral/auditory learning style. In researching this project, I have done reading

in the areas of generational differences, learning styles, and how digital media usage

affects the brain.

Generational Differences

Hayden Shaw's *Generational IQ* looks at the differences between generations and

how those differences affect faith and worship practices. Shaw defines the generations in

this way:

- Olders are those born before 1945;

- Baby Boomers are born between 1946 and 1964;

- Generation X (or Gen X) are persons born between 1965 and 1980;

- Millennials are born between 1981 and 2001;

- the generation born after 2002 has not been named yet.[1]

Each generation is shaped by the unique experience of its time and the ideas and beliefs that arise from those eras. Generational IQ is the ability to understand the ideas and experiences that shape other generations as well as one's own generation. Pastors are not necessarily better than lay people at recognizing and understanding the experiences that shape the different generations. But I would maintain that this is a skill pastors and preachers need to learn. Because of the changes in the generational makeup of a congregation, a strong understanding of the generational differences is an essential tool in the preacher's toolkit.

Peter Horsfield addresses the urgency of the task of reaching Digitals and Christianity's failure thus far to be inclusive of a population that is no longer text-based.[2] Christianity's faith practices are grounded in the spoken word and the printed text, especially the faith practice that is the sermon. As the culture moves away from "text-based mediation" of reality to "the more dynamic, transient, and sensory fluidity of electronically mediated reality,"[3] the language and methods used to proclaim the Word are becoming less relevant and less understandable by society.

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[1] Hayden Shaw, *Generational IQ: Christianity Isn't Dying, Millennials Aren't the Problem, and the Future Is Bright*, Kindle edition (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishing, Inc, 2015), 5.

[2] Peter Horsfield, "Electronic Media and the Past-Future of Christianity," in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*, ed. Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage (New York: T&T Clark Ltd, 2003), 271-92.

[3]Ibid., 281.

For example, I grew up reading the King James Bible. The familiarity with a more archaic way of speaking meant that when I read J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings,* the formal language he used to give the book a sense of legend was easy for me to understand. Reading his *Silmarillion,* set in an even more ancient age, with markedly archaic language usage, was a bit of a struggle but not outside my ability. My children, who have not been exposed to the language style of the King James era, find the *Lord of the Rings* difficult to read and the *Silmarillion* almost beyond their ability to read and thus comprehend.

Carroll Anne Sheppard and Nancy Burton Dilliplane broadly summarize the generational divide. On one side are the over 50s, who they refer to as "Olders," and on the other are the under 40s, referred to as "Youngers." Those between 40 and 50 straddle the divide, and this balancing act enables them to move between the two groups.

In the world of the "Olders," authority comes from the top, and to reach the top you need to pay your dues. This means that age and seniority are in practice valued more highly than skill and merit, and gender and race play a role in how much seniority and authority one can achieve. Education is valued over life experience as a method of earning credentials. Relationships and connections are limited by physical proximity, which means face-to-face communications take precedent over communications methods that do not require a physical presence. They do one thing at a time, focusing on only that, and then move on to the next step.

The "Youngers" live in an entirely different world. They are collaborative, and team based. Authority comes with skill (not age, gender, or race), and it is possible to have authority in one area and not in another. Electronic communications and networking

means that they are not limited by physical location or by normal office hours. Theirs is a

24/7 world where information comes at a rapid pace, multi-tasking is normal, and

"electronic protocol" sometimes means that the person on the other end of the electronic

device is given precedence over the person standing in front of them. Carol Sheppard and

Nancy Dilliplane sum up these differences by saying:

> What the Olders fail to see and value are the structures of social networks, tribes, and electronic protocols that do integrate the Youngers. They are nearly invisible to them, and the Olders do not understand why they should be privileged above face-to-face, the highest-reward situation for most traditional Olders. What the Youngers see instead is disrespect for their achievements, an insistence on a single-stream communication mode, and a weird refusal to participate in the electronic, networked society they inhabit.[4]

The question of adding digital media to worship or the sermon raises a new bone of

contention between the Analogs, who have always gotten along just fine without such

things, and the Digitals, to whom accessibility to digital media is as necessary as life

itself.[5] It has been my informal observation that Analogs often reject outright the need for

digital media to be used in worship, while Digitals find worship without digital media to

be boring and irrelevant.

Since, as Shaw says, "generations relate differently to God and often fight about

those differences based on their unique generational characteristics,"[6] these differences in

expectations, needs, and preferences can cause stress within a congregation. In the past,

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[4] Carroll Anne Sheppard and Nancy Burton Dilliplane, *Congregational Connections: Uniting Six Generations in Church* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation, 2001), 45-46.

[5] Ibid., 10.

[6] Shaw, *Generational IQ, 20*.

congregations typically had three generations at worship.[7] Today, a congregation can have as many as five or six generations gathered at the same time. As leadership transitions from one generation to another, congregational practices shift, reflecting the preferences and values of that generation. Leadership transitions are not taking place in the same way today, as people are living longer, healthier lives, and many older members are retaining their leadership roles much longer than similarly aged members would have in the past. According to Shaw, since the older generations do not understand the worldview and mindset of the younger generations, the younger generation's ideas and preferences are not naturally incorporated into the congregation.[8]

The lack of generational IQ is strikingly illustrated in Alberto Cutie's doctoral thesis on media, listening context, and preaching in the twenty-first century.[9] He surveyed pastors and lay persons regarding their opinion on how the Internet, social media, cell phones, and other electronic technologies have impacted sermon creation and delivery and the experience of listening to the sermon. He was stunned to discover that the majority of both preachers *and* lay persons believed there was little or no impact from digital media. Tellingly, the only respondents who felt there was significant impact were from "two mega church pastors, and one Anglican priest who work[ed] with a younger demographic."[10] The rest of the respondents were from congregations overwhelmingly

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[7] Sheppard and Dilliplane, *Congregational Connections,* 8.

[8] Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 10.

[9] Alberto R. Cutie, "Ongoing Evolution in Our Media Culture and Listening Context as It Pertains to the Craft of Preaching in the 21st Century" (DMin Thesis, The School of Theology of the University of the South, 2015), 41-43.

[10] Ibid., 43.

represented by the older generations, who simply did not have the generational IQ to recognize the importance of digital media to the younger generation's experience.

The generational divide is exuberated by the Digital/Analog divide. Next, we will examine how digital media has made a difference in the way Digitals and Analogs think. Combined with the generational characteristics of "Olders" and "Youngers," the difference between Digital and Analog results in essentially two different cultures, speaking two different languages.

Digital Brain, Analog Brain

Two Different Languages

Digital and Analog are two very different languages, deriving from two very different cultures. Like a tourist struggling with a phrase book, and resorting to speaking louder and slower, preachers also struggle with ways to present a sermon crafted in Analog style to listeners who only speak Digital. The results for the tourist and the preacher are similar: difficulty or inability to communicate, and frustration that the message is just not being understood.

Marc Prensky coined the terms "digital natives" and "digital immigrants"[11] as a way of talking about the differences between those who have had digital access all their lives and those who learned to access digital media outside of their formative years. His categories ignore the group of people who do not use digital media at all (or at least very little), though admittedly this group is small and getting smaller. However, if one takes

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[11] Prensky, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," 1-2.

into consideration that most congregations are considerably older than the population in general,[12] Analogs could make up a significant portion of a congregation. Hence, we have two groups in our churches who speak their native language, Digital and Analog, and one group (Prensky's "digital immigrants") who speak Analog and some degree of Digital.

What do these languages look like?[13] Digital is a fast language. Information on the internet superhighway comes at astounding speeds. It's a language that can carry multiple streams of conversation at the same time, through multitasking and parallel processing. It's a communal language, where connection and networking are the basics of its grammar. It's a nonlinear language of tangents, fostered by the ubiquity of hypertext and random access to data. Play is a huge part of the vocabulary, and immediate reward is given frequently.

Analog on the other hand is a careful, considered, serious language. Its grammar of reality is structured around the physical and the individual. It is sequential, logical, and linear; carrying on one conversation at a time, but that conversation is deep. Rewards come slowly and infrequently.

Robert Fortner outlines the two different languages in terms of logic and ways of knowing:

> The logic of the digital age replaces the logic of the analog age. The analog age was an age of continuity that was based in relationship. This age extended back into prehistory and continues to develop despite the discontinuities visited upon it by the technologies of writing, print, electricity, and electronics.. . . The logic of the digital age, however, has a different set of characteristics that are

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[12] Michael Lipka, "Which US Religious Groups Are Oldest and Youngest?," Pew Research Center, July 11, 2016, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/11/which-u-s-religious-groups-are-oldest-and-youngest/.

[13] The following discussion on the differences between Digital, Analogs and "digital immigrants" is gleaned from Prensky, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants."

fundamentally discontinuous and non-relationship driven. These characteristics sometimes mirror the older cultural norms, but they are fundamentally at odds with them.[14]

"Digital immigrants," who grew up speaking Analog, can and do learn to speak Digital, but they speak it as a non-native. Just as someone thinks in their native language, then translates it to the new language, "digital immigrants" process the Digital language/culture through Analog filters.

Prensky notes that in the field of education, typically the teachers are "digital immigrants" and the students are "digital natives".[15] And so, these "digital immigrant" teachers, trained in the Analog way, struggle with their "digital native" learners, who need Digital ways to learn. As I read Prensky, I was reminded of a time in my confirmation class. I, as the "digital immigrant" teacher, was speaking to the seventh and eighth grade students, all firmly "digital natives." Two of the students were talking to each other. When I asked them to stop, one of them said, "We can listen to you and talk to each other at the same time." I tested his statement by asking him to tell me what I had just said. I was surprised to discover that both students had been listening and following my presentation while conversing with each other.[16]

Don Tapscott outlines the ideals and values of "digital natives": freedom, customizable experiences, the necessity of critical evaluation, integrity, collaboration, a

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[14] Robert S. Fortner, "The Gospel in a Digital Age," in *Confident Witness, Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 26-38.

[15] Prensky, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," 2.

[16] This interaction caused me to reevaluate not only my teaching methods, but my understanding of acceptable classroom behavior.

deep sense of fun, commitment to speed, and innovation. [17] The online world offers an unprecedented freedom of choice in entertainment, friends, shopping, and creating self-identity. The online world is their oyster, and there are few, if any, limits. There's always the opportunity to customize, to personalize, or even to springboard off an idea to innovate something different and new. "They have grown up getting what they want, when they want it, and where, and they make it fit their personal needs and desires."[18] They have become information-savvy and know how to do the work needed to determine fact from fiction. They value integrity in themselves and others. Collaboration is natural to them and is a part of every segment of their lives. They look for ways to collaborate in settings which are not typically considered collaborative, such as using Google Docs[19] to collaborate when taking notes during a lecture style college course.[20] Their sense of fun pervades everything they do, and they expect to find joy and fulfillment in every aspect of life: work, play, home, friends, faith, everything! Finally, this is a generation raised on high-speed internet, so they expect immediate response, fast delivery, and instant gratification.

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[17] Don Tapscott, "The Eight Net Gen Norms," in *The Digital Divide: Arguments for and against Facebook, Google, Texting, and the Age of Social Networking*, Kindle e-book (New York: The Penguin Group, 2011), 73–96.

[18] Ibid., Location 2024, last sentence in the second paragraph in the section titled "customization."

[19] Shep McAllister, "Use Google Docs to Collaborate on Class Note Taking | HuffPost," HuffPost, April 3, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/hack-college/use-google-docs-to-collab_b_844192.html. This article gives helpful tips for collaborative note taking.

[20] Laura Thompson, "Students Came Up with This Genius Way to Take Notes & It'll Change College Forever," PizzaBottle, July 21, 2017, https://pizzabottle.com/41663-students-came-genius-way-take-notes-itll-change-college-forever/.

Preachers, much like Prensky's "digital immigrant" teachers, were not taught in

Digital. Most sermons remain rooted in Analog culture, spoken in Analog grammar,

using Analog vocabulary. Even for preachers who are Digitals themselves, the Analog

methods are the ones being primarily taught in seminary.[21] Digital preaching students are

left to their own devices to update the sermon to speak to their culture in their language.

One such preacher is Nadia Bolz-Weber, who, when asked what people look for when

they come to her church, succinctly describes the situation preachers and the Church face:

> A place where they don't have to culturally commute in order to show up. Culture
> has to do with aesthetics, it has to do with humor, it has to do with pop culture
> references, it has to do with so many things, and there's a commute that
> postmodern people have to make if they're going to show up to a mainline church
> because culturally it's so different, it's just so different, and you just feel
> uncomfortable when you're in a context that is so culturally different from what
> you're native to. And I don't know that the church realizes that there's that
> crevasse culturally between who they are and who young folks are. It's massive.
> So, there's no sort of outreach strategy that's going to bridge that.[22]

I fervently pray for the sake of the Gospel, for the sake of congregations whose ministry

makes bridging that gap essential, that she is wrong. Nevertheless, I and some of my

pastoral colleagues believe she is correct-that we need to get out of our Analog comfort

zone and do more than a little cross-cultural study.

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[21] When discussing this thesis with colleagues, many of the Gen X and Millennial pastors indicated that
their own preaching classes focused on the sermon as an oral presentation. A review of the course
catalogs of the ELCA seminaries, Luther Theological Seminary, Lutheran School of Theology at
Chicago, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Pacific Lutheran Seminary, Trinity Lutheran
Seminary, United Lutheran Seminary, and Wartburg Theological Seminary supports their
experience. The course descriptions for the preaching classes dealt primarily with content of the
sermons. The introductory preaching classes often mentioned preaching methods, without further
description of what those methods entailed. A recurring theme in the course descriptions was on
oral proclamation.

[22] Jesse James DeConto, "For All the Sinners and Saints: An Interview with Nadia Bolz-Weber," Religion
& Politics, July 28, 2015, http://religionandpolitics.org/2015/07/28/for-all-the-sinners-and-saints-
an-interview-with-nadia-bolz-weber/#sthash.0RxHXo4y.dpuf.

Digital Culture, Analog Culture

To begin to talk about the digital culture, we need to start with the digital brain. Digital media is not only changing how people gather and process information but how those using digital media think. While prophets in the field such as Marshall McLuhan began the discussion of the effects of electronic media all the way back in 1964,[23] there are several recent studies documenting that use of social media is changing not only the way we gather information but also the way our brains are actually wired.

Prensky asks the pressing question: "Do [the Digitals] really think differently?"[24] Given what we know about neuroplasticity,[25] Prensky believes that the brains of "digital natives" are likely different from the brains of "digital immigrants" (and by extension, different from the brains of Analogs). Differences in language herald differences in culture. Areas with different dialects in the United States also have differences in foods, leisure activities, and even identities. Prensky, noting that the culture one grows up in makes a difference in the structure of the brain, maintains, "Children raised with computers think differently than us."[26]

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[23] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 7. In the chapter entitled "Media as Translators," McLuhan makes the observation that as more and more information is digitalized, humans will become a hybrid of sorts, with our brains and nerves reliant more and more on digital media.

[24] Marc Prensky, "Do They Really Think Differently?," in *The Digital Divide: Arguments for and Against Facebook, Google, Texting, and the Age of Social Media*, Kindle e-book (New York: The Penguin Group, 2011), first page of unnumbered document.

[25] Prensky explains this term by noting how the brain is constantly re-organizing itself throughout a person's lifetime, especially as we learn a new skill (such as reading) or suffer an injury to one area of the brain.

[26] Ibid., "Do They Really Think Differently?" last paragraph, third page of unnumbered document.

Brain research has shown that the brains of "digital natives" do indeed work differently than the brains of "digital immigrants" (and Analogs). Gary Small and Gigi Vorgan's research shows that "digital natives" (Gen X and Millennials), having digital access almost from infancy, are able to "multi-task and parallel process with ease" and process information faster, have shorter attention spans, and seek instant gratification.[27]

"Digital immigrants" (Boomers and older who use digital media) retain the patterns of thinking and information processing set down in childhood but do adapt to process faster and divide their attention between projects (although they do not truly multi-task).[28] This change in brain functioning widens the generation gap between "digital natives" and "digital immigrants."[29] I would maintain that gap is even wider between "digital natives" and the Analogs. The generation gap becomes a cultural divide.

Some decry these changes. Nicholas Carr laments the loss of "deep" reading fostered by books as a more surface level reading takes place on websites and e-books.[30] Mari K. Swingle's studies on neurological mapping find that for digital media users, changes in neural pathways result in a state of heightened arousal, more rapid (and more shallow) processing, and increased reward-seeking behavior.[31]

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[27] Small and Vorgan, *iBrain,* location 564.

[28] Ibid., location 853, 857.

[29] Ibid., location 554, 563.

[30] Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, Kindle e-book (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 91.

[31] Mari K. Swingle, *I-Minds: How Cell Phones, Computers, Gaming, and Social Media Are Changing Our Brains, Our Behavior, and the Evolution of Our Species* (Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2016), 78.

Gaming is especially good at tapping into the pleasure centers of the brain, reinforcing rapid processing with an ever-varying array of rewards.[32] Swingle's research has shown that gaming and digital media use redirects the brain's creative processes and decreases focus,[33] which for her is a red flag indicating a potential decrease in innovation and artistic creation. In *A New Culture of Learning,* Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown explore how gaming can be adapted to learning events that make the most of this new way of gathering and processing information.[34] In *Reality Is Broken,* Jane McGonigal offers an in-depth analysis of what makes games appealing and "why games make us better and how they can change the world."[35] Preachers are learning to speak Digital 101, or perhaps have advanced to Digital 102. However, to incorporate the theory of gaming and values of gamers into preaching and worship would require a preacher to be fluent in Digital. Therefore, the discussion of gaming culture and implications for preaching are located in Appendix A.

Swingle also suggests that our consumption of electronic media is making it difficult for us to slow down and take leisure time. She believes we need to relearn the fine arts of creativity and relaxation.[36] In other words, our media usage is making it more difficult for us to experience Sabbath. It will come as no surprise to anyone who's

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[32] Ibid., 41-42.

[33] Ibid., 78.

[34] Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown, *A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating the Imagination for a World of Constant Change* (Lexington, KY: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011), 37-38.

[35] Jane McGonigal, *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*, Kindle e-book (New York: The Penguin Press, 2011).

[36] Swingle, *I-Minds*, 49.

witnessed two teenagers text each other from their homes instead of getting together for an in-person conversation that Swingle's research has also shown that use of digital media has affected our social processing as well.[37] The relative anonymity and the speed in which comments can be posted online and the lack of accompanying facial expression, body gestures, and vocal intonation has negatively impacted the ability to process social cues. She goes on to imply that virtual relationships cannot be as real and as meaningful as face to face relationships, because the incarnational experience of being face to face inherently gives more substance to our relationships. While Swingle does not recommend that we all eschew digital media completely, she does recommend cautiously limiting the way we use digital media.

Not all is doom and gloom. Prensky notes that while their attention spans are shorter for Analog style learning/tasks, Digitals do sustain attention for games and topics they want to learn. He points out, "generally [it] isn't that Digital Natives can't pay attention, it's that they choose not to."[38]

Shane Hipps discusses how image-rich digital media encourages a return to the equally image-rich narrative of Jesus, moving us from orthodoxy to orthopraxis.[39] The brain processes images differently than written words. After all, processing images is natural to the brain. We do this from birth. One must be taught to process written

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[37] Ibid., 180.

[38] Prensky, "Do They Really Think Differently?" page four, end of second paragraph from the bottom in an unnumbered document.

[39] Hipps, *Flickering Pixels*, 82.

words,[40] forging new neural processes in doing so. Images give rise to holistic thinking and intuition, while written words use linear logic and categorization.[41] In fact, digital media, which uses both images and text, uses right brain processes: "intuition, emotion, holistic perception, and pattern recognition."[42] Hipps maintains that the increase in right brain thinking is why spiritual practices, long overlooked, are on the rise again.[43] Analogs, raised in a text-based culture, learned to process with the logical, sequential, analytical left brain, and the traditional sermon does a fabulous job of engaging the left-brain. Instead of relying on only the traditional, linear, text-based sermon, introducing story, visual and sensory rich images, and connective, participatory, and relational elements to the preacher's repertoire preaches not only to both sides of the brain, but to both Digitals and Analogs.

Analogs can become "digital immigrants." Small and Vorgan's study also demonstrates that, given enough digital use, the brain structures begin to change.[44] Even Analogs, after "five days of spending a few hours on the internet," show changes in brain activity that reflects the brain activity of "digital natives." Small and Vorgan encourage the older generations to "adapt to high technology, or they'll be left behind."[45] Preachers

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[40] Ibid., 40.

[41] Ibid., 77.

[42] Ibid., 144-5.

[43] Ibid., 145.

[44] Small and Vorgan, *iBrain*, location 435.

[45] Ibid., Location 220.

also risk being left behind if they do not consider how the sermon must adapt to the digital culture.

To adapt to the differences between Digital and Analog, it might be helpful to consider studies of social location. Social location considers how culture, social status, economic status, and other demographic indicators affect the way a person, or group of people, interprets data. In his book *What Do They Hear*,[46] Dr. Mark Alan Powell discusses how social location affects how Scripture is understood and given meaning. I was fortunate to take his seminary course on the New Testament in the spring of 2007, shortly before his book was published. The manifold meaning of Scripture and the ways social location determine interpretation were major themes in the course. We were introduced to the concept by a slideshow of varying pictures and paintings of Jesus. Just as there is no one definitive image of Jesus (despite the ubiquity of Sallman's "Head of Christ" in churches across the United States), the image of God portrayed by Scripture is multifaceted. Dr. Powell enthusiastically discussed the effects of social location, empathy choice, reading strategy, conception of meaning, and polyvalence with the class.[47]

I would maintain that preachers also must include Digital and Analog in their consideration of social location. Ronald Allen wisely reminds the preacher that it is good to remember that the congregation itself is "other," and that within the congregation there are groups of "others." Given the historical context of the Bible, even the biblical text is

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[46] Mark Allen Powell, *What Do They Hear? Bridging the Gap Between Pulpit & Pew* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007).

[47] Mark Allen Powell. "New Testament 1," Seminary Class Lecture, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, OH, April 11, 2007.

"other."[48] Twenty-first century preachers are charged with bridging the gap between multiple social locations: those of the text, their own, and the multiple social locations of the congregation. This means preachers must become fluent in Digital and Analog.

Preaching in a Multi-Media World

For far too long the Church has downplayed, or even ignored, the effect digital media has had on society. In his article, "Making Religious Media: Notes from the Field," Adan Medrano explores four assumptions that have exacerbated the divide between the church and the media.[49] The first is that there is a divide: The institutional church sees itself as a distinct entity from media with no intersecting areas. By treating media as a bounded set with no intersection, the church has placed itself outside the cultural mainstream. The second is treating media simply as a method of communicating. This downplays the importance the media has in creating a message. The third assumption, firmly rooted in Christendom, is that the church automatically has a voice that will be heard and listened to. As we have seen, this is no longer true. The church is just one voice among many, and often it speaks in ways that are no longer heard by most. The final assumption is that the meaning of the message is determined by those creating the message. As previously discussed, the social location of the listener affects what is heard, and the listener actively participates in making meaning. The church can no longer afford to operate under these assumptions. Preachers in particular need to proclaim the

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[48] Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching and the Other: Studies of Postmodern Insights* (St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2009), 36.

[49] Adan M. Medrano, "Making Religious Media: Notes from the Field," in *Belief in Media: Cultural Perspectives on Media and Christianity*, ed. Peter Horsfield, Mary Hess, and Adan M. Medrano (Burlington, VA: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), 141-152.

Word in a way that connects with the way information is gathered and processed through media.

In the closing chapter of *Mediating Religion*, Jolyon Mitchell outlines a variety of issues raised in conversations throughout the book.[50] Among the issues pertinent to this thesis is the emergence of the "participative turn," where the listener is no longer a passive recipient of information and its meaning but actively participates in making meaning from the information presented. In addition, "narrative identity" is shaped by this information, both by the information available and how those stories are presented. Digital media is increasingly formative in identity,[51] and preachers need to be aware of the diverse identities in their congregations and how these stories and identities might shape the receptiveness of our listeners. The final issue pertinent to this thesis is "communicative justice": the fair and just access to means of communication, such as the internet and cell phones. Often these means are limited by economic status or geographical location.[52] However, they can also be limited by choice. An elderly person may feel he or she is "too old" to learn to use such "confusing" devices. Preachers who find themselves preaching to both Digital and Analog must consider incorporating new

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[50] Jolyon Mitchell, "Emerging Conversations in the Study of Media, Religions and Culture," in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media Religion and Culture*, ed. Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage (New York: T&T Clark Ltd, 2003), 337–50.

[51] Andrew Root, "Identity in a Digital Age," *Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry* 30, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 241-246.

[52] Both my first and second call were to rural locations with less than reliable cell service. This made a profound impact on the use of digital communication among Analog users, who appeared to see unreliability of access as an excuse not to learn to use the new technology.

styles of preaching as just methods of proclaiming the Word in a world that is increasingly defined by the Digital and Analog divide.

Sermon format has changed to adapt to technology in the past and in today's world of fast paced technological innovation, it must keep changing. Alison Witte, in her thesis on preaching technology, observed that although, historically, the sermon has primarily been an oral event, the advent of the printing press allowed the sermon to take on a new form as printed text.[53] This move not only captured the oral event of a sermon, however imperfectly,[54] but allowed for sermons to be created with the express purpose of being read for devotion and instruction rather than simply preached. Little has changed since then. In her study, Witte found that while preachers and congregations may use PowerPoint slides to enhance a sermon, the sermon remains a primarily oral event.[55] Witte argues that a shift must take place in how the sermon genre is understood. As long as preachers and congregation expect the sermon to be an oral event, the use of multimedia in the sermon will remain an accessory rather than an integral part.

As information gathering and processing becomes increasingly reliant on digital technologies, the sermon's form must change to reflect this shift. Reading and writing are now being shaped by the use of digital technology, yet sermons rely heavily on text-

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53 Alison Witte, "Preaching and Technology: A Study of Attitudes and Practices" (PhD. Thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2013), 2-3.

54 Mark Allen Powell told us in class that he is often asked for manuscripts of his sermons, but he always refuses. He believed that one cannot separate the words from the rest of the sermon's event: body language, tone, inflection, listener response, etc. A printed copy of a preached sermon will be less than the preached event.

55 Witte, "Preaching and Technology" 92-93.

based practices.[56] Witte argues that as congregations become accustomed to receiving and processing data through digital means, the preacher must learn to craft sermons which utilize a variety of oral, aural, and visual methods to speak the Word in a way that is accessible to Digitals.[57] However, as she notes, the use of digital technology "requires many resources including time, personnel, hardware, software, and monetary resources that may be beyond those available to most congregations."[58] She also acknowledged the additional time and collaborative effort preachers and worship teams must make to effectively incorporate digital technology into a sermon. This reality is why this study exploring the use of low-tech methods to speak to Digitals and Analogs is crucial.

In her book *I Refuse to Preach a Boring Sermon*, Karyn Wiseman tackles the issue of using digital media as part of the sermon. Social media is the native language and cultural experience of most Generation Xers and Millennials. Excluding social media from worship means removing a component that these younger groups find deeply meaningful and reduces the degree to which they can engage. However, using digital media in worship successfully means incorporating it in a way that appeals to Digitals without turning off Analogs. This is a tricky balance to maintain, and while use of digital media during worship remains controversial (especially incorporating social media into worship or the sermon), Wiseman recommends that congregations who have the ability to engage Digitals by doing so should try it, while taking their context into consideration.

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56 Ibid.,144.

57 Ibid., 147-8, 154-155.

58 Ibid., 155.

In the case of this thesis, due to the extremely small size of the three of the congregations, incorporating digital media in worship is not feasible.[59] But where possible, preachers and worship teams should make a prayerful study of how digital media can speak usefully in their context. Analogs often resist the use of media in worship, claiming it to be a distraction. However, by not including digital resources, Wiseman says congregations concentrate on "ninety-nine sheep safe in the fold," leaving the one Digital sheep to fend for itself. There will only be one sheep's worth of young people still coming to church if we do not shake things up!

Embodied Preaching and Multiple Learning Styles

In addition to social location as defined by generation and digital media usage, learning styles also make a difference in how we relate to the gospel and how we gather and process information. Howard Gardner posits that there are at least seven learning styles: musical, kinesthetic, logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.[60] Thomas Troeger and H. Edward Everding Jr. explore these learning styles and how preachers might craft sermons in ways that resonate with each style.[61] Their advice on how to tap into the eight different ways of knowing (they add "nature" as a learning style) concentrates on using language to evoke each style, which, while well intentioned, still leans heavily on the preaching moment as primarily oral communication.

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[59] The reasons for excluding the use of digital media in this thesis will be discussed in the next chapter.

[60] Howard Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons*, Kindle e-book (New York: Basic Books, 2008), Chapter 1, "The Original Set of Intelligences."

[61] Troeger and Everding, *So That All Might Know*, 27–48.

Wiseman encourages the preacher to use image-rich storytelling and multisensory experiences to connect with their congregation.[62] She emphasizes using real-life situations instead of canned sermon illustrations. Using real-life stories gives authenticity to the sermon and creates a space for listeners to think about how the biblical text might intersect with their own lives.

In her thesis, Lynne Kammeraad explored the reception of three sermon styles by congregants ranging in age from 26 to 56.[63] She evaluated a first-person narrative style sermon (telling the story from the perspective of a character in the biblical text), an object/image-based sermon, and storytelling (combining a biblical text and a contemporary story). Kammeraad determined that the story-based sermons (both the first-person and storytelling styles) were slightly more effective across the generations than the object-based sermon was. It is difficult to tell from this study if these sermon styles are better received than a traditional sermon as one was not included in the study. Based on the evidence produced by the many writers referenced in this Literature Review, we can conclude that storytelling sermons, in a variety of formats, are effective for all generations.

Wiseman also recommends using visuals and other multi-sensory methods to engage the varied learning styles present in the congregation.[64] She maintains that these are essential skills for today's preachers, as congregations move from being "people of

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[62] Wiseman, *I Refuse to Preach a Boring Sermon! Engaging the 21st Century Listener,* 22.

[63] Lynne Kammeraad, "Preaching More Effectively to Multiple Generations" (DMin Thesis, Lutheran Theological Seminary, 2016).

[64] Wiseman, *I Refuse to Preach a Boring Sermon!*, 77.

the book to people of the screen."[65] She encourages the use of varied sermon styles, rather than using a tried and true format week after week, in order to create interest.[66]

D. Matthew Poole studied the effects of multisensory communication in worship.[67] He determined that adding elements of touch and smell, in addition to the congregation's established usage of audiovisuals, was positively received by the congregation and easily remembered in follow-up interviews. The addition of a bitter taste (meant to evoke the bitterness of anger) was received negatively, and the use of a positive taste, such as sweet, was not explored. Poole's study was limited to the five senses, sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell, and did not incorporate all of the multiple learning styles. In addition, in Poole's study, the multisensory elements were used in various places in worship, not exclusively during the preaching event. In my thesis, I propose to incorporate more of the learning styles in the sermon itself.

Albert Cutie outlined the historical changes the sermon has undergone in the spirit of demonstrating that the sermon can and should be changed to fit the current listening context.[68] Based on changes in forms of communication, he posits a way forward by using humor and anecdotes, understanding the preaching context, allowing for alternative preaching platforms besides the pulpit, and not reading from a

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[65] Ibid., 111.

[66] Ibid., 53.

[67] D. Matthew Poole, "Effectiveness of Multisensory Communication in Worship" (DMin Thesis, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2004).

[68] Cutie, "Ongoing Evolution ."

manuscript.[69] James Stephen Burns, in his thesis, advises a move from "performance to participation, authoritarian to authentic, isolated to integrated, verbal to visual," and "stabilizing to subversive."[70] Burns then gives concrete examples of how to incorporate these moves into the sermon. Both theses are academic, not practical, and their conclusions have not been tested. My thesis draws on these theories, putting them into play in the pulpit and testing their impact. In this way, the work will move beyond the propositions of these doctoral theses. Their insights and those gleaned above provide potential starting places as we explore ways to preach that reach Digital and Analog at the same time.

By combining generational differences, considering the Digital/Analog divide, and acknowledging the diverse learning styles of both groups, we have created a picture of the two cultures and languages the preacher must navigate. Of course, there are exceptions to every rule, and there will be individuals who share characteristics with both groups. But for a sermon to engage as many of those present for worship as possible, it needs to strike a balance between the general characteristics of the Digitals and the Analogs.

As a helpful guideline, I referred to Leonard Sweet's EPIC acronym. Sweet observed that the popularity of Starbucks is not driven by overpriced coffee but rather the EPIC experience Starbucks creates. Starbucks dials in on the values and desires of the

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[69] Ibid., 54.

[70] James Stephen Burns, "With Arms Wide Open to a New Millennium: Preaching and Worship in the Digital Age" (DMin Thesis, Iliff School of Theology, 2004), 32.

Gen X and Millennial ("digital natives") generations[71] to create an (E)xperiential,

(P)articipatory, (I)mage-rich, (C)onnective experience.[72] How does this EPIC experience

meet the values and desires of the Digitals? Does it also meet Analog characteristics?

Thinking about the profiles built in earlier in the chapter on the characteristics of Digitals

and Analogs listeners, we will consider how EPIC meets those characteristics.

<div align="center">It Is Experiential.</div>

Forbes.com (among other media sources) has observed there is a trend toward

choosing to spend money on experiences[73] over acquiring things. However, not just any

experience will do. Millennials—the current focus of marketing—value authenticity[74] in

their experiences and have a well-honed ability to sniff out the phony and superficial.

Experience engages the senses. There was a time when worship was good at

engaging the senses.[75] It was a time when the accoutrements of worship surrounded the

worshipper with sights, sounds, smells, and tastes. God is revealed in experience.[76] The

Bible is a record of experiences with God and what the biblical authors understood those

experiences to mean. Jesus, as Word made Flesh, made the experience of God even more

immediate. The experiences of our lives are the places where we encounter God.

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[71] Leonard Sweet, *The Gospel According to Starbucks: Living with a Grande Passion*, WaterBrook Press e-book (New York: Random House, 2008), 11.

[72] Ibid., 820.

[73] Jeremy Quittner, "Why Americans Are Spending More on Experiences vs Buying Stuff," Fortune.Com, September 1, 2016, http://fortune.com/2016/09/01/selling-experiences/.

[74] Sweet, *The Gospel According to Starbucks*, 34.

[75] Ibid., 55.

[76] Ibid., 46.

Story is experience captured in words.[77] Human beings, both Digital and Analog, are storied creatures. Story is the opportunity to share experiences, to invite the listener into considering that experience and connecting it with the listener's own experience. Worship is one place where it is central to share biblical experience stories. The preacher connects the biblical story to the current stories of the world around her, to her own story, and to the story of the congregation. Skillfully done, these connections allow the listener to consider how their own experiences connect with the biblical story.

It Is Participatory.

Worship, including the sermon, is also an opportunity to invite the listener to move beyond listening and create a new experience. By nature, experiences are participatory. At least personal experiences are. We vicariously participate in others' experiences when they tell us the story, but when we actually do an activity ourselves, it takes on substance.[78]

Digitals place high value in participating. They are team builders and collaborative. They want to interact with everything they touch, customizing, improving, and changing.

Participation in an event creates interest and engagement.[79] It's no wonder that the digital world inhabited by the younger generations invites participation. The physical

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[77] Thomas E. Boomershine, *Story Journey: An Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), 18.

[78] Sweet*, The Gospel According to Starbucks*, 64.

[79] Ibid., 70.

world pales by comparison, especially when it comes to worship and the sermon. Too often, life offline is a spectator sport: TV, classes, church.

Yet worship is inherently relational, an opportunity to connect with the God who is inherently participatory: a triune being who, through the incarnation, participated intimately in our world and invites us into deep participatory relationship with God and each other.[80] Made in the image of God, it's no wonder people desire to participate.

While Digitals expect to actively participate, Analogs expect to observe. Analogs have grown up in a world where the expert disseminates information to a passive audience. Until the individual audience members have assimilated the expert information, their input is not valued. Invitation to participate in the sermon can be a tricky area to navigate for an Analog. It is uncomfortable to speak out in a setting where for so long one has been taught to be completely quiet. It can be frightening to offer one's opinion when one is not the expert. The Analog worries that their opinion might be unpopular or that they may sound stupid or make a fool of him or herself. The preacher should consider the Analogs' fear when crafting participatory sermons.

<div align="center">It Is Image-Rich.</div>

We've often talked about the importance of images in the digital world. My husband's stock response to a book recommendation is "I'll wait until the movie comes out." In fact, storytelling, be it around a campfire or in a book, is most effective when the story's images are lavishly described.[81] Images relay information quite well on their own

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[80] Ibid., 82-84.

[81] Ibid., 100-1, 108.

but can make an even more powerful statement when combined with words. Think of the earliest picture books a child has. Often each page is a large image, perhaps of a cat, along with a single descriptive word: "cat." Even though the child cannot yet read, a connection is being made between the image and those squiggly lines, a connection that will one day result in the child reading, "c-a-t, cat!"

Included in images are Sweet's "thingies": tactile, manipulatable items we can pick up, hold, sense, or otherwise engage with.[82] By expanding the category of the images from the strictly visual to items that can be touched, tasted, or smelled or otherwise engage the senses in the whole body, Sweet's category of "image-rich" expands to include multi-sensory engagement and incorporates multiple learning styles. Visual images and "thingies" connect with the right brain, and the right brain is the side that is activated by much of Digitals' media usage. Images (and "thingies") have the potential to enhance the Analogs' reception of the sermon by engaging their individual learning styles.

In my research, I found that many ideas on how to incorporate multiple learning styles often do not include actually using multi-sensory methods. Maintaining the sermon as an oral/auditory experience, preachers settle for describing a scene, scent, or activity. Thus, the multi-sensory, multiple learning-style event must first be processed through auditory channels before connecting to other parts of the brain. To me, this does not appear to be an effective way of engaging multiple learning styles. In my project, I proposed to engage as much multi-sensory, kinesthetic activity in my multiple learning

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[82] Ibid., 116.

style sermon as possible. One of the things I will offer in that sermon is an opportunity to make a "takeaway": an item that one can take home as a way of engaging with the sermon later. These items are often used in children's sermons and occasionally used in an adult sermon to emphasize a particular event in the biblical story or a sermon topic.

It Is Connective.

Humans are social beings and relational by nature. We seek out each other's company. Being made in the image of a relational God, we seek relationship with God, ourselves, and each other. We connect when we tell stories and share experiences.

I often hear the story of the "good old days" when the church was the heart of a community's social life. People gathered in Bible studies, women's circles, youth groups, and softball leagues. The neighborhood church was a place that invited and encouraged connection and relationship building. In the story of the "good old days," there's a longing to return to a time when the "pews were full, and Sunday School was bursting at the seams." But I think the true longing in this story is not so much for the community's sheer numbers, but for the connections and relationships it created.

The digital world is all about connections.[83] Through the Internet we are connected to people and places we would not encounter "in real life." To the digital generations, these relationships are as real as the face-to-face relationships their elders value.

The incarnational, participatory nature of God, as addressed earlier, also indicates that God is relational. And humans, created in the image of this relational God, crave

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[83] Ibid., 130-131.

relationship. Relationship is valued highly by Digitals. Analogs value face-to-face interactions, indicating a relational aspect to their values also.

Another element of connection is the relationship between thoughts and ideas. Analogs' linear, logical thinking processes provide rich opportunities for connecting various sources of data. Digitals also connect thoughts and ideas, but in a nonlinear way through the use of hyperlinks. In its early days, a hyperlink was just a clickable word or phrase that led to another webpage based on a logical next step or relevant idea. Nowadays, the paths one can follow via hyperlinks are limitless. Wikipedia, a community-supported online encyclopedia, peppers its articles with links to every possible related topic or concept. An Instagram post can boast dozens of hashtags, which are words or phrases paired with the pound sign, that, when clicked, lead to a feed of all other posts that use the same tag, each of which also uses a suite of other hashtags. One can follow a chain of hashtags for hours on end or use strategic hashtags to draw more traffic to one's own posts and content. The abundance of options, of things to click on, of paths to take through a growing maze of digital ideas, makes it very easy to find oneself worlds away from the original starting place. Hyperlinks offer both the risk of falling down an endless rabbit hole and the gift of making connections between different ideas and concepts.

Integrating the themes of the sermon with the rest of the worship service allows both Analogs and Digitals to make important connections.[84] Analogs can find a logical flow between the various parts of the worship service, and digitals are offered a variety of

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[84] Burns, "With Arms Wide Open," Chapter 6.

entry places for connection as they move through worship where the liturgy informs the hymn, the hymn informs the sermon, the sermon informs the hymn and liturgy, and so on.

Putting It All Together

Thomas Boomershine uses the metaphor of preaching as a jazz riff:[85] The jazz musician delves into musical theory and practices the piece in questions until he intimately knows the nuances of the piece before he begins to express his experiences through improvisation. The preacher is also challenged to be similarly, deeply rooted in the biblical story and in the experiences and cultural language of her listeners (and her own) before she can meld the two into the jazz riff that becomes the sermon. Using Sweet's EPIC experience as a framework for engaging the values and desires of the Gen X and Millennial ("digital natives") generations, I proposed to test a sermon series that contained elements that were experiential, participatory, image-rich, and connective.

Summary

In this literature review, I have explored first how generational differences might affect sermon reception. Shaw outlined how the experiences and cultural realities of each generation shape distinct generational world views and attributes. He encourages pastors, preachers, and other church staff and leaders to develop "generational IQ," the ability to understand the ideas and experiences that shape other generations as well as one's own generation, so that they may more effectively minister to the multiple generations which

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[85] Boomershine, *Story Journey*, 31.

populate the congregation. Shepherd and Dilliplane explored the differing needs of the "Olders" (Boomers and older) in contrast to the needs of the "Youngers" (Gen X, Millennials, and younger) regarding the use of digital technology in worship. They state that digital media usage is a crucial part of the "Youngers'" generational IQ.

Next, I considered the differences between those who use digital media and those who do not. Prensky's "digital natives" (those who grew up with digital media) and "digital immigrants" (those who did not have digital media access until their adult years) was foundational in defining the affect digital media has on how people gather and process data. Digital media usage encourages fast-paced, nonlinear, parallel processing over the slower paced, logical, sequential processing typical in a text-based society. Over time, digital media usage will, due to the neuroplasticity of the brain, move "digital immigrants" from text-based information processing to digital-based information processing. Recognizing these changes in brain structure resulting from even small amounts of digital use, I combined Prensky's categories of "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" into simply "Digitals" and added the category of "Analogs" to refer to the increasingly small group that does not access the internet, social media, email, or gaming.

Hipps' discussion of faith formation in this era of digital-based information processing gave insight on how preaching might adapt to engage "Digitals" as well as "Analogs." Text-based faith formation methods (and that includes preaching) engages the slower-paced, linear, sequential processing of the Analogs. He recommends the use of story, visual, and sensory rich images, and connective, participatory, and relational elements to engage the digital way of processing.

Finally, I examined how multiple learning styles might engage the different ways of data processing used by Digitals and Analogs. Troeger and Everding's advice on how to incorporate the eight learning styles (musical, kinesthetic, logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, nature, interpersonal, and intrapersonal) provided a possible way of engaging both the Digital and Analog groups. Sweet's EPIC experience (engaging the values and desires of the Gen X and Millennial generations, whose life experiences make them digital natives) became the framework for designing a sermon series that contained elements that were experiential, participatory, image-rich, and connective.

In an effort to better understand the cultural language of the United States in the twenty-first century, I have considered books, journals, online articles, and doctoral dissertations in my exploration of how digital media affects the way people gather and process data. I have examined the field of multiple learning styles for clues to adapt the sermon to this new cultural reality. I have discussed how generational difference may help or hinder this effort, and the sensitivity to context the preacher's need in order to determine how to preach to both Digitals and Analogs. Next, I will examine how I applied and tested these insights in a series of sermons preached in my context.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Learning to Speak Digitally

In this chapter I will discuss the context of my study and the rationale behind the sermon forms I chose to evaluate. Using the Action/Reflection model of research, I presented a series of five sermons to my ministry context to evaluate how Digital and Analog listeners respond to various sermon styles. Feedback from worshippers was gathered through questionnaires completed at the end of each sermon.

Congregational Context

I took a new call during the second year of my doctoral studies. My former call was to two small rural congregations. Both were aging, with few members younger than the Boomer generation. It was in this context that I became aware of the need for methods of preaching that would effectively engage the few Digital members without alienating the majority Analog members.

The context in which I currently serve consists of four small rural ELCA[1] congregations in a parish relationship. Three of these congregations are "country" churches, located six to eight miles away from the nearest town. They all are very small, aging congregations, with an average worship attendance of six, thirteen, and fifteen

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[1] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. These congregations are deeply Lutheran and of Swedish and Norwegian descent.

respectively. Congregation A is the smallest, consisting entirely of Boomers and older. This congregation is aware that its lifespan is nearing an end, projecting that it will most likely close within five years. Congregation B consists of Boomers and older. Occasionally, this congregation will have two or three children and/or youth worshipping with grandparents. Congregation C is also an older generation church with no children or youth attending. None of these congregations have any technological capability.

Congregation D is in a small town with a population below 300. It has a worship attendance of 60, with a broad makeup across the generations. There is a flourishing children's and youth ministry. The church building has Internet, projection, and screens. These are used to project hymns and liturgy for a monthly "blended" Sunday morning service, a monthly mid-week contemporary service, and various children and youth programming. I have not yet used this technology during the sermon. While I could have incorporated a digital component for sermons at this congregation (for example, displaying an image on a screen rather than showing a hard copy), I chose not to do so to keep the sermon presentation as uniform as possible at all congregations.

Aware of the limited financial resources of the congregations I serve, and the fact that there are many other congregations with similar limitations, this thesis project seeks to find effective ways of communication without depending on digital technology.[2] Also, at least within my context, there is a resistance to incorporating video or digital media

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[2] Hess, *Engaging Technology in Theological Education*. Hess notes that while the financial outlay for digital technology is often beyond the means of many congregations, there are "low-tech" ways to "engage digital cultures." Sheppard and Dilliplane, *Congregational Connections* encourage using multiple learning styles in faith formation as a way of connecting with all generations.

into worship in the three small, older congregations.[3] For the sermons, I selected styles

and methods that do not exclude Analogs (for example, asking for a texted response to a

question) while appealing to the visual, multi-tasking, participatory sensibilities of the

Digitals. This meant not relying on the use of technology and yet crafting sermons that

are accessible to and effective for both Digitals and Analogs.

The congregations do not all worship every Sunday, and Easter is the only

Sunday I preach at all four. As a result, I planned a careful series schedule to ensure the

largest possible listener pool and include all the congregations, rather than just preaching

the series on consecutive Sundays. The members of congregation B and congregation C

attend worship at each other's churches on the Sundays when their own does not have

worship. I decided that I would preach the sermon series on the third Sunday when

Congregation C would worship with Congregation B and the fourth Sunday when

Congregation B would worship with Congregation C. Congregations A and D worship

both the third and fourth Sundays. By scheduling the study's sermons on the third and

fourth Sundays, I was able to have the largest possible listener pool and include all

congregations.

Methodology

I presented five sermons, each with a different sermon style, to my congregations

on September 17, September 24, October 15, October 22, and November 19 in 2017. In

each week leading up to these dates, I included brief instructions for completing the

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[3] As I explained my thesis to my Parish Response Group, one of the older members of my former
congregation responded that her congregation didn't have young people, and the older members
were not interested in sermons that included digital media.

survey in a weekly worship bulletin. The survey included both scaled questions and open-ended questions (Appendix B). The questions for the scaled responses remained the same for every sermon to allow for comparison between sermon types. The open-ended questions were different for each sermon, designed to access specific feedback on the sermon type. Time was given at the end of worship to complete the questionnaire.

Sermon Styles

In selecting the sermon styles and crafting the sermon, I kept in mind the characteristics of Digitals and Analogs. Analogs are hierarchical, individualistic, linear, slow-processing, partial to single-tasking (although some can rapidly switch between tasks), and accustomed to delayed reward. They give preference to age and seniority, give preference to the "real" physical over the virtual, believe playfulness is limited to leisure time, and prefer oral/written over other means of communication. Digitals are egalitarian, participatory, collaborative, multi-tasking, nonlinear, rapid-processing, playful in all aspects of life, multi-sensory, and used to immediate reward. They give preference to skill and expertise over seniority and consider both physical and virtual as "real."

The five sermon styles selected are a traditional manuscript sermon, an integrated worship/sermon experience, a TED-talk-style sermon, a participatory sermon, and a multiple learning style sermon. Keeping in mind Sweet's EPIC worship,[4] the focus was on creating sermons that filled at least one of the acronym's qualities: experiential,

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[4] Sweet, *The Gospel According to Starbucks*, 20.

participatory, image-rich, connected.[5] The sermons (and the script for the integrated worship) are in Appendix C for reference. The following is a description of each sermon style and the rationale for selecting it for this study.

Business as Usual: The Manuscript Sermon

The manuscript sermon is similar to my typical preaching style. I use one of three processes in preaching: writing a manuscript and preaching from it, writing a manuscript and creating an outline from which I preach, and writing an outline (often from recorded notes I make when pondering the text while driving) from which I preach. The sermon presented loosely follows the form Paul Scott Wilson recommends: trouble in the text, trouble in our world, grace in the text, grace in our world.[6] This is my standard preaching format, although I do vary it with occasional storytelling or first-person narratives. Although I had an informal sense of how Digitals and Analogs responded to this type of sermon since it's my standard format, I included it in the series in order to collect data that would add credence to my previous observations and serve as a baseline against which to compare response to other, different styles.

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[5] Ideally, all four characteristics would be present in the sermons or somewhere in the worship service (the sermon doesn't have to do all the heavy lifting!). However, for the purposes of this study, the sermons were limited to one method in order to evaluate each particular method.

[6] Paul Scott Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon: A Guide to Biblical Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999).

Experiential, Image Driven: The Multiple Learning Styles Sermon

To incorporate multiple learning styles in a sermon, I used the suggested activities

from Thom Turner's web article "You Preach, I'll Doodle" as a guideline.[7] My goal was

to cater to as many learning styles as possible, relying on solely oral communication as

little as possible. I started with the children's sermon as an introduction to the concept of

new life from dried bones and taught the children "Dem Bones" to incorporate musical

intelligence. I referred back to the song in the sermon. In the opening of the sermon I set

the scene, using language evocative of nature to access the naturalist intelligence. For

visual/spatial intelligence, I used Georgia O'Keefe's "Ram's Head and White

Hollyhock"[8] to illustrate the Easter moment of new life out of death.

Figure 3. Georgia O'Keefe's Ram's Head and White Hollyhock

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[7] Thom Turner, "You Preach, I'll Doodle," Church Leaders, January 30, 2013,
https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-how-to/164951-thom-turner-you-preach-doodle.html.

[8] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/f/f8/O%27Keeffe_Georgia_Ram%27s_Head.jpg accessed Nov
13, 2017.

Kinesthetic and visual/spatial intelligences were engaged when I passed out small plastic

bones, asking the congregation to think about what in their lives were as dry as bones.

Figure 4. A flower with a cross bead looped in the stem was wrapped around a

plastic bone to symbolize the new life Christ brings.

Later in the sermon, I passed out a cross bead threaded on a wire flower, with the

instruction to wrap the flower through and around the dry bone, which reinforced the

visual/spatial, and kinesthetic intelligences. The cross symbolized God's re-creative work

bringing life out of death, and the flower was meant to make a connection back to the

O'Keefe painting, as well as allow the congregation to reflect where new life might be

"blooming" in their lives. These times for reflection incorporated intrapersonal

intelligence. Logical/mathematical intelligence was engaged by enumerating the steps

from dry bones to breath of life. Sermons by nature engage linguistic intelligence, so I

did not incorporate a special element targeting it. Interpersonal intelligence was not

engaged specifically in this sermon. Since multiple intelligences are present in both

Digital and Analogs, I anticipated that this sermon would be well received by both groups.

<div align="center">Participatory: The Interactive Sermon</div>

Participatory sermons are well suited for Digitals, with their penchant for collaboration, teamwork, participation, and egalitarianism. While the other sermon forms in this study speak to the characteristics of Analogs in some form, the participatory sermon pushes Analogs out of their comfort zone. A traditional sermon nicely models the ethos of the "Olders": An expert presents well-researched information to an audience who receives that information (this refers to Palmer's model, figure 2a, in chapter 2). A participatory sermon would seem to breach all those norms.

In the minds of many Analogs I have talked with, participatory sermons conjure up the image of being asked to talk in worship. Participatory sermons do invite response from the congregation: The congregation may be called upon to ask questions, answer questions, or break into small groups for discussion. However, there are many ways to participate in a sermon without actually speaking during the sermons. Karyn Wiseman discusses various ways to make a sermon more participatory:[9] preaching in a conversational style, inviting response (spoken or non-verbal, or even via text message for congregations with technical capabilities), or asking a question and allowing time for reflection or for discussion with the person sitting next to them. Even before the preacher steps in the pulpit (or wherever she chooses to deliver the sermon), there are ways to encourage participation: Studying the upcoming biblical passage in small groups during

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[9] Wiseman, *I Refuse to Preach a Boring Sermon*, 32-34.

the week, posting questions or the pastor's initial thoughts on a social media platform and

asking for response, or having conversations during visits and meetings during the week.

It was the practice of my internship supervisor to use the upcoming preaching text as a

devotional for every meeting he attended—a practice I still use. Another way to

encourage participation in a non-threatening way is to give the congregation the

opportunity to write a response to a question or challenge posed in the sermon, and either

take it home to consider it or place it in the offering place or other appropriate location.

One of my concerns on interactive, participatory preaching is the reluctance of the

congregations I serve to answer questions or otherwise verbally participate in the sermon.

There are more Analogs than "digital natives," and even many of the "digital

immigrants" find responding verbally during the sermon challenging. Grant Aaseng's

thesis on interactive preaching in his Lutheran congregation demonstrated that Lutherans

will indeed respond aloud in worship if properly prepared by the preacher to do so. Once

a congregation is comfortable with interactive sermons, Aaseng found that interactive

sermons were more memorable and effective than traditional sermons, even among those

who did not answer a question.[10] Attention to the sermon was better, and it appealed to

both children and adults, especially younger adults who are used to collaboration.

David Lose is an enthusiastic proponent of offering an interactive element in

every sermon. He notes that for faith to be connected to daily life, Sunday worship needs

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[10] Grant Luther Bretheim Asseng, "The Appropriateness and Effectiveness of Interactive Biblical Preaching in a Lutheran Context" (DMin Thesis, Luther Seminary, 2012), 80. This style isn't something quickly incorporated. Asseng used this style of sermon for at least twelve years in his Sunday evening outdoor worship services, which attracted many vacationers. His town congregation encouraged him to use it in their worship services as well. Acclimating a congregation to participate in the sermon takes time and requires the congregation to trust the preacher.

to include ways to practice how to live that faith, such as practicing talking about faith with the person in the next pew, or practicing praying for someone.[11] Giving the listener the opportunity to move from passive listening to active hearing (which includes a component of doing) provides an opportunity to practice. Lose gives a list of several simple, non-threatening ideas to spark congregational participation, noting that some congregations will find interactive, participatory sermons uncomfortable at first.

Since my congregations were not accustomed to the preacher soliciting verbal responses in worship, I decided that I would use three gentle measures to elicit participation: questions to ponder, a written response, and a chance to interact with others by blessing them. I hoped that this tactic would allow Analogs to engage – where Digitals already were bold enough to go.

<div align="center">Connected, Experiential: The Integrated Worship/Sermon</div>

James Stephen Burns recommends an integrated approach that connects all elements of worship to the preaching text and the sermon.[12] People have a better chance of entering the experience of worship when the liturgy, hymns, and prayers are intentionally chosen to complement and reinforce the message of the proclaimed text. Integrating worship and the sermon "sets the mood," so to speak, allowing the sermon themes echoed in the hymns, lifted up in prayer, and confessed in liturgical dialog to become integrated in the heart of the worshipper.

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[11] David Lose, "Preaching 2.0," *Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry* 30, no. 3 (July 1, 2010): 300-310.

[12] Burns, "With Arms Wide Open ."

Ideally, integrated worship would include far more than words. There is an opportunity to engage the senses[13] in a variety of ways: through liturgical art, such as the altar art installations at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Minneapolis,[14] liturgical dance, a digital presentation, or the introduction of multi-sensory elements. For example, in a text study on John 21, a colleague had the idea of cooking fish on a charcoal fire outside the main entrance of the church.[15] Worshippers would symbolically join the disciples in breakfast with Jesus. Unfortunately, he had the idea much too late to incorporate it that Sunday.

In this study, the integration only incorporated the spoken/sung elements of worship. This better facilitated evaluation of the effectiveness of integration, since multi-sensory elements were evaluated in the multiple-learning style sermon.

<div align="center">Experiential, Connected: The TED-Talk Sermon</div>

It's fascinating to hear people say sermons are boring or too long while the eighteen-minute TED Talk format is so popular. Which raises the question: What is the difference between a TED Talk and a sermon? And can the elements of TED Talks be incorporated into a sermon?

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[13] Ibid, 79-80.

[14] Their liturgical arts program can be viewed at http://www.goodshepherdmpls.org/liturgical-art. See https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51b74a70e4b0d3389493ad24/t/59c2b4b5914e6b4789b66c76/1505932477877/2016+Lent.pdf for their innovative art for Lent and Easter.

[15] Rev. Dan Ofstehage graciously gave me permission to cite our conversation from a May 2014 text study at Trinity Lutheran Church, Mobridge, SD. Being a Digital himself, Dan often had innovative insights and ideas to enrich worship. I count him as both teacher and friend.

Jezra Kaye, in a blog post on the differences between a TED Talk and a business presentation,[16] points out that beyond the diligent rehearsal and profession production values of a TED talk, there are essential characteristics of a TED talk that most business presentations lack. TED talks are based on authentic personal experiences. Using carefully constructed storytelling that invites the listeners into the story's journey, the speaker presents one main point in a way that is relevant to the listeners. The passion of the speaker becomes important to the listeners.

At the heart of every TED Talk is a story.[17] TED Talks open with the retelling of an experience, either from the speaker's personal life or someone else's experience that deeply touched the speaker.[18] In *TED Talks Storytelling*, Akash Karia goes on to say that these stories need rich details that connect with the senses, specific rather than general language (such as an exact date rather than the more general "a few years ago"), a conflict that engages the audience, and a positive resolution to that conflict. Karia also states that a speaker/storyteller needs to grab the listeners' attention in thirty seconds.[19]

Karia may be overstating how much time a speaker actually has to capture the attention of the audience. The first few results of a Google search of "how much time to

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[16] Jezra Kaye, "Giving a TED-Style Talk? Here's How They're Different from Business Presentations," *Speak Up for Success* (blog), March 18, 2014, http://speakupforsuccess.com/how-are-ted-talks-and-business-presentations-different/.

[17] Akash Karia, *TED Talks Storytelling: 23 Storytelling Techniques from the Best TED Talks*, Kindle Edition (AkasaKaria.com, 2014), "In a Nutshell" at the end of Chapter One.

[18] Ibid., first and fourth paragraphs after "Share a Personal Story" in Chapter Three.

[19] Ibid., stated twice in Chapter Two, at the beginning and in the "In a Nutshell" section, and again in Chapter Nine, principle #2 of the 23 principles for Ted Talk storytelling.

catch attention" agree that the window is actually less than ten seconds.[20] Indeed, Tom

Fuerst, in his blog post "5 Reasons Ted Talks Go Viral and Your Sermons Don't,"[21] says

that seven seconds may be all it takes for members of a congregation to tune out of what

they have already perceived will be a boring sermon.

Fuerst maintains that TED Talks aren't boring because they engage the

physicality and bodily response of the listener. He outlines five characteristics of a TED

Talk that connects with the physicality of the listeners. First is the use of inflection, pitch,

and rate of speech to convey emotion and passion. In *On Christian Doctrine,* Augustine

makes a similar plea to preachers to embody the Living Word by their use of voice.[22]

Second, Fuerst notes that TED Talks featuring speakers with liberal use of hand gestures

garner more views than ones with limited gestures. According to Fuerst, gestures and

body movement allow the listener to not only hear, but "see the message of the God who

speaks to us through the sermon." The third characteristic is that TED Talks, as noted

above, are memorized. Fuerst refers to this quality as "charisma" and notes that sermons

read from a manuscript are usually less full of life than sermons that are preached from

memory. The fourth characteristic is a simple smile. According to Fuerst, smiling makes

you look smarter and more inviting. Finally, those crucial first seven seconds need to

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[20] "Google Search Query 'How Much Time to Catch Attention,'" accessed July 31, 2017, https://www.google.com/search?q=how+much+time+to+catch+attention&rlz=1C1CHZL_enUS748US748&oq=how+much+time+to+catch+attention&aqs=chrome..69i57.5856j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8.

[21] Tom Fuerst, "5 Reasons TED Talks Go Viral and Your Sermons Don't," *Seedbed* (blog), August 27, 2015, http://www.seedbed.com/5-reasons-ted-talks-go-viral-and-your-sermons-dont/.

[22] St. Augustine, "On Christian Doctrine," in *The Complete Works of St. Augustine*, Kindle Edition (Amazon Digital Services LLC, 2011), Book IV, Chapter 7, "Examples of True Eloquence Drawn from the Epistles of Paul and the Prophecies of Amos," especially section 21.

invite the congregation into the sermon, encouraging them to be active, participatory

listeners. He closes his article by saying:

> The fact is, the sermon is not a lecture; the sermon is the embodiment of the words of the Word made Flesh. TED Talks are so popular because the speakers understand that embodiment of the message is as important as the content of the message. It's just unfortunate that it took TED to remind the church of the values of such incarnational theology. [23]

In my TED style sermon, I attempted to capture this embodiment of the message. I

selected a personal story, taking care to give it lively, yet concise, narration. A significant

portion of sermon preparation went into balancing the need to identify the main point of

the sermon and why it was important to my listeners and using this to come up with an

opening sentence that engaged their interest and invited them into the story with me. The

goal was two-fold: to make a relational connection, inviting the congregation to share an

experience in my life and consider how they may have had a similar experience, and to

encourage them to view that experience as a connection between them and God.

Adjustments during the Survey Process

After the first survey, I reorganized the survey format to group all the

demographic questions together. It made the survey simpler to complete. I also added a

line to separate the demographic questions from the sermon questions. When explaining

the survey during opening announcements, I asked the congregation to complete the top

section first. Doing so made the completion of the survey after the sermon less time-

consuming and improved the flow of worship.

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[23] Fuerst, "5 Reasons TED Talks Go Viral and Your Sermons Don't."

A second change I made was to incorporate the link for SurveyMonkey and to post that link on the parish Facebook page. It is testimony to the difference in thinking between "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" as discussed in Chapter Three that it did not even occur to me (a "digital immigrant") to offer an online survey option until after the second sermon survey! Since I was already using SurveyMonkey as a data collection tool, it was a simple thing to copy and paste each week's survey link to the paper form and the Facebook page. While I did not receive a single online response, I did receive a comment on one of the link posts from someone affiliated with the congregation that she was impressed that her home congregation was keeping up with the times.

In the next chapter, I will examine the results from the surveys and form some conclusions on preaching in my context. It is my hope that these conclusions will not only improve my preaching practice in my own parish, but also provide insight for the many other pastors in their task of preaching the Word of God to both Analogs and Digitals.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Digital Vs. Analog?

We have established that Digital and Analog are two different cultures, speaking

two different languages. We have also considered several different sermon styles that

could appeal to both Digital and Analog in a congregation. In this chapter, we will

evaluate the data from the five sermons outlined in the previous chapter in an attempt to

discover which of the proposed sermon styles resonated best with Digitals and whether

Analogs respond positively to sermons designed to appeal to Digitals. We will begin with

an overall evaluation of the sermon styles and how they were received by the Analogs

and Digitals. Then we will evaluate each individual sermon style more deeply.

Data Tabulation Notes

Before we begin looking at the data, a brief comment on how the data was

tabulated is in order. The primary goal was to access differences in reception of sermons

between Digitals and Analogs. Since digital media usage is the primary factor in the

changes in the way Digitals gather and process information (as discussed in Chapter

Three), the primary information I wanted to glean was email, internet, social media, and

gaming usage.

The section of the survey designed to collect information about the respondents'

digital media usage was a bit unwieldy. The survey asked for information about use of

basic cell phones, smartphones, computers, and tablets. I included the question about basic cell phones assuming there would be respondents who did not have smartphones. As it turned out, this question was not needed. Nor were the questions about smartphones or whether the respondent used a tablet or computer. The level of digital access was not determined by the device used. It was possible for those who had basic cell phones but used a computer or tablet to still have a high level of digital usage. I expected that a person's device of choice would impact their level of digital access and was surprised when the data showed no real correlation between the two. The three questions about what devised the respondent used were not included in the calculations to determine if the respondent was Digital or Analog.

A scale of zero to five was used to rank the respondent's frequency of use of email, internet, social media, and gaming, with zero indicating "never" and five indicating "daily." The ranking for email, internet, social media, and gaming were added, and the total was used to determine whether the respondent fit in the Digital or Analog category. Keeping in mind Small and Vorgan's observation that even a small amount of digital use does change the brain,[1] those who had no or extremely low digital media usage (a score of 7 or less out of a possible 20) were placed in the Analog category.

Originally, I planned to place everyone who scored 8 or higher into the Digital category. However, there were a number of people who had scores of 16 or higher. I was interested if there would be a difference in sermon reception between these heavy digital

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[1] Small and Vorgan, *iBrain*, location 431.

users and digital users with scores under 15. I also wanted to evaluate the degree of difference between the Analogs and these highest digital users. I classified them as Super Digitals.

Because of the small sizes of my congregations, the number of responses received was very small. Some groups might have between two to five respondents. It is possible for this small response size to distort the data. For more information on response sizes and tables with data points, please see Appendix D. For the most part, the small response sizes are in keeping with the demographic distribution of my congregations. I will note instances where the sampling is atypical.

In the next section, I will examine the results for each sermon type by Analog, Digital, and Super Digital. Then I will examine the response for each sermon type by generation. Finally, I will examine the data grouped by congregation and do a more detailed evaluation of each individual sermon.

Overall Sermon Score

The overall score was the average of survey questions one through six. The responses to each question were averaged by groups, and those averages combined to arrive at an "overall score." The scale for these questions was: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). Thus, a score of three is the "zero-point" for the question, with anything above indicating a positive response, and anything below indicating a negative response.

There was a marked difference in the reception of the manuscript sermon between the Analogs and both Digital groups (see Figure 5). The Analogs gave the manuscript

higher scores than either of the other groups, but the lowest individual score for this format was a 3.6 out of 5, which is still indicates a positive response. The integrated worship/sermon and the TED Talk sermon had the best scores overall. The high scores the Analog groups gave for the non-traditional sermons are encouraging to me and for this project.

Figure 5. Overall Sermon Score by Digital Use

We see similar results when the individual responses are sorted by generation rather than digital use (see Figure 6). The Olders and Boomers gave the manuscript sermon a higher score than the younger generations did. This was expected. The Olders and Boomers learned in the "old-school" lecture-based format, but the younger generations have been exposed to changes in the field of education such as the incorporation of multiple learning styles and more participatory, collaborative learning situations. It is not surprising that a traditional sermon, with its lecture style format, is meaningful for the Olders and Boomers and not as meaningful for the younger

generations. However, the traditional sermon was rated no lower than 3.4 out of 5.[2] Both

Boomers and Olders rated the non-traditional sermon forms highly. The Gen Xer scores

for the multiple learning style sermon and integrated worship/sermon was much lower

than for the other sermon styles. However, the Gen X attendance on the Sundays those

two sermons were delivered was much lower than the Sundays for the other sermons. It is

possible that the Gen X scores for the multiple learning style sermon and the integrated

worship/sermon reflected individual preferences rather than the dynamics of the Gen X

group as a whole.

Figure 6. Overall Sermon Score by Generation

Since the data obtained by sorting the individual sermon evaluations by

generation closely mirror the data obtained by sorting the individual responses by digital

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[2] The difference between the lowest average score for the Analog/Digital Chart and the Generational Chart is due to the different groupings of the individual respondents.

use, the scores by generation will not be discussed in the individual sermon portion of this chapter. The data is located in Appendix D for those who would like to review it.

Figure 7. Overall Sermon Score by Congregation

When the individual responses are sorted by congregation (see Figure 7), the traditional sermon still scored lower than the other sermon types, but the difference was much smaller. The manuscript sermon scored lowest (3.8) at Congregation D compared to the other three congregations, which undoubtedly reflects the larger contingent of Digitals/Youngers in this congregation. Congregation A had an atypically low number of respondents for both the integrated worship/sermon and the participatory sermon, so those scores may reflect personal preference. Since sermon response across congregations is not the focus of this thesis (and is mostly of limited use outside of my context), I will not analyze this data for individual sermons. The scoring data for the individual sermons by congregation is included in Appendix D for those who might find

the comparison of sermon reception between primarily two-generation (Traditionalist and Boomer) congregations and a six-generation congregation interesting.

Based on data from my congregations, the traditional sermon is not really an effective sermon form for digital generations. The other sermon forms were rated much higher by the digital groups than the manuscript sermon was (see Table 1):

Table 1. Overall Sermon Scores by Digital Use

	Manuscript	Integrated	TED-Talk	Participatory	Multiple Learning Styles
Analog	4.1	4.3	4.3	4.1	4.2
Digital	3.7	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.2
Super Digital	3.6	4.4	4.5	4.2	4.4

For the most part, this trend held true for all generations surveyed and all four congregations (see Table 2):

Table 2. Overall Sermon Scores by Generation

	Manuscript	Integrated	TED-Talk	Participatory	Multiple Learning Styles
Olders	4.1	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.2
Boomers	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.3
Gen X	3.4	4.3	4.4	3.9	3.8
Millenials	3.8	4.2	4.6	4.4	4.8

Still, the manuscript sermon scored no lower than a 3.4 on any of the scales, which still indicates a positive response. While there may still be a place for the traditional sermon form, it should not be the default. The other tools in a preacher's box are more effective. In the next section we will dig deeper into the traditional form in order to seek out treasures old and new.

Sermon One Response: Traditional/Manuscript

The traditional sermon, represented here by a manuscript sermon based on Wilson's four pages, is firmly in the Analog comfort zone. The Analog group scored all survey questions about this sermon form much higher than the other two groups did (see Figure 8). While all groups evaluated the sermons as "clear and well presented" and "[having] a clear message," the scores from both the Digital and Super Digital groups were lower than the Analog response. Of particular interest is the way the scores dropped for both the Digital groups in response to the questions about interest level, connection to daily life, and whether the sermon challenged them in any way. Those are important functions of the sermon, and it would be wise to consider the limitations of a traditional sermon for the faith formation of Digitals.

Figure 8. Sermon One Score by Digital Use

For the written response questions (see Appendix E), the Analogs made more positive responses to the question "What did you like?" than the question "What didn't you like?" While the Digitals' written responses were mostly positive, they commented

that the sermon was too long and expressed disappointment that there were no visuals. Two of the Digitals felt that language structure was not effective, and one Digital observed that this sermon did not relate to how we live today. Several of the written responses indicated the story of the sacrifice of Isaac was a difficult topic. One thing became very clear in reading the written responses for this question: My congregations prefer sermons with stories. This observation is reinforced by reading the written responses for the other sermons

<div align="center">Sermon Two Response: Integrated Worship/Sermon</div>

While the traditional sermon was clearly preferred by Analogs, the integrated worship/sermon struck a chord with both Digitals and Analogs. The overall score was 4.2 for Analogs, 4.3 for Digitals, and 4.4 for Super Digitals (out of a 5-point scale). The scores for the individual questions had minimal variance between the groups. It is noteworthy that the two greatest variances in scoring were between the Super Digitals and Digitals. In response to whether the sermon related to everyday life, the Super Digitals gave an average score of 0.5 points higher than the Digitals. In response to whether the sermon challenged them, the Super Digitals gave an average score 0.4 points higher than the Digitals (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Sermon Two Score by Digital Use

The overall preference for the integrated worship/sermon really shines in the written responses. This sermon had the highest rate of completion for Questions 7 and 8, at 72%, compared to 46% for the manuscript sermon.[3] Only three out of 42 respondents to Question 7 felt that integrating the sermon with the rest of the worship service was not important. The music was repeatedly mentioned as a unifying element (although a few expressed concerns that songs be "sing-able" or known by the congregation). This Sunday was our "blended" worship, with songs and hymns from contemporary Christian music as well as the hymnal. There were comments that praised the "upbeat" music as well as comments that bemoaned that we were not singing "old favorites."

It's clear that unifying worship around the theme of the sermon enhances the worship experience and is important to both Digitals and Analogs. Having personally

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[3] The TED-talk sermon had a 66% completion rate, the participatory sermon 56%, and the multiple learning style sermon 60%.

experienced several different worship planning procedures (the pastor planning

everything, the pastor and the organist selecting the music together, the organist selecting

the music and the pastor selecting the hymn of the day, worship planning teams, and

others), I can vouch for the fact that not all preachers have the time or assistance to

integrate the sermon and worship. However, when possible, it is worth the preacher's

time and effort to integrate worship and the sermon.

Sermon Three Response: TED Talk

The TED Talk sermon was very well received by both Analogs and Digitals.

There were no ratings under four points for any of the questions. Respondents scored this

sermon style at least as high as, if not higher than, the integrated worship/sermon in terms

of connection to daily life, interest level, and challenge, and far higher than the

manuscript sermon in these areas. The Super Digitals gave the highest overall rating for

this style sermon and had the highest rating for almost all of the individual categories (see

Figure 10).

Figure 10. Sermon Three Score by Digital Use

The written responses for this sermon were extremely encouraging. This sermon had the second highest completion percentage for the written questions at 66%. The responses indicated that the TED Talk sermon did invite the respondents into both the biblical story and the preacher's story and gave insights on how God might be speaking to the respondents. The story component of the TED Talk sermon was well received, further proof that, in my context, stories are important parts of a sermon. The responses showed an increased desire to "listen" for God and to ponder how God "calls" them in various aspects of life.

It is so encouraging to see a sermon dealing with call not only to be well received, but also to be internalized so dramatically by the congregation. The TED Talk sermon is effective, but preachers will need to study the form of the TED Talk to understand the differences between a TED Talk and a traditional sermon.

Sermon Four Response: Participatory

I was certain that the participatory sermon would not be well received by the Analogs and was thus surprised by the high ratings it received from this group. Some written responses indicated that this sermon pushed the comfort zone of some, but the overall responses were positive. While there were no ratings under 4.0, the ratings were not as high as for the TED Talk sermon. Still, in the categories of challenge, connection to daily life, and interest level, the participatory sermon rated much higher than the traditional sermon for both Digital groups (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Sermon Four Score by Digital Use

The written responses to Questions 7 and 8 indicated a surprising openness to certain forms of participation. There is an overall sense that, when participatory elements are added, the congregation's interest and engagement levels are higher. While I was concerned that some people might feel uncomfortable in a participatory sermon, I think gentle inclusion of participatory elements in the sermon would acclimate the congregation to a more active role in the sermon over time. The preacher needs to carefully communicate that individual congregation members may participate at their own comfort level. Perhaps making an effort to add some of the pre-sermon participatory elements discussed in Chapter Four would also increase engagement and interest in the sermon. Preachers know their context best and can determine their congregation's starting point for including participatory elements in the sermon.

Sermon Five Response: Multiple Learning Styles

Since both Analogs and Digitals have multiple learning styles (even though Analogs' educational experiences often did not include multiple learning styles as discussed in Chapter Four), I expected the multiple learning styles sermon would be well received by both Digitals and Analogs. For the Analogs, it was as effective as the manuscript sermon in connecting to daily life and challenging the listener, and almost as effective at sustaining interest. For the Digital groups, it was much more effective in all three of these categories (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Sermon Five Score by Digital Use

The Digital groups were more enthusiastic in the written responses to Questions 7 and 8 than the Analogs were. While the visuals, especially the bone/flower/cross, were mentioned frequently, the Digital groups also mentioned that the nature imagery, poetry, and time for personal reflection were helpful for them to enter the story. The Analogs liked the visuals, but all but one Analog response to Question 7 included the "spoken

word" as being the most helpful. The Digital groups also indicated that they were able to connect the biblical story to their daily life, while the Analog group had a mixed response to this question.

Including multiple learning styles in a sermon can be as simple as describing a nature scene, or as complicated as assembling a "takeaway" during the sermon. Multiple learning style sermons can be more challenging and time-consuming for the preacher to create, but it is well worth it to engage all members of the congregation.

Becoming Fluent in Digital *and* Analog

It is possible to preach in a language both Digitals and Analogs understand. We have seen that TED Talk sermons, multiple learning style sermons, participatory sermons, and integrating worship with the sermon are all effective ways to speak Digital in a way that Analogs understand. The traditional sermon style, however, is not as effective when trying to speak Analog in a way Digitals understand. Since Analogs also respond well to the sermon styles directed at Digitals, continuing to rely on the traditional sermon format may not be the best practice for the preacher. Just as a builder selects which tools are needed for a specific project, the preacher also must consider which sermon format and elements enhance the proclamation of a specific text by speaking the languages of her congregation, both Digital and Analog.

Of course, a study is only as good as its data, and that data is only as good as the method used to obtain it. In the next chapter, I will look at the strengths and the weaknesses of this study. I will also suggest some modifications for future study.

CHAPTER 6

EVALUATION

The Good, the Bad, and What I Would Change

This study demonstrated that it is possible to preach to Digitals and Analogs in

way that engages both groups simultaneously. As I suspected, the traditional sermon form

is not the most effective way to engage Digitals. It was encouraging to note that the non-

traditional sermon forms engaged Analogs at least as well as the traditional sermon.

The congregation found the sermon/survey process to be positive. There were

often comments in the after-worship greeting line, or during the week that knowing there

was a survey to complete after the sermon helped the respondent focus more on the

sermon. Several people mentioned that they found the reflection time after the sermon

helpful. It gave them time to process what they had just heard. Considering these

comments, I wonder if having a congregational hymn right after the sermon is the best

practice for congregations. Perhaps a short time of quiet prayer or occasionally ending the

sermon with a question and time to ponder that question might lead to better sermon

effectiveness.

The "Same Old, Same Old" Is Okay, but We Can Do Better

The written feedback from survey questions 7 and 8 were quite informative. For

the traditional sermon, stories were mentioned the most by all groups in response to

"what part of the sermon style did you like." One of the Analogs liked "The way you

presented and used comparisons," while another found "the history background at the start of the sermon" helpful to understand the context of the Scripture text. Another of the Analogs said, "I liked the stories but found the whole sermon itself uplifting and very well presented. I like how you present to everyday life and easy to understand." Detailed storytelling that explains the context of the scriptural text and connects it to modern life are extremely effective for my congregations. I knew this informally already, but it is helpful to have my hunch confirmed. Storytelling is one of my strengths, and even when I try to not tell stories, apparently I do.

The Digitals also responded to the stories which helped them connect with the character of Isaac in the scriptural story of the sacrifice of Isaac. One Digital commented that "relating Isaac's age to the story" was helpful, and another really connected with Issacs's dilemma: "Idea that Isaac was willing to be the sacrifice-rock and hard place- what's my choice? God will provide." A Super Digital commented, "It was a hard story about trusting God's love." And another connected with Abraham: "You related the story to us as parents. Wow what a sacrifice!" The comments made it clear that the story was told in a way that engaged the congregation and made them think. This is such a hard story both to hear and to preach. I struggled to find "a way in" to make it relevant to my congregation. I found this Super Digital comment to be very encouraging: "It was a tough topic, and pastor admitted as much but helped us understand it."

When asked what they didn't like about the traditional sermon style, there were not many Analog responses. One indicated he or she didn't like the use of questions in the sermon. The Digitals found the sermon too long and longed for visuals. Although there were responses that indicated I had successfully related the story to current times,

one Digital commented, "Too long and not related to us as we live today." The only Super Digital responding to this question disliked the scriptural story itself and struggled with the fact "that God asked a man to sacrifice his son."

Encouraged that my traditional sermon style was fairly well received by all groups, I was anxious to see if any of the other sermon styles resonated better than another style, especially with the Digitals and Super Digitals, whose scoring of the traditional sermon was lower than the Analogs. The written responses to questions 7 and 8 showed me that I was on the right track for crafting sermons that speak both Digital and Analog.

<div align="center">The Whole is Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts</div>

The integrated worship/sermon experience was well received and generated the most responses for questions 7 and 8. It appeared that respondents felt having the hymns and liturgy reinforce the theme of the sermon and scripture text was very important. Some of the responses were:

- Analog: Very important. It helps everything to fit together and makes it easier to hear and understand what that Sunday's message is about.
- Digital: Yes, it is important to me. The hymns help follow along with the sermon.
- Digital: I appreciate that it does. Hearing and seeing things in a different way is helpful.
- Digital: Very! Helps to ties the entire service together. Makes you listen to the readings.
- Super Digital: It is fairly important to me because it really helps connect the dots in a way and fill in the blank spaces.
- Super Digital: Yes. I like it when the hymns help me follow the message of the sermon. It helps me follow the sermon.

As Lutherans, our liturgy is typically pre-written. The prayer of the day, the offering prayer, and the prayers of intercession (prayers of the people) generally reflect the scriptural theme. However, if the preacher is using a worship resource, and not writing her own prayers, the sermon theme may not always match the themes of these prayers. The remainder of the liturgy is typically the same from week to week (or at least for a church season). One could argue (and I have had parishioners tell me this) that the familiarity of the liturgy allows the worshipper to retain it outside worship, where these prayers and confessions can become part of his or her daily faith life. However, this study indicated that there is also value in creating liturgy that matches the theme of the scriptural text and the sermon. Doing so creates several entrance points to the sermon and gives multiple avenues for reflection after the sermon.

Writing one's own liturgy week after week may not always be practical. However, an effort to write at least a call to worship and ending blessing that reinforce the sermon could go a long way to offer some integration in times when writing a full liturgy is not possible. Fortunately, the responses to Question 8 indicated that the hymns chosen were effective in integrating worship with the scriptural theme and sermon.

Responses to the question "What part of today's worship do you think connected with the message of the sermon?" revealed that the hymns and songs selected were very important in reinforcing the scriptural theme and the sermon. One Analog said, "I really like your conclusions at the end of the sermon. The songs chosen for today were great!" A Digital stated that the parts of the worship that connected best were "the call to worship, C's song while we completed the survey, hymn 'Borning Cry.'" The best response I received acknowledged how the Spirit moves in worship: "The Kyrie is

uplifting-great rhythm and melody-rather than the LBW liturgical Kyrie! The spirit

moves-connected words, music, scripture!"

Almost all the comments from all group included hymns and songs. Conclusion:

Songs are very important in worship and very important in making a space for the

worshipper to make connections with the Scripture and the sermon. Since preachers (and

other worship team members) may not always find it feasible to write a full liturgy every

week, it is important that preachers, musicians, and worship planning teams consider the

preaching text and probable sermon theme when selecting hymns. In my context, we do

hymn selection quarterly. When I select the hymn of the day I have a general sense of the

direction of the sermon, but between the time of hymn selection and sitting down to write

the sermon, the theme often changes. The rest of the worship team selects the other songs

and hymns based on the general theme I give them at the time we do worship planning.

Thinking about how important it is that the hymns and songs reinforce the sermon theme

means that as the sermon theme develops more, going forward I need to review the

hymns and make changes if they do not reinforce the sermon theme.

How TED Reclaimed Storytelling

The effectiveness of Sermon Three's TED-Talk style was clearly displayed in the

comments on survey questions 7 and 8. Framing my own call story in the language of the

call of Samuel (1 Samuel 3) gave an entry point into the congregation considering how

God might be calling them. When asked in question 7 if this storytelling style helped

them think about how God might speak today, respondents said:

- Analog: Very much so. He speaks to us and we are not listening to his message. I will think about every situation why?
- Analog: Yes-I should listen more closely to what He is asking me to do.

- Analog: It did. Something I don't think about often.
- Digital: Yes, God speaks to us, but we might not always be hearing what he has to say.
- Digital: Reminder that God continues to call me. Renew and open eyes and ears to hear him.
- Digital: Yes. I need to "listen" better-God may be calling and I didn't listen or recognize his call.
- Digital: Yes, it related to my everyday life.
- Digital: Yes! It took scripture and combined with real life story to make it relatable.
- Super Digital: Yes, it reminded me to still my soul and heart, so I may listen better to what God is saying to me.

Question 8 moved from God calling in general, to God calling the respondent personally:

- Analog: Made me think about God is calling me.
- Digital: Started thinking about new ways to serve.
- Digital: God might be using a friend or family member to speak to me.
- Digital: Made me think about everyday calling of the Lord.
- Digital: It makes me think I should listen more and what he wants me to do. with my life and how I should be a role model.
- Digital: It helped reassure me that God has/is speaking to me at times throughout my life. Before I just dismissed the throughout but now I realize God was speaking to me.

One of the Super Digitals made the connection between God's calling and secular

vocation:

God calls me to tend to the elderly daily and those who might not be befriended easily. I know this because every time I tried and did leave and look away from these things there was a constant pull and tug in my heart to return and be there for these people-so I continue to be here for them. Great Blessing!

These are powerful responses. As a preacher, rarely do I have evidence that a sermon made an effect on my congregation. To read these responses revitalized my ministry. While not every scriptural text might lend itself to a TED Talk style sermon, a new part of my sermon process is to consider how the elements of a TED Talk might be used to effectively proclaim a given week's scripture.

The Sermon Is a Participation Sport

I was certain that the Analogs would not like the participatory sermon (Sermon Four), so the Analog written responses took me by surprise. It would appear that while participation in sermons is not something Analogs are comfortable with, they realized that it is good for them. While the Analog responses to Question 7 ("What do you think about sermons that give the congregation an opportunity to participate in some way?") were less than enthusiastic, the responses to Question 8 showed that they found the process meaningful:

- Makes me think about the sermon during the week. I will tape the card to my mirror.
- Will probably think about it more during the week.
- Good reminder of what we need to do.
- If you write it down, it will be on your mind and you will dwell on that more.
- Helped to bless and help others.

I expected the Digitals to be more supportive of participatory sermons and I was not mistaken. Responses by both Digitals and Super Digitals to Question 7 indicated that they believe participatory sermons:

- Can be useful-making us think.
- Keeps us engaged.
- Makes it more interesting.

Again, there was indication in Question 8 that this sermon helped the Digitals and Super Digitals connect the sermon theme to their personal life:

- Digital: Sometimes what we do doesn't seem so important until we think about it.
- Digital: It helped to personalize the message.
- Super Digital: It made me connect my daily activities to my service to God.
- Super Digital: It made me think hard about what God has blessed me with and how I can use those talents in my life to serve Him.
- Super Digital: Made me think of things I do daily that I could use to help others.

Adding participatory elements to the sermon is as simple as asking a question and giving time to reflect on it. Given the positive response to the participatory methods I used in this sermon, I will make an effort to incorporate participatory elements more frequently in my sermons. In addition, I plan on stretching my congregations' participatory boundaries by gradually introducing more active participation (such as breaking into groups of two or three to discuss something or practice a faith skill, asking for verbal responses, or asking for questions).

A Sermon for the Whole Being

It's difficult to know which element of the multiple learning style sermon was the most effective, but that's the point. Different people learn in different ways, so it's only to be expected that in the responses to Question 7, which asks which of the sermon's techniques was most helpful, would field a number of different responses. There were people in all groups that referred to the visuals and to the kinesthetic activities. Some mentioned the poems, some the nature imagery, and some the time for personal reflection. Every learning style I targeted, with the exception of musical and mathematical (which were mostly in the children's sermon), were mentioned, and the inclusion of it in the sermon was appreciated. I count this attempt at incorporating multiple learning styles as successful.

I did find a significant drawback to incorporating multiple learning styles in a sermon. I chose to use actual elements of each learning style rather than rely on spoken appeals to each learning style (for example, showing a picture instead of describing a scene, having a tangible instead of asking people to imagine it). Doing so involved a lot of preparation and expense. As a solo pastor, I could not imagine trying to present such a

sermon each week. In my opinion, multiple learning style sermons require a team to prepare. Not only could the preparation task be shared among the team members but having team members with different learning styles would make the sermon richer and more effective. Still, I will continue to consider which learning style might be most effectively incorporated into each sermon. Not every sermon has to appeal to all learning styles, as long as an effort is made to not rely on the same styles of learning for every sermon.

Still, the preparation and expense involved the multiple learning style sermon was worth it! The responses to Question 8 "Did the sermon help you connect the biblical story to your life?" showed deep reflection and connection with the sermon and the text:

- Analog: Brought up questions of resurrection-when does it occur.
- Digital: Even though there are so many tough times in life, God brings hope into "dry bones."
- Digital: Yes. not to be a zombie with no spirit or purpose.
- Digital: Dry bones are low points in life-with God they come alive just how he helps with the trouble in life.
- Super Digital: Yes, all the bad things happening, there is still life and hope.

One of the Digital responses broke my heart: "Yes. I've been waiting for the breath. Maybe I should ask God for help. What can I do to help get started?" I wish I knew who this was, so I could partner with them in finding the answer to their question.

As I reviewed the written responses, I realized that using different sermon styles had resulted in my congregation making deeper and more meaningful connections with the scriptural text and the sermon. It was encouraging to see that the sermon was making a difference in the lives of the congregation. The responses indicated an engagement with the biblical text that opened the door to growth in faith.

What I Would Have Done Differently

The written responses were encouraging. I also found the data from the sermons response questions 1-6, which used a scale from 1 to 5 (with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree"), to be much more positive than I expected. The data skewed on the positive side, with very few "neutrals," even fewer "disagrees," and no "strongly disagrees." Some of that might be because of the "honeymoon" effect of being new to the congregation. It might also have been because the congregants wanted to be "nice." There were a few surveys where some of the sermon response questions were answered and some left blank. Leaving the question blank could be a way of avoiding criticizing the new pastor. I might have gotten better responses if I have not labeled each individual number and used a sliding scale, thus removing the implied judgment of the label.[1]

As a psychology undergrad, I learned the importance of controlling variables, and in this study, there were too many I could not control. Attendance naturally varies from week to week, so the responses did not necessarily come from the same people for each survey. The lectionary (either Revised Common or Narrative) does not typically assign the same biblical text for multiple Sundays, so it is very possible respondents' connection (or lack thereof) to the preaching text itself influenced the survey ratings.

Because I changed calls during my doctoral studies, I was less familiar with who the Digitals and the Analogs were in the new congregations. It would have been helpful

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[1] My concern here is that the labels I assigned, especially the "disagree" and "strongly disagree" labels, designated a level of critique that my congregations were not ready to engage in with their new pastor. Simply labeling "1" as the lowest score and "5"as the highest may have removed this implied judgment and allowed the respondents more flexibility in scoring each question.

to know the digital habits of my new congregations when designing this study. If I were to do this over, I would do a pre-sermon series survey on digital usage habits. I would introduce the scale in worship during announcements, give the scoring, and then ask for volunteers for the focus groups. I would ask for volunteers from the Analog (people who didn't use smart phones and scored zero to one in the other categories), Digitals (people who scored two to three in most categories), and Super Digitals (four to five in all categories). I would have asked this group of volunteers to commit to evaluating all five sermons, listening to a recording of any sermon they missed. I would have asked them to use the codes A, D, and SD respectively to mark their surveys, so I could evaluate these subgroups. I also would have used social media platforms to recruit digital natives from my congregation. That I failed to even think of doing these things speaks to my own status as a digital immigrant. I would have still distributed surveys to the congregations at large and tabulated the results. I think this would have addressed some of my concerns about controlling variables.

Turning an Analog Girl into a Digital Preacher

Having evaluated the responses to the sermons in this study, I am encouraged to try different sermon styles with my congregations. In the next chapter, I will first discuss how my own preaching has changed since completing this study. Then I will consider avenues for further study. Finally, there will be an evaluation of the potential benefits this study has for preachers in the larger Church.

CHAPTER 7

REFLECTION

Preaching in a Multi-Media World

What difference does it make to know how the Analogs and Digitals in my

context respond to various sermon styles? Is there a benefit to the Church at large? And

where can we go from here? In this chapter, we will examine the benefit this study has

had for preaching in my context. Then I will consider avenues for further study. Finally,

there will be an evaluation of the potential benefits this study has for preachers in the

larger Church.

Personal Benefits

Since I changed calls during my doctoral studies, I had no historical knowledge of

which sermons styles connected best with my new congregations. This study has been an

excellent way to familiarize myself with the congregations and to discover what forms of

preaching resonate most with them. It gives me a great deal of confidence as a preacher

to learn that my congregations respond so well to stories. Storytelling is one of my

strengths as a preacher.

The grace and acceptance the congregations have shown as we explored different

ways of proclaiming God's word have also given me confidence in trying new methods

of preaching. I have begun to write more parts of the liturgy myself or to find liturgies

that reinforce the sermons theme. My worship team is skilled at selecting songs that

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enhance the sermon, but on the occasion that the hymns do not, I am more apt to ask for an alternate. I will continue to incorporate the TED Talk and multiple learning style sermons in some form as often as possible. The participatory sermon is a growth area for my congregations, so I will continue to take baby steps in acclimating them to move from passive reception to active participation in the sermon. It is a gift to know I serve in a place where experimentation and play are greeted not with resistance, but with a willingness to try new things.

A Little Child Shall Lead Them

One of the major changes I have made to my preaching is the connection of the children's sermon with the sermon. Prior to this study, I had received comments that the children's sermon really helped an adult connect with the adult sermon. Some of the survey's written responses indicated this as well. Although none of the survey questions asked specifically about the children's sermon, some of the written responses indicated that the children's sermon was an entry point into the sermon:

- (Sermon 3, Question 7) I enjoyed hearing the children's version the best.
- (Sermon 3, Question 7) Yes; reading/talking about the children's sermon helped explain that God speaks to us and wants us to share his good word.
- (Response to Sermon 2, Question 8) The music and the children's sermon

Realizing how often the children's sermon helps adults prepare for the sermon, I have begun to change how I craft the children's sermon. It has become a central part of my sermon writing process. I have begun writing the sermon first, then crafting a children's sermon to match its theme. Previously just an afterthought, the children's sermon now introduces and reinforces the main theme of the central sermon. Even if the congregation

to which I am preaching does not have children in attendance, I still give the children's sermon. The adults love it and find it very meaningful.

I have been told that sometimes it's hard to determine where the children's sermon ends and the "adult" sermon begins. I do not think this is a bad thing. I think, as more preachers move to EPIC sermons, the sermon will become an interactive, all-age, cross-generational event. Troeger and Everding recommend incorporating "children's ways of knowing" in sermons.[1] They list the following benefits:

1. Children's ways of knowing can help a preacher create parabolic sermons that engage adult ways of thinking.
2. Children's ways of knowing allow room for different ways of interpreting the Bible.
3. Children's ways of knowing is our gift to the whole community of God, children and adults alike. By treating seriously a child's perception, we avoid speaking down to children.. . . When the whole community of faith learns from children, it demonstrates a greater respect for them being fully members of the body of Christ. But it does something more, it honors adults by assuming they have the capacity to become like children in order to enter the reign of God.
4. Using children's ways of knowing in sermons gives witness that God is concerned for the whole story of our lives.
5. Children's ways of knowing foster the rebirth of wonder.[2]

I think a rich area of further research could be the exploration of how the children's sermons affect the reception and understanding of the adult sermon.

Further Studies

It would be interesting to repeat this study by having a preacher preach the different sermon styles but use the same text for all the sermons. In the previous chapter,

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[1] Thomas H. Troeger and H. Edward Everding Jr., *So That All Might Know: Preaching That Engages the Whole Congregation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 60.

[2] Ibid., 84-87.

I considered the possibility that using a different text each week could have influenced the evaluation of the sermon style. Using the same text for all five sermons would remove this variable. However, "text fatigue" for both the preacher and the congregation could be a problem and lead to the sermon styles presented later to be scored lower. Another way to address this issue would be a longer study in which each sermon style would be preached and evaluated two or three times.

Another avenue for further study would be to test the sermons styles in several congregations not in a parish relationship. I originally considered recruiting members of my text study to preach using the selected sermon styles in their congregations. The resulting data would allow a researcher to determine whether results were consistent across congregations. However, several of the text study members also took new calls at the same time I did, so that option was not feasible for me. Testing the sermons styles in non-parish congregations, and potentially across denominational lines, would increase the benefit of this study to the Church at large.

There are also other demographics that might benefit from non-traditional sermons styles, and replicating this study within these groups might provide insight on their needs. For example, Witte notes in her study that the use of digital technology in worship and preaching improves accessibility not only to what she refers to as the "younger generations" (aka digital natives) and to visitors, but also to those who have limitations in hearing and vision.[3] Further research into whether the various sermon styles explored in this thesis are more inclusive of those who are hard of hearing, visually

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[3] Alison Witte, "Preaching and Technology: A Study of Attitudes and Practices" (Bowling Green State University, 2013), 157.

impaired, or working with mental challenges could be a fruitful line of study. Another

area of study could be on how these sermons styles affect engagement with the sermons

for people who have grown up in the faith and "speak the language" and people who are

new to faith or people who have never experienced church at all.

The Game's Afoot!

Finally, I find the research on the attitudes and values of gamers to be quite

intriguing. I really wanted to have a sixth sermon in the series that spoke "gaming." I

sense a connection between the gaming culture and preaching, but I haven't been able to

articulate that connection. As stated in chapter 3 and discussed in Appendix A,

incorporating gaming theory and the values of gamers into worship and preaching is an

intriguing area of further research. James Gee posits that video games are compelling not

only because they're fun, but because they mimic the way people actually think to a

remarkable degree.[4] Humans learn by doing and by play that imitates actions. Think of a

child caring for a doll or building with Legos. There are a variety of skills that this child

is learning in his or her play. Likewise, role playing and practicing conflict resolution

skills is more helpful for couples in learning how to resolve conflict than simply reading

about it.[5] This is why simulators are such good learning tools. There is the opportunity to

learn by doing, hone skills, try out various scenarios, and see if the desired results occur.

Also, simulators often incorporate an element of play, which can help one persist in

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[4] James Gee, "Learning Theory, Video Games, and Popular Culture," in *The Digital Divide Arguments for and Against Facebook Google, Texting, and the Age of Social Media*, Kindle e-book (New York: The Penguin Group, 2011), Location 681, quoted text is the opening section header.

[5] I use Prepare/Enrich for premarital couples' sessions. Prepare/Enrich's main teaching method is role play and practice of communication and conflict resolution skills.

learning an otherwise boring skill. So, I will continue to reflect upon how preachers can incorporate play into learning faith practices.

Gee notes that in gaming, the players learn about the world of the game and how the various elements of the game help or hinder them in achieving their goals.[6] The best games allow user input to modify the world of the game in order to make achieving the goal more realistic, to encourage cooperation, or to give guidance to newcomers to the game. While current games often take place in fictional or historical worlds with fictional characters, Gee sees potential in crafting games to offer real-world learning simulations that would allow students to experientially learn. He extols "the important of games as "action-and-goal-directed preparations for, and simulations of, embodied experience."" [7] How might preachers craft worship experiences that incorporate simulations of the life of faith?

Jane McGonigal's characterization of games and gamers present a picture of a culture that is participatory, collaborative, able to imagine the future and works to create it, sees failure as practice in getting it right, is willing to try new ways of doing things, and is willing to expend energy and focus to participate in something bigger than oneself.[8] I hear echoes of biblical values: community, living into the Kingdom of God, self-giving, and openness to growth that brings one closer to God. Could further research

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[6] Gee, "Learning Theory, Video Games, and Popular Culture, location 740"

[7] Ibid, location 751.

[8] McGonigal, *Reality Is Broken.* See Appendix A for a detailed discussion of her assessment of gaming culture.

into the connections between the life of faith and game culture provide an entry way to faith and insight on how to deepen one's faith?

We May Have Always Done It that Way, but It's Time for a Change

I have heard it said that the Church is twenty years behind the culture. It calls to mind Tolkien's hobbits: "So, life in the Shire goes on very much it has this past age with its own comings and goings, and change coming slowly, if it comes at all."[9] Substitute "the Church" for "the Shire" and this statement could be equally true. There may be those who agree with beloved hobbit Bilbo Baggins that this is not a bad thing at all. However, as Bilbo and his nephew Frodo find, the larger world is changing fast, and if one is not careful, that change can sweep one away. We no longer have the luxury of remaining twenty years behind in a culture that is changing as fast as the digital culture we find ourselves in. My view, and I believe much of what was discovered in this thesis project, is that preaching must adapt to new mediums.

It's far too easy to look at our congregations of aging Analogs and Boomers (who may be digital immigrants) and think, "Why does preaching need to change when it works for the people in the pews?" Christianity has always been about more than just who is inside the room. Jesus tells us to "go and make disciples of all the world." The Church, and her preachers, needs to consider those who are not in the pews and preach in a way that results in their being reached with the Gospel. We must learn this new language for preaching, lest the Digitals grow tired of us speaking loudly and slowly in a language that has no meaning for them and turn away.

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[9] Peter Jackson, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, DVD, Burbank, CA: New Line Productions, 2001.

As this study has shown, incorporating different sermon styles in a preacher's repertoire allows for preaching that communicates God's word to the Digital, the Analog and everyone in-between. I pray that this study's findings inspire preachers to explore their own context by using the preaching styles tested in this study. Hopefully, this study will motivate preachers to expand their preaching to try new styles this thesis did not address, responding to this multi-media world by preaching in both Digital and Analog.

APPENDIX A

GAMING AS PREACHING?

Research for this thesis has revealed some intriguing information about the culture of

those who play computer or video games. Jane McGonigal's provocatively titled

[1] book, *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change

the World,* discusses the characteristics of the gaming culture:[2]

- By playing a game, one seeks out voluntary obstacles;

- Energy is focused in positive ways;

- The "work" of the game is fun and gamers engage in blissful productivity;

- Failure is seen as practice (one has had fun and there's always a do-over);

- In games, especially MMORP (Massively Multi-player, Online, Role Playing) games, collaboration is essential;

- Strong social bonds are built in team games, through playing together or against each other, talking about game, and general conversation during the game;

- By entering the world of the game, one becomes part of something bigger than the self;

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1 One could argue this is what faith is supposed to do: connect us with God, thereby enabling us to become "better" by becoming the people God created us to be and empowering us to be God's hands and feet and heart in the world (and thus changing the world).

2 McGonigal, Reality Is Broken.

- The world of the game provides a vision of alternate reality;

- The gamer can imagine and create the future;

- In game play it is easy to take advice and try out new habits.

Reading McGonigal's description of these characteristics made me realize that many of the gamer's values were similar to the values of Christianity:

- In living a life of faith, one chooses to embrace obstacles that others may ignore;

- Energy is focused in on living a life pleasing to God;

- The "work" of faith is done in grateful response to all God has first done for us;

- Failure is not fatal because we serve a God of second chances;

- We are the Body of Christ, in the community of faith collaboration is essential;

- Strong social bonds are built by worshipping together, serving together, bearing one another's burdens, living out our lives together;

- In the household of faith, one becomes part of something bigger than the self;

- God's Kingdom gives a vision of reality that is alternate to the world's reality;

- The Christian is a co-creator with God, bringing in the future;

- We learn from one another's example. We try new faith practices as we learn to lives of faith.

As I read, I wondered how might a preacher link the values of faith to the corresponding values in gamer culture? Is there a way to preach "gamer?"

There is a "way in" for faith formation and church ministry. Schnekloth, quoting John Paul Gee, cites what gaming can teach the church about faith formation.[3] In gaming, one is free to adapt different identities. Exploring who one is and what it means to be a child of God is essential to faith formation. Games allow for trial and error. Faith formation also should include grace for mistakes to occur and used as learning experiences. Games allow players to create the world around them, reflecting their personal playing preferences. Faith formation should empower the student use their individual passion and giftedness to engage with the Word and the world to effect change in the world around them. There is resurrection in games, and faith formation is all about resurrection. These attributes of games give a "real sense of agency, ownership, and control."[4] I would argue that faith formation should give that same sense of connectedness. Preaching should do the same.

Thomas and Brown, in their book *A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating the Imagination for a World of Constant Change*, discuss gaming as a unique disposition to learning, where gamers evaluate performance and assess the best way to reach their goals. They understand the value of teamwork and of the diverse input of the team. Change is not something to be feared but is embraced. They are open to radical and innovative strategies and ideas. They learn while having fun.[5]

In their discussion of gaming and the new culture of learning, Thomas and Brown use language that is spiritually evocative. They talk about "indwelling" as "the familiarity with

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[3] Schnekloth, *Mediating Faith*, 73-74.

[4] Ibid.,74.

[5] Thomas and Brown, *A New Culture of Learning*, 85-88.

ideas, practices and processes become so ingrained that they become second nature."[6]

Indwelling expands to "Collective indwelling – the feeling and belief that group members

share a tacit understanding of one another, their environment and the practices necessary to

complete their task."[7] I hear in their words echoes of the goals of faith formation and

Christian community. Their description of the environment of games (referring especially to

World of Warcraft but applicable to most MMORP games) reminds me of how when

captured by God's vision for the world, Christian imagination, at its best, would function:

> The environment that is *World of Warcraft* is made up of the acts of shared
> imagination among its inhabitants. And what makes that world particularly interesting
> and challenging is both constant change and the fact that the actions of the players in
> the world, as a collective are driving that change.[8]

This look into gaming culture and the community of gamers evokes for me a sense of

God's activity in creating and re-creating the world. To me, it sounds much like God's

activity in reconciling humankind and all of creation to God's self. It sounds much like God's

vision for humankind: playful, imaginative, creative, connected, relational.

I never expected to catch glimpses of God's vision in gamer culture. I cannot shake

the feeling that there is something there that captures an essential quality that preaching

needs to regain. I cannot quite articulate how preaching might incorporate these insights

from gamer culture. What I can articulate is the nagging suspicion that many gamers are

finding in games a spiritual connection that I as a pastor and preacher wish they could find in

church.

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[6] Ibid., 84.

[7] Ibid., 111.

[8] Ibid., 115.

APPENDIX B

SERMON SURVEYS

Sermon One Survey   **September 17, 2017**

Congregation (circle one)   A   E   F   H

Thinking about the sermon you just heard today, please answer the following:

   1. The sermon kept me interested
Strongly Disagree   *Disagree*   *Neutral*   *Agree*   *Strongly Agree*

   2. The sermon had a clear message.
Strongly Disagree   *Disagree*   *Neutral*   *Agree*   *Strongly Agree*

   3. I can connect the sermon to my daily life.
Strongly Disagree   *Disagree*   *Neutral*   *Agree*   *Strongly Agree*

   4. The sermon made me feel God loves me.
Strongly Disagree   *Disagree*   *Neutral*   *Agree*   *Strongly Agree*

   5. I was challenged by the sermon.
Strongly Disagree   *Disagree*   *Neutral*   *Agree*   *Strongly Agree*

   6. The sermon was clear and well presented.
Strongly Disagree   *Disagree*   *Neutral*   *Agree*   *Strongly Agree*

   7. What parts of the sermon style (use of language, visuals, stories and questions) did you like?

   8. What parts of the sermon style (use of language, visuals, stories and questions) did you not like?

You were born: 1945 or earlier   1946-64   1965-80   1981-2001   2002 or later

Male _____   Female ____

On a scale of 0-5 with 0 being never and 5 being daily, rate how often you use the following:

____Cell phone (basic)   _____Smart phone
_____Computer/ tablet   _____Email
_____Internet   _____Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
_____Video or computer games

Today's sermon is one of the five sermons for my Doctorate in Biblical Preaching thesis project.

This survey is designed to give me feedback on the sermon, which I will use in writing my thesis. All data used in the thesis will be anonymous, so please do not put your name on the survey. Completion of the survey is considered your agreement to participate in the project.

There will be a brief pause at the end of the sermon for you to complete the survey. If you can't finish in the time given, please finish during the offering and after worship. Please place the survey in the box at the back of the sanctuary when you leave.

Thank you for helping me with my thesis project. Your feedback is very important, and I appreciate your participation

Pastor Ramona

Sermon Two Survey   **September 24, 2017**

Please fill the following out before the sermon:

Congregation (circle one)   A   E   F   H   Male _____   Female ____

You were born: 1945 or earlier   1946-64   1965-80   1981-2001   2002 or later

On a scale of 0-5 with 0 being never and 5 being daily, rate how often you use the
following: _____Cell phone (basic)   _____Smart phone
_____Computer/ tablet   _____Email
_____Internet   _____Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
_____Video or computer games

Thinking about the sermon you just heard today, please answer the following:

   1. The sermon kept me interested
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

   2. The sermon had a clear message.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

   3. I can connect the sermon to my daily life.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

   4. The sermon made me feel God loves me.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

   5. I was challenged by the sermon.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

   6. The sermon was clear and well presented.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

   7. How important is it to you that the hymns and words of the liturgy reinforce the
      sermon and its scripture text? Why or why not?

8. What parts of today's worship service do you think connected with the message of the sermon?

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Pastor Ramona

Sermon Three Survey   **October 15, 2017**

Please fill the following out before the sermon:

Congregation (circle one)   A   E   F   H   Male _____   Female ____

You were born: 1945 or earlier   1946-64   1965-80   1981-2001   2002 or later

On a scale of 0-5 with 0 being never and 5 being daily, rate how often you use the following:
_____Cell phone (basic)   _____Smart phone
_____Computer/ tablet   _____Email
_____Internet   _____Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
_____Video or computer games

Thinking about the sermon you just heard today, please answer the following:

1. The sermon kept me interested
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

2. The sermon had a clear message.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

3. I can connect the sermon to my daily life.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

4. The sermon made me feel God loves me.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

5. I was challenged by the sermon.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

6. The sermon was clear and well presented.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

7. Did telling the pastor's story using the language from the 1 Samuel 3 story help you think about how God might speak today? How did or didn't it help?

8. How did hearing the pastor's story help you think about the ways God might be speaking to or calling you? If it didn't help, what would have helped?

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Or you can fill this survey out on Survey Monkey:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2QNVMBN

There is also a link to the survey on the Langford Lutheran Parish Facebook page.

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Pastor Ramona

Sermon Four Survey   **October 22, 2017**

Please fill the following out before the sermon:

Congregation (circle one)   A   E   F   H   Male _____   Female _____

You were born: 1945 or earlier   1946-64   1965-80   1981-2001   2002 or later

On a scale of 0-5 with 0 being never and 5 being daily, rate how often you use the following:
_____Cell phone (basic)   _____Smart phone
_____Computer/ tablet   _____Email
_____Internet   _____Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
_____Video or computer games

Thinking about the sermon you just heard today, please answer the following:

1. The sermon kept me interested
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

2. The sermon had a clear message.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

3. I can connect the sermon to my daily life.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

4. The sermon made me feel God loves me.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

5. I was challenged by the sermon.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

6. The sermon was clear and well presented.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

7. What do you think about sermons that give the congregation an opportunity to participate in some way, such as making some sort of response, asking questions, or otherwise providing some form of input?

8. Today's sermon invited you to interact by thinking about a question, by writing something down, and by blessing someone. How did (or didn't) each of these activities help you connect the sermon to your daily life?

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Pastor Ramona

Sermon Five Survey   **November 19. 2017**

Please fill the following out before the sermon:

Congregation (circle one)   A   E   F   H   Male _____   Female ____

You were born: 1945 or earlier   1946-64   1965-80   1981-2001   2002 or later

On a scale of 0-5 with 0 being never and 5 being daily, rate how often you use the following:

_____Cell phone (basic)   _____Smart phone
_____Computer/ tablet   _____Email
_____Internet   _____Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
_____Video or computer games

Thinking about the sermon you just heard today, please answer the following:

1. The sermon kept me interested
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

2. The sermon had a clear message.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

3. I can connect the sermon to my daily life.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

4. The sermon made me feel God loves me.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

5. I was challenged by the sermon.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

6. The sermon was clear and well presented.
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

7. Today's sermon incorporated different techniques meant to appeal to various learning styles. Which techniques – visuals, nature imagery, movement/tangibles, spoken word, time for personal reflection-did you find the most helpful?

8. Did the sermon help you connect the biblical story to your life? How?

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Or you can fill this survey out on Survey Monkey:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZY9HX37

There is also a link to the survey on the Langford Lutheran Parish Facebook page.

Thank you for helping me with my thesis project. Your feedback is very important, and I appreciate your participation

Pastor Ramona

APPENDIX C

SERMONS

Manuscript Sermon

Genesis 22:1-14

Is it just me, or when you hear or read this passage do you think, "God said WHAT?"

How do we get from a God who created everything out of divine love and called everything good, to this story?

It just makes no sense.

I bet that's one of the things that went through Abraham's mind. "God, you are talking crazy. You gave me Isaac-after 25 years of waiting, beyond all hope, Sarah and I finally have the child you promised, the child who is going to have children and make me the father of many nations. And you want me to do what?"

Maybe it didn't seem as horrible, as bizarre to Abraham as it does to us. After all child sacrifice was a major part of the religions around Canaan. So, Abraham thought that God was just asking for the same thing that all other gods did.

But God is not like the other gods. God, who created humans in God's image, values life. In stopping Abraham and by providing the ram for the sacrifice, God was saying no to the practice of human sacrifice.

And we also have to remember that children were not valued the same way we value children today. High infant mortality, rampant childhood diseases meant that older children were the ones that counted.

It's very probable that Isaac was not a small child when this happened, but a teen or even a young man. Jewish scholars, who have had millennia to wrestle with this story have put Isaac's age at 37. Which gives us a couple of insights into this story: Isaac trusted his father, and his father's God. An old man like Abraham would not have been able to bind Isaac unless Isaac allowed it.

The other insight is that Isaac was not married yet. The promised children had not yet been born. Which means by offering him up, Abraham was offering God the future. He had already given God the past when he left Ur to follow God's leading to a new land.

Abraham-and Isaac!- truly laid everything on the altar when he put Isaac there. Because they trusted God.

Abraham is held up as an example of faith. He trusted God enough to leave his home. He trusted God enough to offer Isaac. In between these two stories that are the beginning and ending of Abraham's story in the Bible, he trusted through disappointment and doubt. He conversed with God. He cried out to God. He even challenged God. Yes, Abraham was a man with a deep faith in a God he knew personally. That is why when faced with this unspeakable choice, he chose God.

"Sacrifice my son! Give up everything I hold dear. Give up on every promise God had made and give the only fulfilled promise-my son-back to God.'

Or….

"Disobey God! God, who has given me everything I have. Who had led me to this place. Who has protected me from all evils."

Abraham is between a rock and a hard place. And he chooses the Rock.

This is where this story become personal for us. It's easy to read this story and think: this has nothing to do with me today. We don't practice child sacrifice, at least not literally. Our children do get sacrificed to our ambitions, our dreams and our goals, in our desire to material wealth and comfort in and a whole host of ways. And that's another sermon all together.

So, what does this story have to do with me and my life?

We have all stood between a rock and a hard place. We have all faced times where we have to act, to make a decision, and there is just no good choice. I know that I have had times when I look around at what is going on in my life and I wonder, "Is God really good? Is *this* what God's blessing looks like?"

Have you been there?

Which way do you turn when all paths before you lead to heartbreak and ruin?

Where do you go when the way is not clear, and doubts and fears overwhelm you?

Abraham turned to God.

When Isaac asks Abraham where the lamb for the offering is, Abraham answers, God will provide. Did he mean God gave me you and you are the offering? Did he trust

that God would do what God ultimately did and provide a ram for the sacrifice? Did he have no idea what God was up to and was just trying to deny what was about to happen?

The Bible doesn't tell us. I think that's because it doesn't matter what Abraham thought. I think that all that mattered was that when faced with impossible choices, when full of doubt or despair, when the future didn't just look bleak but non-existent, when faced with a rock and a hard place, Abraham chose the Rock.

Abraham chose to believe that the God who promised: to give him descendants as numerous as the stars; to provide him and his children a land of their own; to bless him in order that he could bless others. This God of steadfast love and faithfulness, who spoke creation into being, would somehow turn certain death into life.

And God does. God calls out and stops Abraham in the nick of time. God provides a ram instead.

I don't understand this story at all. I don't like to think that the God I know would ask Abraham to kill his own child. I've wrestled with this story all week, and I still don't like it.

But I do understand clinging to a thread and trusting, hoping against all hope that God saw my plight and God would provide-not necessarily a way out-but a way through.

I understand why Abraham calls this place that would have been forever etched in his mind as a place of terrible death-Jehovah Jireh-God will provide. The word provide also means sees: God will see; and God will provide.

Jehovah Jireh,

God will see,

No matter where you are,

No matter what terrible place you find yourself.

Jehovah Jireh,

God will provide,

Exactly what you need for the moment you face.

God saw creation and called it good and provided everything necessary for life.

God saw Abraham and Isaac and called "do not kill" and provided the ram for the sacrifice.

God looks at you-in your faith, in your doubt, in your heartbreak and your joy-and calls you my child, my beloved, and provides the courage and the strength for you to cling to the Rock.

Integrated Worship and Sermon

Genesis 27:1-4, 15-23

Call to Worship:

P: Surely the Lord is in this place!

C: We know God will meet us here!

P: How awesome is this place!

C: This is none other than the house of God,

All: and this is the gate of heaven.

Gathering Song: Be Thou My Vision, WOV 776

Invocation: We come together to worship the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Confession and Forgiveness: Lord, we come to this place, knowing that you always meet us here. But too often, when we walk out the door, we think we leave you behind. We often don't see you walking beside us. There are times when we don't notice your face in the face of the people we meet. Our first response to our sin is to run away and hide from you. Forgive us for all the times we don't recognize you, reveal your love and mercy and strengthen us for the journey ahead. Amen

 Words of Assurance: Created in the image of God, you are beloved. God knows you completely and forgives you even before you ask. Forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ, walk with confidence the path God has set before you. Amen.

Kyrie: (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Setting 8)

Prayer of the Day: Creator God, you made us to be in relationship with you and you never leave us alone. Walk with us on our journey, hem us in behind and before,

guide us with your hand on our shoulders. Give us the ability to recognize your presence with us always, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

P: We continue our reading in Genesis. Last week we heard Abraham and Isaac's journey to Mt Moriah, where God provided a ram for sacrifice. A few years later, Isaac married Rebecca and they had twin sons-Esau and Jacob. The boys wrestled with each other even before they were born. Jacob, the younger son, was born grasping Esau's heel. He continued to grab for the privilege of the first born-tricking Esau into selling the firstborn share of the inheritance for a bowl of stew and then deceiving his father into giving him the firstborn blessing. Esau vowed to kill Jacob, so Isaac sent him away to his mother's brother. On his way, Jacob encounters God.

First Reading: Genesis 28:10-17

Pastor: Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said,

Lector: "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will

bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have

promised you."

Pastor: Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said,

Congregation: "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!"

Pastor: And he was afraid, and said,

Congregation: "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Psalm 139:1-12

L: O LORD, you have searched me and known me.

C: You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

L: You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

C: **Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely.**

L: You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

C: **Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.**

L: Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

C: **If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.**

L: If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

C: **even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.**

L: If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,"

C: even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is

as light to you.

Lector: Word of God, Word of life.

ALL: Thanks be to God!

Alleluia: (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Setting 8)

Gospel Reading: John 1:47-51

C: Glory to You , O Lord.

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

P: The gospel of the Lord

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Children's sermon

I'm going on a journey

What should I take? *Allow children to respond.*

Should I pack God? *Allow children to respond.*

We don't need to pack God because God goes with us.

Prayer-*Thank you God for never leaving us alone. Help us to remember that you are always with us. Amen.*

Sermon

Jacob wasn't just on a journey. And I don't think he probably had time to pack very much. Jacob was on the run: from his brother with a stolen birthright; from his father with a stolen blessing. And maybe he thought he would try and run from God – because his behavior up to this point hadn't been very good. And maybe he wanted to hide from God a little bit too.

He runs until he's tired enough to sleep with his head pillowed on a rock. He's completely exhausted and as he drifts off to sleep, he has a dream. He dreams of a ladder that goes all the way from earth to heaven and angels are ascending and descending on it. And there is the Lord-standing beside him at bottom of ladder!

The Lord reaffirms this promise that God had intended Jacob to have all along:

- You will inherit the land I promised your father Abraham;

- Your children will number more than the stars;

- You will be blessed to be blessing to the whole world;

- I am with you – I will go where you go.

Jacob wakes up from this very vivid dream. Did you ever have one of those dreams that are so vivid, so real, that when you wake up you're not quite sure it is was a dream or it really happened? I think that's probably the kind of dream Jacob had. And Jacob says:

- Surely the Lord is in this place!

- And I did not know it.

We might say Jacob found God in his journey. It's a popular Bible theme-

- Abraham wandered, and God met him in the wilderness;

- Moses and the burning bush;

- the Exodus and the wilderness wandering of the Israelites with God;

- the people journey out the wilderness of the Jordan to see John the Baptist in hopes they will experience God;

- The Spirit sending Jesus in the wilderness. Granted Jesus doesn't meet God in the wilderness, but in his encounter with the devil, his identity as God's Son is strengthened. After this, the angels come to minister to him;

- On that first Easter morning, Mary meets Jesus in the Garden;

- Paul falls to his knees in the middle of the road to Damascus when Jesus meets him there.

Things happen in the wilderness, while we are journeying.

We might say that in the journey is where we find God. But as I thought about it, I realized that's just not the case. We don't find God...

Because God is always there-every step of way.

You might find this comforting and again you might not:

God is with you everywhere!

Here at church,

At home,

At work,

When you're out with friends.

As I tell the seniors on graduate Sunday-God is even in those places that you think God would never be found!

It's one of the things I love about the song "Borning Cry." It's starts off with God there at the beginning of our lives, and at the end. And God there when we are baptized. Then it says

"In a blaze of light, you wandered off to find where demons dwell."

Guess what? Yup-God is even there too. When you wander off to find where demons dwell, God goes with you.

We hear this in the words of the Psalmist: God knows when we sit down and rise. Whenever I read that verse, my mind always goes to the Christmas song (Santa Clause Is Coming to Town):

He Sees us when we're sleeping,
He knows when we're awake,
He knows the bad and good,
So be thankful you're never alone….

The song kind of breaks down there, but you get the idea:

- God finds us-searches out our paths;

- Goes behind and before and all around-live and move and have our being;

- If we fly to heaven, God is there, and in those places demons dwell, in death God is there also;

- o The farthest limits of the sea, the ends of the earth and even in the middle of nowhere, God is there.

There is no where you can go that God is not with you.

Even if you hope to hide under the cover of darkness – too bad. Because darkness is like light to God, and God is always there.

It's not so much that we find God – as it is that we finally realize that God is in the place where we find ourselves, and we just now noticed that God is there;

Surely God is in this place and I didn't know it!

Something caught our attention, and we took the time to look around and see what God was doing and how God was beside us.

I wonder if Jacob had been paying more attention would his story have been a little different? Could he have been able to see God's hand at work in his life? And able to trust God, so he didn't have to cheat his brother and trick his father and cause the broken relationship that caused him to flee.

Or even if he would have still had to run for his life anyway – if Esau was still mad even if Jacob didn't trick him-would he have been able to set out in confidence and faith, like Abraham when he set out on his journey.

I wonder how different his life would have been if he had realized that God was indeed in this place, all the time.

I wonder about us too. Do we realize that God is with us all the time?

- Everywhere.

- In the holy, like here on Sunday morning

    o and in the mundane when we're doing our housework,

    o or jobs,

    o or school,

    o or having coffee with a friend.

- Or those moments where we are pretty sure God could never be, like moments of

  loss,

    o beside the hospital bed,

    o or when the doctor gives that diagnosis,

    o or the crops fail,

    o or you get the pink slip,

    o or the children turn their backs on you,

    o or the relationship ends

    o and you know you're alone and there's no way God could possibly be

      there.

Do you take the time? Do you look and see that surely God is even there too, and you

just haven't realized it up to that point?

Where have you been in the last week or two where you've realized that

> Surely the Lord is in this place
>
> And I did not know it.

Maybe it was in something as simple as the comforting words of a friend, who speaks God's love into your heart.

Or maybe you were the one who did the comforting, and all of a sudden you hear yourself, and think, "Where did that come from? It must have been God!"

Where have you been in the last week where you were pretty sure God was nowhere to be found?

> Surely the Lord was in **that** place, too.

I challenge you in this next week, look for those moments where you realize

> Surely the Lord is in this place,

And you see how God is acting in and through your life.

For surely the Lord is in this place.

Wherever that place might be for you at any given moment:

From the time you take your first breath;

Until you take your last.

Surely the Lord is in that place, with you.

Hymn of the Day-Borning Cry WOV 770

Affirmation of Faith (adapted from the Ionian Community Worship Book, Scotland)

We believe in God above us, maker and sustainer of all life, of sun and moon, of water and earth, of male and female.

We believe in God beside us, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, born of a woman's womb, servant of the poor. He was tortured and nailed to a tree. A man of sorrows, he died forsaken. He descended into the earth to the place of death. On the third day, he rose from the tomb. He ascended into heaven to be everywhere present, and his kingdom will come on earth.

We believe in God within us, the Holy Spirit of Pentecostal fire, life-giving breath of the Church, spirit of healing and forgiveness, source of resurrection and of life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession / Lord's Prayer

Standing in the house of God, at the very gate of heaven, we pray for the church the world and all who are in need.

Gracious God, you promise to stay with us until you have accomplished all that you have promised. Give your church the confidence that you are working through us to bring salvation to the ends of the earth. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Creation sings your praise, o God, and we rejoice in the beauty your hands have made. Yet there are earthquakes and fire, and floods and drought. Be present in those places that need your re-creating hand. We pray especially for those in Puerto Rico and places dealing with the aftermath of hurricanes, for Mexico reeling from three earthquakes and

places threatened by the wildfires in the United States. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You have promised that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed through Jacob's offspring, through Jesus, through us. Yet there is war and hatred, injustice and oppression. Stand beside the leaders of the world and guide them in the way of peace. Strengthen those who work to bring justice to the oppressed. Empower us to be agents of blessing. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You hem us in, behind and before, and your hand is upon us. We pray for all who need to feel your presence with them and your healing hand on their shoulder especially *{named people from the prayer list*}, and all who we now name. Comfort the grieving, heal the sick, and strengthen those who care for both. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We give you thanks for the saints who have helped us recognize your presence in times of joy and sorrow, in times of fear and trust. Be with us and keep us until that day we stand with them in your presence in heaven. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You know our thoughts and the prayers of our hearts before we can ever speak them. Confident in your loving faithfulness, we pray the prayer that Jesus taught us…

Our Father . . . *{continued with Lord's Prayer}.*

<u>Sharing of the Peace</u>

L: As we share the peace of Christ with one another, may we see the image of God within each other. The peace of the Lord be with you all.

C: And also with you.

Offering – Change My Heart, O God

 Offertory Prayer:

C: Luminous Giver of all good things, in your presence, everything is gift. Bless these gifts and the work of human hands that they may work for the healing of your creation, in the name of Christ, our light and the light of the world. Amen.

Blessing:

P: Surely the Lord is in this place.

C: God is with us here!

P: Surely the Lord is in this place.

C: God goes with us as we leave!

P: Surely the Lord is in this place.

C: Let us see God in every place!

P: Surely the Lord is in this place.

C: Let us see God in the stranger's face!

P: May God be revealed to you, as you journey through this week. And the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, go with you and keep you now and forever. Amen.

Sending Song – My Lighthouse

Dismissal

L: Go in peace to walk in light and truth. See the light of Christ in every face.

Be the light of Christ to all you meet.

C: OK, we WILL!

TED Talk Sermon

1 Samuel 3:1-10

The Word of the Lord was rare in those days. And the people longed for God to speak to them clearly, like God did to Abraham, to Moses, to Samuel when he heard God calling in the night

We might say the word of the Lord is rare in these days. We'd like God speak to us too, maybe even to call us like God called Samuel. Wouldn't that be great!

It's not always so easy to understand and to recognize when God is calling us.

So, it was thirteen years ago, and I was at worship. The praise team had just finished their part of the service. We always did the first part of the service, and then we would sit down right in the front. So, I was sitting about three pews back on the pulpit side-about right there.

The pastor started preaching and for some bizarre reason I thought to myself, "I could never do that. I could never get up and preach in front of a church full of people."

And then I heard it, "Ramona." *Look around puzzled*

I didn't really hear my name. What I heard in my heart or my mind, in answer to my thought that I could never preach, was, "Why not?" And I kind of shrugged it off and went back to listening to the sermon.

But you know just because you don't answer God's call right away doesn't mean God quits calling. So, I continued to hear God's call at different times. I might be at work

and hear, *(urgently)* *"Ramona, Ramona."* Or maybe at worship or when I was doing my devotional, (*softly)* "Ramona, Ramona." Or at home, (*singsong call)* "Ramona."

But I didn't know what to do with it. I didn't know what it meant.

You know, so often, we don't hear God's call. We don't hear because we don't have that place where we can hear. Listening for God at worship or devotional time is pretty easy because we're open to God then. I found that those times when I was doing something but not really busy, like for me, getting dressed in the morning, washing dishes, or best for me is when I'm driving, were the times when my mind is quite enough that I might be able to hear God calling. Those times are my "nights."

When are your "nights?"

Once we get passed the whole busy-ness thing, the next problem is: Do we understand what God is telling us? So, I realize that something was going on by this time, it's been about 6 months. I'm a little bit of a slow learner, I catch on, but it takes some time. I'm thinking "Well. Hmmmm. I serve God in the temple. I'm part of the praise team. And I'm the Christian Ed Director. And I'm really happy doing these things. So maybe what God is calling me to do is just to continue to do those things."

So, I started thinking about what it would take to become an Associate Ministry. I think maybe that's what God is calling me to do-to get whatever kind of degree is needed so I can be a better servant in the temple. That will take care of it.

No, it didn't. I had misheard God's call.

And God continue to call *(loudly)* "Ramona, Ramona." And it got louder, and it got more persistent. It kind of gnawed away at me, so I did what any good Samuel would do. I ran to Eli.

OK, his name's not Eli. It was my pastor at the time, Pastor Paul. I told him what was going on with me, how I thought I was hearing God call me. And like any good Eli, he said, "OK, so the next time you hear God call-because this is God's calling- you say, speak Lord for your servant is listening."

He didn't really say exactly that, but that's basically what he told me to do. He told me to pray about it. And to listen-to talk to my family and my friends and my coworkers about what I thought God was calling me to do. And listen to what they thought. Because sometimes God speaks to you through someone else.

Sometimes we need the help of other people. We need an Eli to help us listen for God. Sometimes we have these thoughts or ideas, you know like when you think "somebody should do something about this." We need somebody to point out to us that maybe, just maybe, that God was the one who put that idea in our heads and the somebody that God wants to do something about it is us. Maybe God is calling you to do that, and that's why God put that idea in your mind.

Maybe we need our Eli to say, "You know, you are really good at (whatever it is you're good at). Have you ever thought how you could use that gift to serve God?"

Sometimes, God speaks through our passion and the things that we love to do. The best story I know about that is about a friend of mine from seminary. In addition to going to seminary, he was a gymnastics coach. He was passionate about gymnastics. He loves coaching, he loved the young athletes who worked so hard to do their best. He loved the families who gave up their weekends to travel to all the various meets.

And he loved God.

And one day, he realized that God was calling him to put those two passions together – to be a pastor to the gymnastics community. To be there for them when they needed to talk, to provide devotionals and worship times when they were on the road travelling to meets. So, he became a pastor to his gymnastics family.

There's a lot of different ways we can hear God's call. We think the word of the Lord is rare, but it's because:

We're too busy – we don't listen in the night;

We don't understand what God is calling us to do and we don't bother to ask an Eli to help us figure it out.

Because I'll tell you, God is calling. Each. And. Every. One. Of. You.

From the youngest child to the oldest person here, God has called us all.

We hear that in our Gospel reading this morning. Jesus says, "As the Father as sent me, so I send you." Then Jesus gives us what we need, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Then he says that thing that's a little weird, "if you forget the sins of any, they are forgiven, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." I'm not sure I know exactly what that means, but what I think Jesus might be saying is:

"You need to go out, I am sending you in my place to go and forgive. To speak God's words of forgiveness across the whole world. And the people who don't get to hear that aren't going to be forgiven, so you need to get out there and go where I send you."

Now a lot of times when we talk about call, people think, "That's fine for you Pastor, because you've been called. It's too late for me I haven't been called." In the first place, I'll let you know I was forty-three years old when the episode in the third pew happened. So, it's never too late and it's never too early.

God is calling you all the time, to a lot of different things and it's not just service here at the church. We often think of it that way – that the only thing God calls us to do is inside these walls. For example, when I first became a Lutheran, as part of the new member class, the council president and the council members, the women's circle leader, different outreach group leaders would all come in and talk about what their group did and how they served the Lord. They invited us to prayerfully and carefully consider if God might be calling us to join them in ministry.

So, I am prayerfully and carefully considering which of these ministries God might be calling me to serve in, and I realized that I was already called to several

ministries. The day I said "I do" I was called to be a wife. The first cry of each of my newborn children called me to be a mother.

We are called to be parents, and children, and brothers and sisters. We are called to be friends and neighbors. We are called to be coworkers – I know some people don't really think their job a vocation, it's just a paycheck – but perhaps God is calling you to be pastor to the community you are with, to be there in their joys and their sorrows and provide them with words of encouragement. We're called to serve in our communities, to be coach, or a band mom, or school volunteer, or the town board, or the community development, {pause} or what? What is it that you do, that God is calling you to be Jesus in that place?

A calling is a lot more than what a pastor does. It's a lot more than what we do here in the church. God calls us to the whole world. Everything we do is a calling.

This week, let me be Eli to each one of you:

As you go through this week, listen for God. And when you hear God calling, say, "Speak Lord for your servant is listening."

Participatory Sermon

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Children's sermon

Our first reading says Samuel anointed David.

Anointed. That's a funny word. What does it mean to be anointed? *Allow children to answer.*

The word anoint means to smear or rub (or pour) something-usually oil-on someone or something. Things were anointed as a sign that they were set apart for special use, usually use in the temple.

People also were anointed to show that they had a special job: kings were anointed: priests were anointed. Jesus was called "Messiah" and "Christ" and both those terms literally mean "the anointed one."

In the Bible times, when someone was anointed, they got oil poured over their head. I have some oil here-anyone want to be anointed today? *Allow children to respond.*

Guess what? You have already been anointed! When you were baptized, the pastor said, "You have been sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever." And he or she took a tiny bit of oil and made the sign of the cross on your forehead.

You have a special job. Anyone know what it is? *Allow children to respond* We say it at the end of every service-go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

If it's ok with you, I'd like to anoint you today before you go back to your seat.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus your anointed one to us. Thank you for making us your children. Help us to love you and to serve you. In Jesus name, Amen

Sermon

I remember the first time I met Pastor Bob. I had taken a group of middle school students on a winter retreat. While the students were doing an ice breaker activity, the adults were asked to gather in the next room for introductions and instructions.

As I waited for the adult meeting to start, I looked around the room. My eyes stopped on an older man. He had long gray hair and a beard. He was tatted up. And he was wearing what I would call biker gear-motorcycle boots, jeans, t shirt, leather vest, the wallet on a chain. I thought to myself, "Must be someone's grandfather here as a chaperone."

I was astounded to discover the grandfather biker was actually one of the pastors. He certainly didn't look like my image of a pastor.

Samuel looked at Jesse's sons. The first one-tall, handsome, strong-was the ideal picture of a king.

But God had not called the one Samuel expected. God called David: young, insignificant among his 7 older brothers. He was so insignificant that his father couldn't be bothered to call him to a festival meal when told to have ALL his sons attend.

God had given David gifts and used David's experiences to make him a king. God gave his skill on the harp and time in the fields to practice, to play and to praise. Many of our beautiful Psalms were written by David. His skill with the harp with so admired that he was called to Saul's palace to play when Saul had nightmares.

God called David to be a shepherd. As he learned to care and nurture his sheep, and to protect them, he was learning the skills God wanted in a king to lead God's people.

I bet when he was out all alone in the fields, using his skills with the sling to protect his flocks from lions and bears, he never thought he'd be able to use that skill to serve God! But it served him in good stead when faced with Goliath

There's a saying: God doesn't call the equipped, God equips the called.

And as unexpected and unlikely as you might think it-God has called you.

So how has God equipped you? What gifts has God given you? *Allow time for silent reflection.*

Last week, we had a talent show that displayed a variety of gifts we have. We had singers, and people who played instruments, people who acted in skits, even a unicycle rider and a clown. Those might be the kind of gifts you would expect to see in a talent show. But did you notice the gifts of the emcees? Their gifts of willingness, enthusiasm, desire to help, plus they were pretty punny!

What skills have you learned during your life's experience? Think of 2 or 3. *Allow time for reflection.*

Last week we talked a little bit about how to hear God's call. Theologian Frederick Buechner defines calling as the point of intersection between your deepest gladness and what you see as the world's greatest need.

What brings you deep gladness? How can that gift or skill be used to serve the need you see around you? *Allow time for silent reflection*

I am going to read you a quote from ELCA web page about Luther on vocation: *The call comes from Christ, but it locates one in a calling in the creation doing works for one's neighbor. As is clear from the above quotation, "vocation" refers not only to one's occupation but to all one's relationships, situations, contexts, and involvements (including, of course, one's occupation, if one is employed). It is true that Luther often speaks about specific occupations, but the purpose in doing so is not to restrict vocation to occupation but to affirm that even the most mundane stations are places in which Christians ought to live out their faith; such work serves other people,*

In the children's sermon, I said we are all anointed for a special purpose and we affirm that purpose each week when we respond to the dismissal "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord" with: *lead congregation in responding "Thanks be to God."*

What is God anointing you to do this week? Everyone has a card that says "Called to Love and Serve the Lord" on the front. Take that card and on the back, write down 2 things that you think God might be calling you to do.

Here's some questions to help you think about how God might be calling you

Remember the two or three experiences and the skills and gifts you thought of earlier? How might God be calling you to use those?

What are you good at? What do you like to do?

What gets you excited?

Who needs your help? What problem do you see around you?

What relationships do you have-how are those a call?

How has your past experiences given you skills?

What groups are you a part of?

Allow times for people to write.

Look at what you have written.

God has called you. God has equipped you. You have been anointed and blessed. To remind you of that blessing, we are going to do a baptismal blessing. When each is named, I invite you to touch your eyes, ears, lips, hands, and feet, as I bless you for service:

I bless your eyes that you may see God's image in everyone.

I bless your ears that you may hear the cry of the poor.

I bless your lips that you speak nothing but the gospel of Jesus.

I bless your hands that everything you receive and everything you give may be a sacrament.

I bless your feet that you may run to those who need you

God has called you. God has equipped you. You have been anointed and blessed. As a reminder, I'd like you to turn to someone next to you and make the sign of the cross on their forehead or hand, as you bless them with these words: "You have been anointed to love and serve the Lord."

Participate with the congregation in blessing each other.

Multi-Sensory Sermon

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Children's Sermon

Teach the children the spiritual "Dem Dry Bones." Have them touch their toes, knees, etc., as

names. When singing "dem bones gonna walk around!" have them walk. After the prayer,

have the children pass out the plastic bones used in the main sermon.

Sermon

Imagine you're standing in the middle of a valley. It's hot, very hot. The sun is

beating down on you. A dry, hot wind ruffles your hair. It carries a dead, musty smell. You

look around and see nothing but bones, bleached blindingly white by the sun. The wind is

whistling across them, and through them, and it's an eerie sound.

Can you see it?

Can these dry bones live?

Hold the bone that the children gave you and look at it. What is it in your life that is dry as

that bone? What is it in our community that is dry as that bone? What is it in our congregation

that is as dry as that bone?

Pause for personal reflection

Last week, there was another shooting, this time in California. When I heard about it,

suddenly I was in the valley of dry bones. I don't know what to say anymore. I don't feel

shock anymore.

Can these dry bones live?

I think about all those shootings. About all the violence in our world. About all the

hatred. And I said no. There's no life to be found here.

What is that you see that is as dead and dry as a bone? Can these dry bones live?

Often, we look around at the dry bones piled us around us and say no. There is no hope of life here.

Can these dry bones live?

Elijah, I think has the right answer: Only you know Lord. God answers by showing Elijah there's life in those old dry bones. God has Elijah prophesy to dem bones.

And foot bone connects to the ankle bone.
And ankle bone connects to the knee bone…

All the way up to the neck bone connecting to the head bone, sinews and skin covering it all. Finally, a vast multitude of people is standing there. Just standing. Doing nothing. Because the breath of life is not in them.

I have to admit–at this point I'm thinking zombies. I know that's a strange image to think of but bear with me for a second. Zombies are not dead, but not fully alive. They respond to the environment around them, but not with conscious thought. Of course, there's that whole brain-eating horror thing, so my analogy breaks down here.

Although now that I think about it, sin and the world eat away at our brains, and our hearts, and our souls.

How often do we go through life like zombies? Not quite living. Not quite dead. Just going through the motions.

We need the breath of the Spirit to blow across the dry bones in our lives.

Do you feel that place of dryness and barrenness? That place where we go through life, not dead, but not really alive either. That place where we are as dry as a bone.

I don't know that we know what to ask God in those places. I don't know that we know how to pray.

I do know that we know there is something better. And we yearn for something more. I wonder if those people standing before Elijah yearned for more. Yearned for better. Yearned for life.

It's that sense of yearning that I tried to capture in a poem I wrote in a preaching class. It is an acrostic where each word starts with the next letter of the alphabet. I started at the end with "z." It's called:

In the valley of dry bones

Zombies yearn xpectantly,
Wishing vague, unaware thoughts.
Skeletons restored, quickened.
Prophecy overruled nature.

Mortals, long keening,
Jealously implore.

Holy grace flows endlessly,
divine, creative breath.

Alive!

Just as at creation, when God breathed into the human creature God had made from mud, the Spirit breathed into those dry-bones-with-sinews-and-skin. God always – always- brings life out of death.

Show the picture from Georgia O'Keeffe.

I love this picture. I love a lot of Georgia O'Keeffe's artwork. This one, "Ram's Head and White Hollyhock" really speaks to me. There's something about the starkness of death with that little white flower right next to it. I've been thinking about this picture a lot this week. And I realized the reason I find it so compelling: It's a picture of Easter! It's a picture of God's promise to Israel and to us:

> I will bring you up out of your graves

> I will put my spirit in you

> I will bring new life to that which is dead.

Through the cross and the grave, God brought resurrection to the whole world. That is what God does: order out of chaos, life out of death, resurrection out of destruction.

Pass out the flowers.

Wrap the end of the flower stem through the hole in the bone and wrap the flower around the bone. *Allow time to do this, helping as needed. (I also drafted confirmation students to help.)*

Look at your bone covered with the promise of new life from Christ. Remember those things in you, in the community, in the church that you saw when you looked at the bone by itself? Offer them up to God-Can these dry bones live?

Join me in prayer: O Lord, you know. You always say yes to life. You are working to bring life where we see nothing but death. Help us to see the signs of life in the surprising places where you cause new life to spring up. Use us to prophesy – to speak words of life, to

act in life-affirming ways – as your Spirit blows through the dry bones in our lives, our

community, our congregation. Amen.

I actually wrote two poems for the class assignment I mentioned earlier. I will leave

you with the second one, a haiku, as a prayer for each of us and our congregation:

<div align="center">

Haiku for the Church[2]
Zombies yearning plea:
"Breathe in us your breath of life.
Make these dry bones live!"

</div>

APPENDIX D

SURVEY DATA

Overall Scores

Figure 13 and Table 3 show the overall score for each sermon by the Analog, Digital and Super Digital groups. Since the primary focus of this thesis is the differences between these three groups, surveys that did not have the digital use information completed were eliminated from data collection.
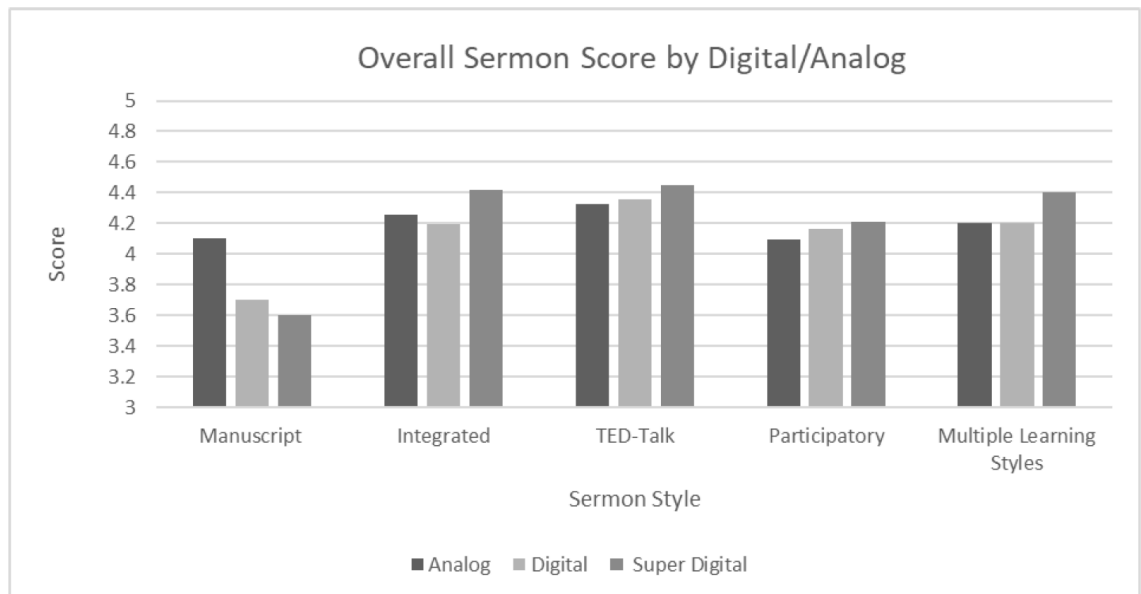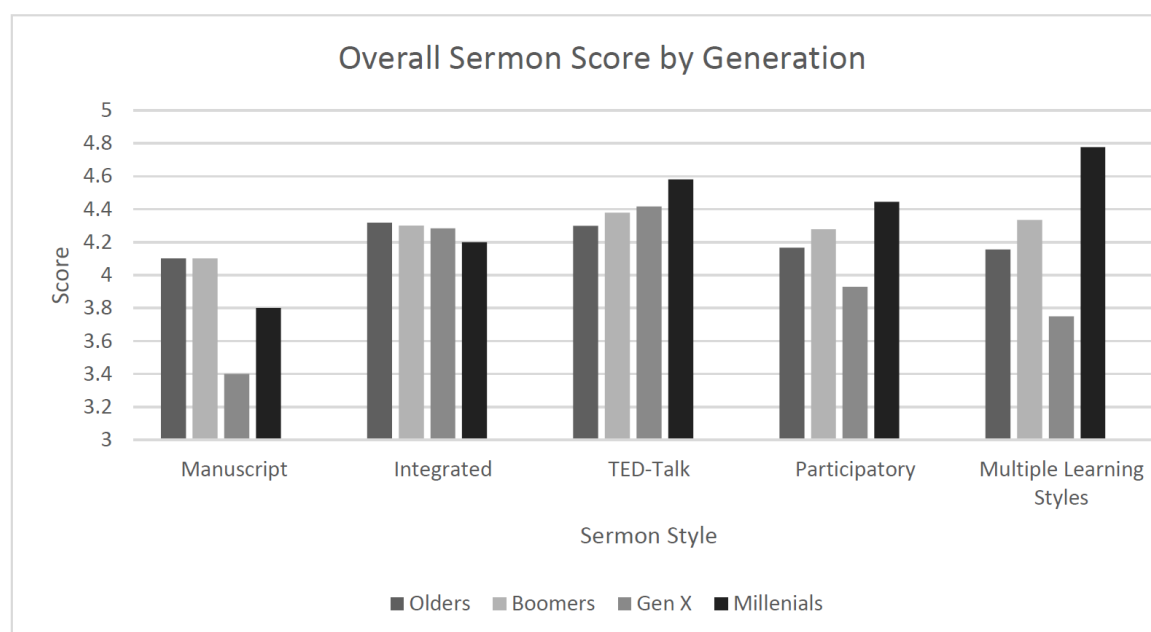

Figure 13. Overall Sermon Score by Data Use

Table 3. Overall Sermon Score by Data Use

	Manuscript	Integrated	TED-Talk	Participatory	Multiple Learning Styles
Analog	4.1	4.3	4.3	4.1	4.2
Digital	3.7	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.2
Super Digital	3.6	4.4	4.5	4.2	4.4

Figure 14 and Table 4 show the overall score for each sermon by generational group. Surveys which were missing the generational information were still included in the overall data collection but are not included in this analysis.

Figure 14. Overall Sermon Score by Generation

Table 4. Overall Sermon Score by Generation

	Manuscript	Integrated	TED-Talk	Participatory	Multiple Learning Styles
Olders	4.1	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.2
Boomers	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.3
Gen X	3.4	4.3	4.4	3.9	3.8
Millenials	3.8	4.2	4.6	4.4	4.8

Figure 15 and Table 5 show the average score for each sermon by congregation. Congregations B/C are combined, since these two congregations worship together on the third and fourth Sundays when the sermons were presented. (Congregation B held services on two of the Sundays the sermons were presented, and Congregation C held services on the remaining three). Surveys without congregational information marked were classified as "visitor" and not included in this analysis.
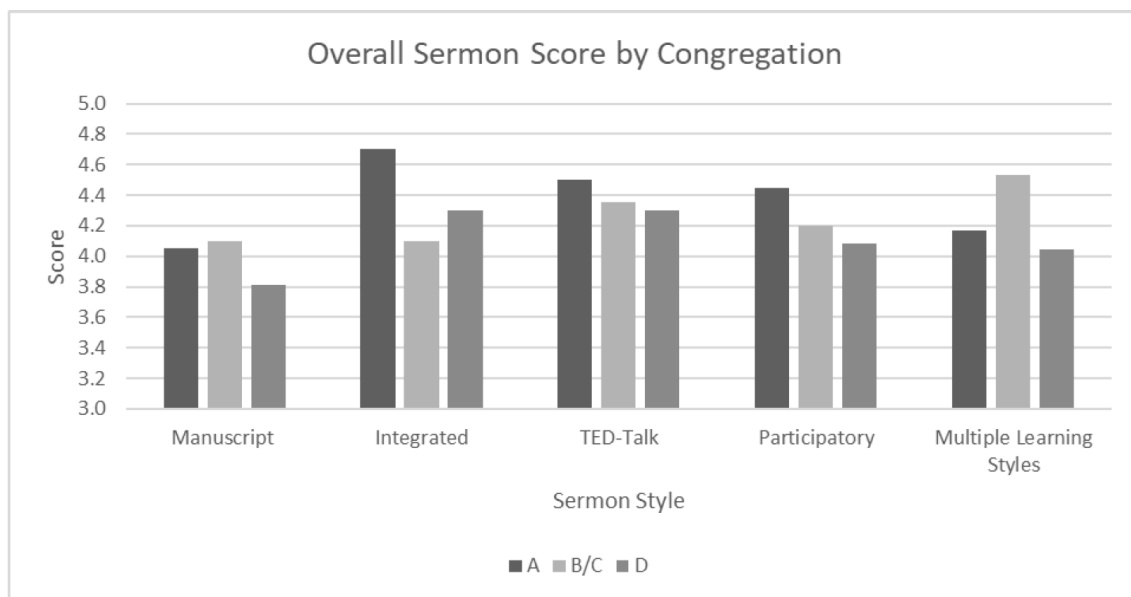

Figure 15. Overall Sermon Score by Congregation

Table 5. Overall Sermon Score by Congregation

	Manuscript	Integrated	TED-Talk	Participatory	Multiple Learning Styles
A	4.1	4.7	4.5	4.4	4.2
B/C	4.1	4.1	4.4	4.2	4.5
D	3.8	4.3	4.3	4.1	4.0

Sermon One Data

Sermon One had a total of 42 surveys completed.

Figure 16 and Table 6 show the average score for each question by group:
Analog, Digital, or Super Digital. There were 25 Analog surveys, 12 Digital surveys, and
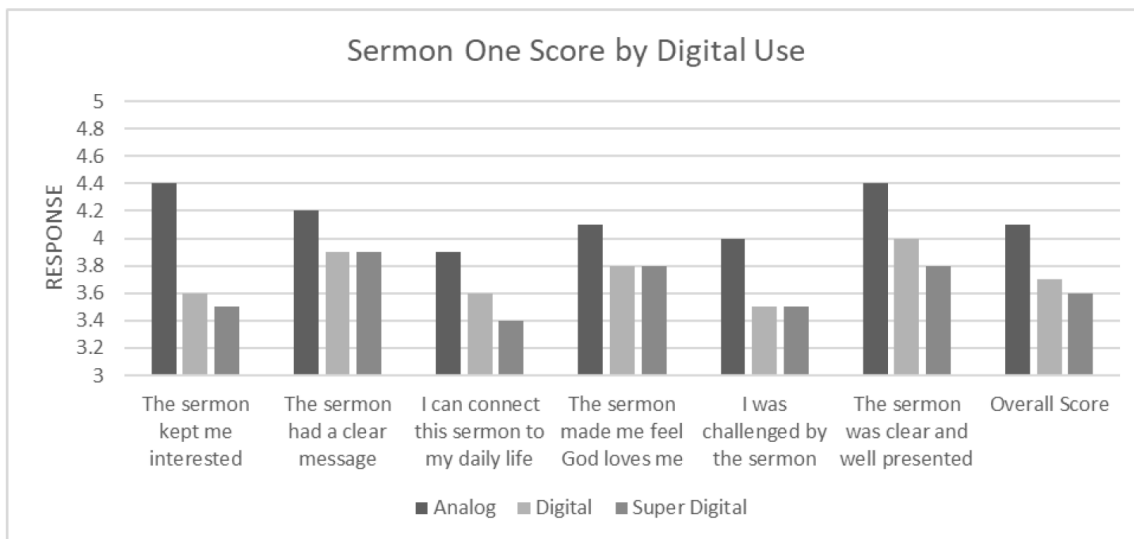5 Super Digital surveys.

Figure 16. Sermon Score by Digital Use

Table 6. Average Scores for Sermon One Questions by Digital Use

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
Analog	4.4	4.2	3.9	4.1	4	4.4	4.1
Digitial	3.6	3.9	3.6	3.8	3.5	4	3.7
SuperDigital	3.5	3.9	3.4	3.8	3.5	3.8	3.6

Figure 17 and Table 7 show the average score for each question by generation:
Olders, Boomers, Gen X, and Millennial. There were 17 Older, 15 Boomer, 6 Gen X, and
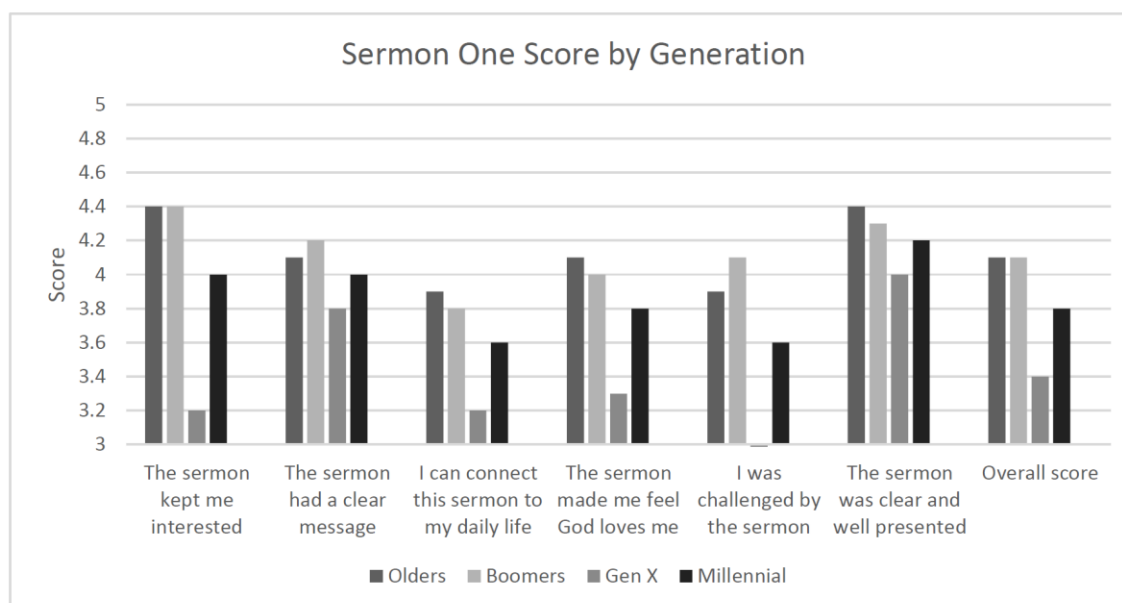4 Millennial surveys.

Figure 17. Sermon One Scores by Generation

Table 7. Average Scores for Sermon One Questions by Generation

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
Olders	4.4	4.1	3.9	4.1	3.9	4.4	4.1
Boomers	4.4	4.2	3.8	4.0	4.1	4.3	4.1
Gen X	3.2	3.8	3.2	3.3	2.8	4.0	3.4
Millenials	4.0	4.0	3.6	3.8	3.6	4.2	3.8

Figure 18 and Table 8 show the average score for each question by congregations. Congregations B and C were grouped together for the chart and table. There were 6 surveys for Congregation A. There were 12 surveys for Congregations B/C (2 for Congregation B, 10 for Congregation C). There were 24 responses for Congregation D.
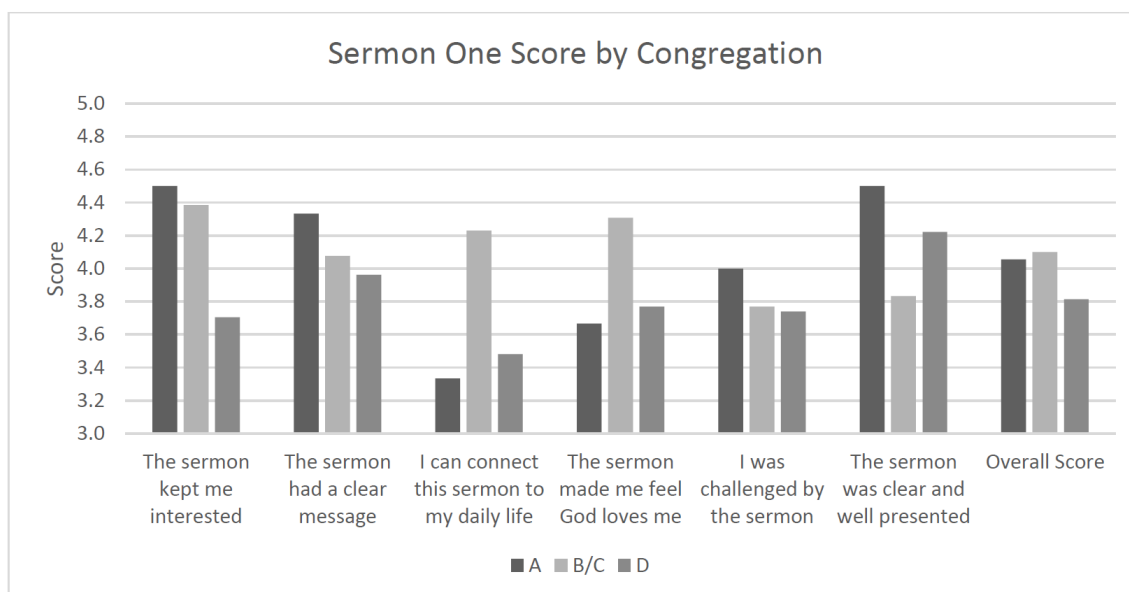
Figure 18. Sermon One Scores by Congregation

Table 8. Average Scores for Sermon One Questions by Congregation

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
A	4.5	4.3	3.3	3.7	4.0	4.5	4.1
B/C	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.3	3.8	3.8	4.1
D	3.7	4.0	3.5	3.8	3.7	4.2	3.8

Sermon Two Data

Sermon Two had a total of 51 surveys completed.

Figure 19 and Table 9 show the average score for each question by group: Analog, Digital, or Super Digital. There were 22 Analog responses, 23 Digital responses, and 6 Super Digital responses.
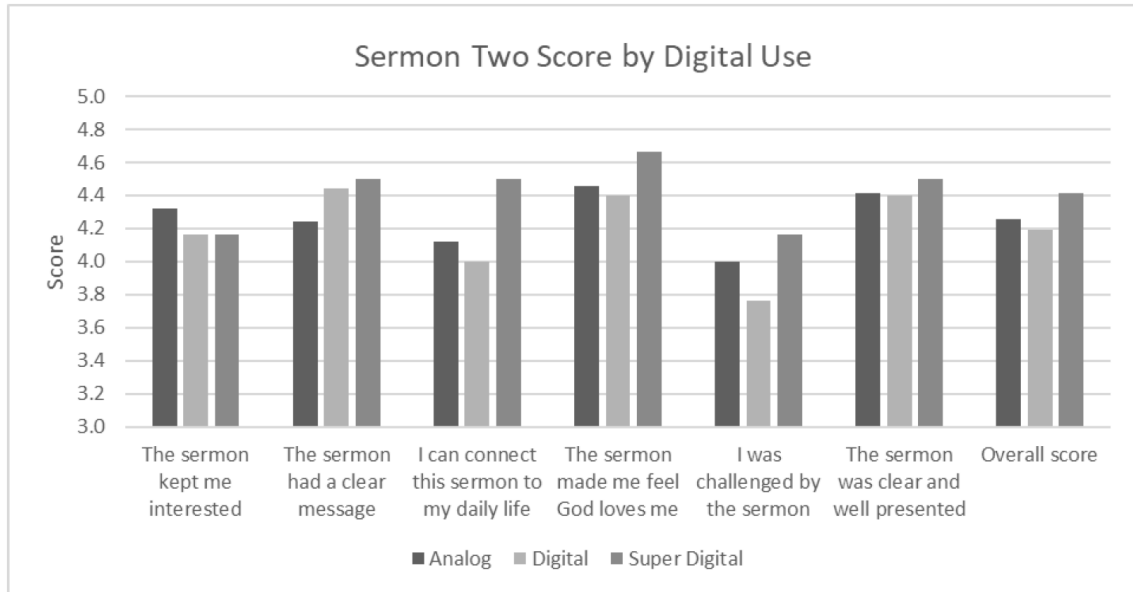
Figure 19. Sermon Two Scores by Digital Use

Table 9. Average Scores for Sermon Two by Digital Use

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
Analog	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.5	4.0	4.4	4.3
Digitial	4.2	4.4	4.0	4.4	3.8	4.4	4.2
SuperDigital	4.2	4.5	4.5	4.7	4.2	4.5	4.4

Figure 20 and Table 10 show the average score for each question by generation: Olders, Boomers, Gen X, and Millennial. There were There were 16 Older, 20 Boomer, 10 Gen X, and 5 Millennial.
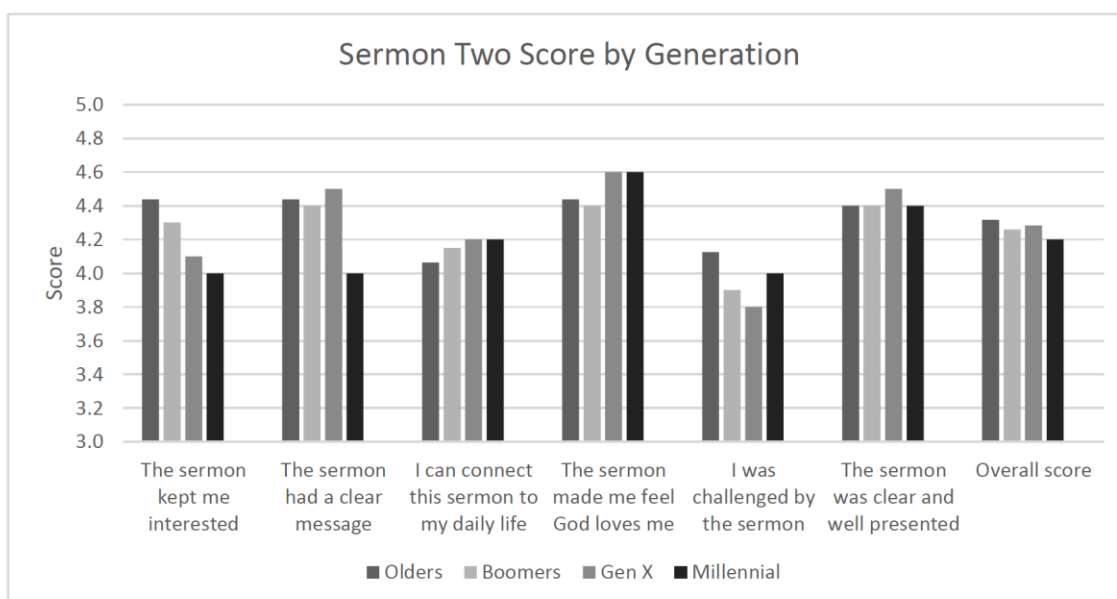
Figure 20. Sermon Two Scores by Generation

Table 10. Average Scores for Sermon Two Questions by Generation

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
Olders	4.4	4.4	4.1	4.4	4.1	4.4	4.3
Boomers	4.3	4.4	4.2	4.4	3.9	4.4	4.3
Gen X	4.1	4.5	4.2	4.6	3.8	4.5	4.3
Millenials	4.0	4.0	4.2	4.6	4.0	4.4	4.2

Figure 21 and Table 11 show the average score for each question by congregations. Congregations B and C were grouped together for the chart and table. Congregation A had only one survey turned in. There were 12 surveys for congregations B/C (9 for Congregation B, 3 for Congregation C). There were 36 responses for Congregation D. There were also 2 surveys completed by visitors, which are not included in this analysis.
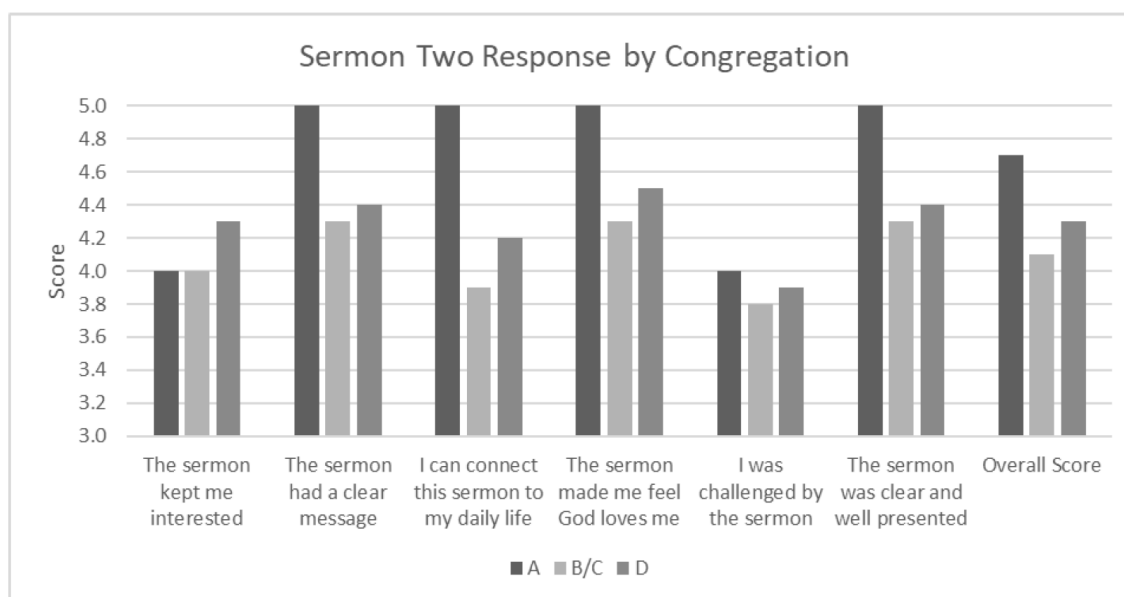
Figure 21. Sermon Two Scores by Congregation

Table 11. Average Scores for Sermon Two Questions by Congregation

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
A	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	4.7
B/C	4.0	4.3	3.9	4.3	3.8	4.3	4.1
D	4.3	4.4	4.2	4.5	3.9	4.4	4.3

Sermon Three Data

Sermon Three had a total of 45 surveys completed.

Figure 22 and Table 12 show the average score for each question by group:

Analog, Digital, or Super Digital. There were 23 Analog responses, 17 Digital responses,
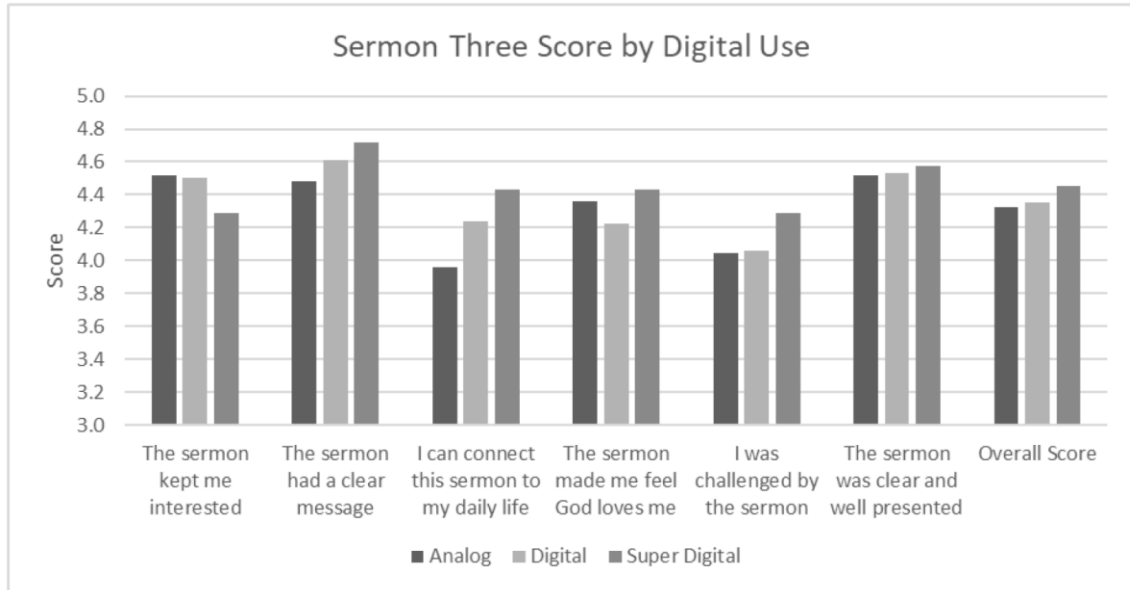
and 5 Super Digital responses

Figure 22. Sermon Three Scores by Digital Use

Table 12. Average Scores for Sermon Three Questions by Digital Use

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
Analog	4.5	4.5	4.0	4.4	4.0	4.5	4.3
Digitial	4.5	4.6	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.5	4.4
SuperDigital	4.3	4.7	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.6	4.5

Figure 23 and Table 13 show the average score for each question by generation: Olders, Boomers, Gen X, and Millennial. There were There were 18 Older, 20 Boomer, 2 Gen X, and 5 Millennial responses.
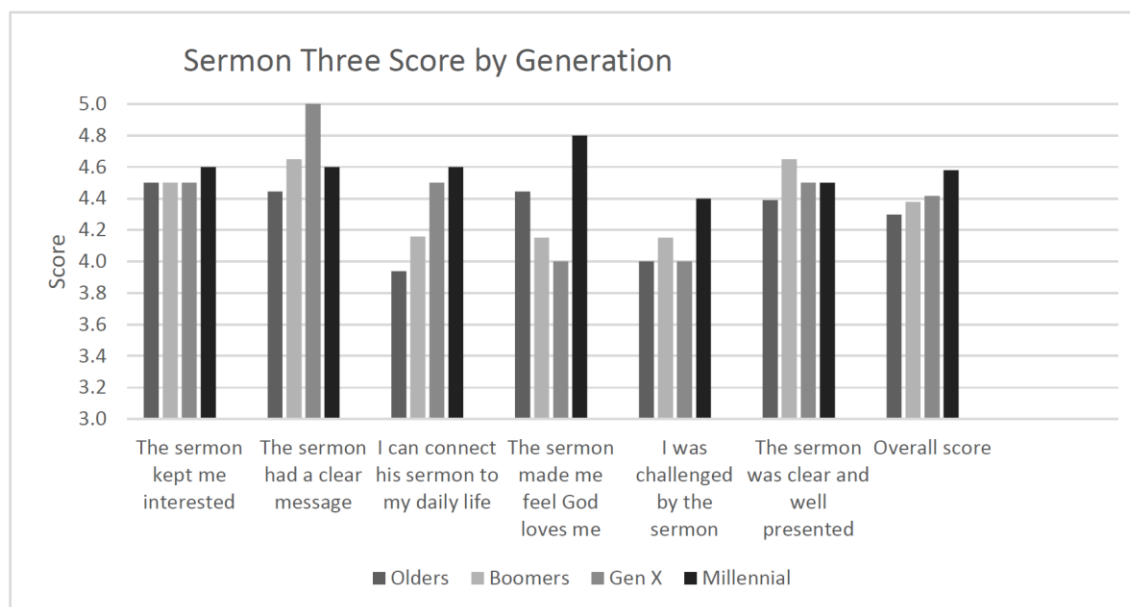
Sermon Three Score by Generation

Figure 23. Sermon Three Scores by Generation

Table 13. Average Scores for Sermon Three Questions by Generation

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
Olders	4.5	4.4	3.9	4.4	4.0	4.4	4.3
Boomers	4.5	4.7	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.7	4.4
Gen X	4.5	5.0	4.5	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.4
Millenials	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.8	4.4	4.5	4.6

Figure 24 and Table 14 show the average score for each question by congregations. Congregations B and C were grouped together for the chart and table. There were 6 surveys from Congregation A. There were 13 surveys for congregations B/C (1 for Congregation B, 12 for Congregation C). There were 25 responses for Congregation D. There was also 1 survey completed by a visitor, which was not included in this analysis.
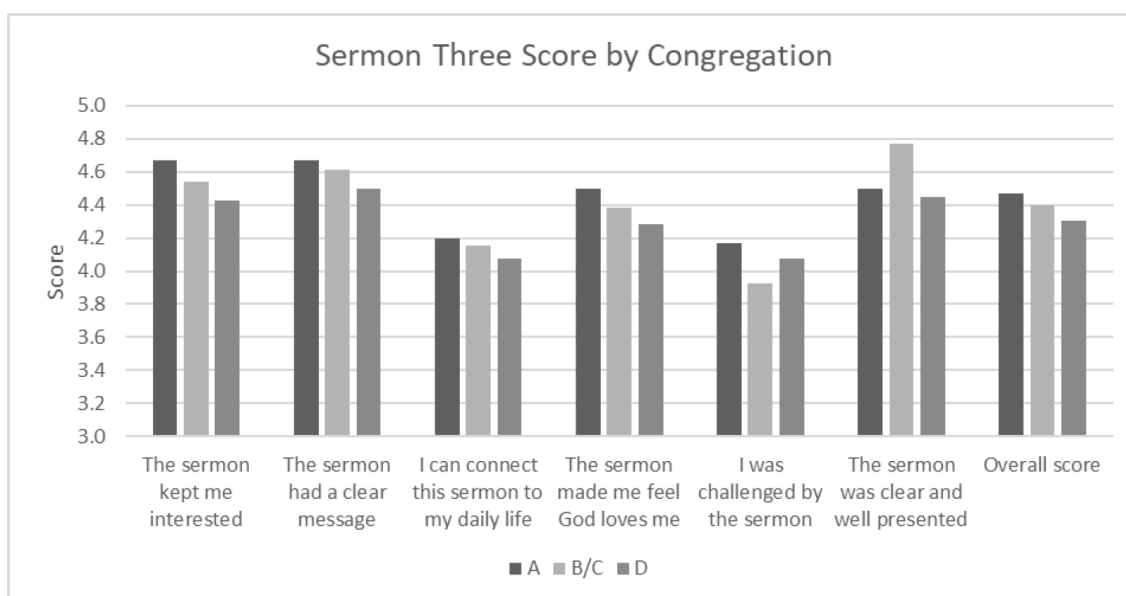
Figure 24. Sermon Three Score by Congregation

Table 14. Average Scores for Sermon Three Questions by Congregation

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
A	4.7	4.7	4.2	4.5	4.2	4.5	4.5
B/C	4.5	4.6	4.2	4.4	3.9	4.8	4.4
D	4.4	4.5	4.1	4.3	4.1	4.4	4.3

Sermon Four Data

Sermon Four had a total of 32 surveys completed.

Figure 25 and Table 15 show the average score for each question by group:

Analog, Digital, or Super Digital. There were 16 Analog responses, 10 Digital responses,
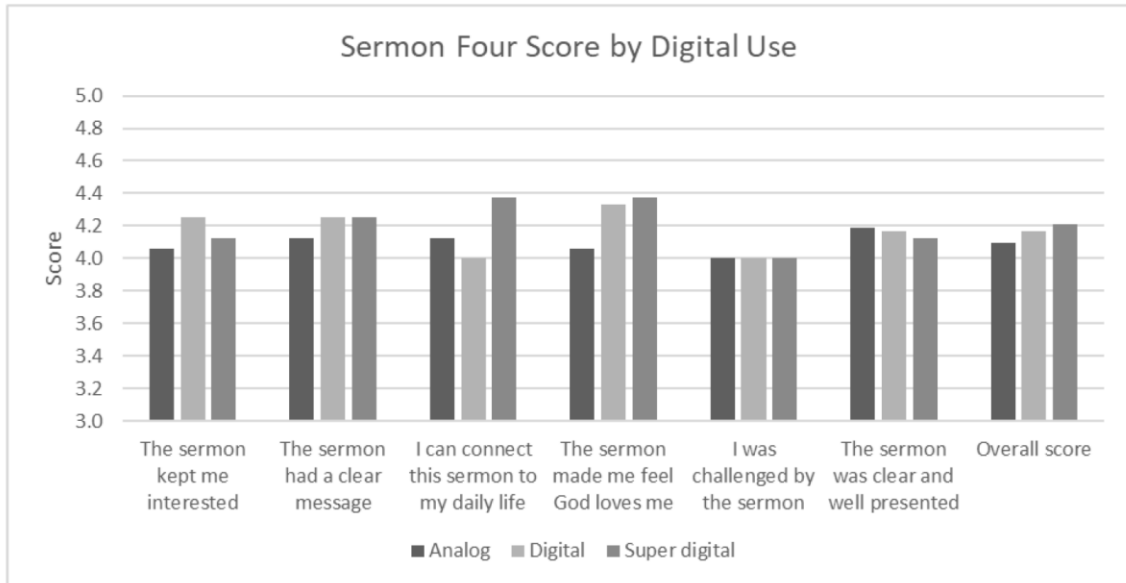
and 6 Super Digital responses.

Sermon Four Score by Digital Use

Figure 25. Sermon Four Scores by Digital Use

Table 15. Average Scores for Sermon Four Questions by Digital Use

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
Analog	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.0	4.2	4.1
Digital	4.3	4.3	4.0	4.3	4.0	4.2	4.2
Super digital	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.0	4.1	4.2

Figure 26 and Table 16 show the average score for each question by generation: Olders, Boomers, Gen X, and Millennial. There were There were 10 Older, 12 Boomer, 7 Gen X, and 3 Millennial responses.
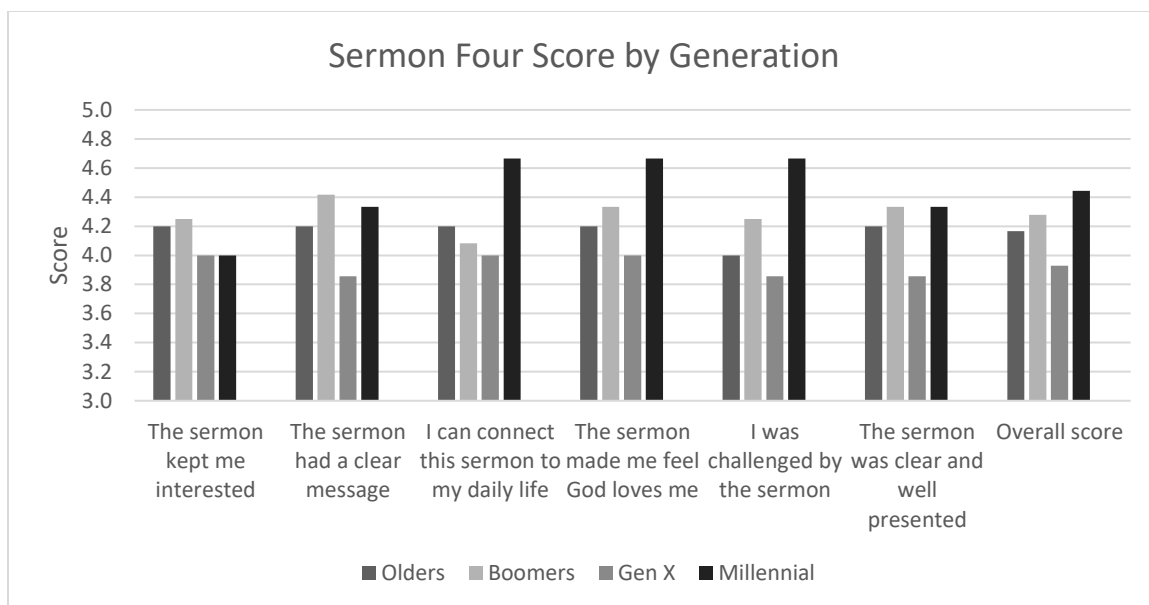
Sermon Four Score by Generation

Figure 26. Sermon Four Scores by Generation

Table 16. Average Scores for Sermon Four Questions by Generation

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
Olders	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.0	4.2	4.2
Boomers	4.3	4.4	4.1	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3
Gen X	4.0	3.9	4.0	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.9
Millennial	4.0	4.3	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.3	4.4

Figure 27 and Table 17 show the average score for each question by congregations. Congregations B and C were grouped together for the chart and table. There were 3 Congregation A surveys. There were 10 surveys for Congregations B/C (7 for Congregation B, 3 for Congregation C). There were 18 responses for Congregation D. There was also 1 survey completed by a visitor, which is not included in this analysis.
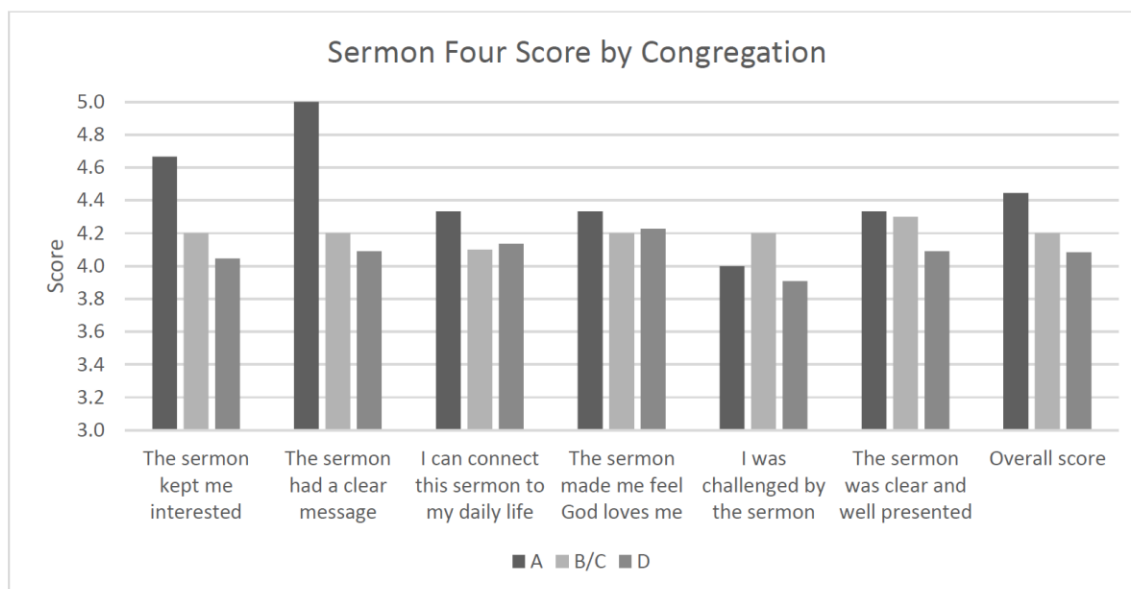
Figure 27. Sermon Four Scores by Congregation

Table 17. Average Scores for Sermon Four Questions by Congregation

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
A	4.7	5.0	4.3	4.3	4.0	4.3	4.4
B/C	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.2
D	4.0	4.1	4.1	4.2	3.9	4.1	4.1

Sermon Five Data

Sermon Five had a total of 31 surveys completed.

Figure 28 and Table 18 the average score for each question by group: Analog, Digital, or Super Digital. There were 14 Analog responses, 12 Digital responses, and 5 Super Digital responses.
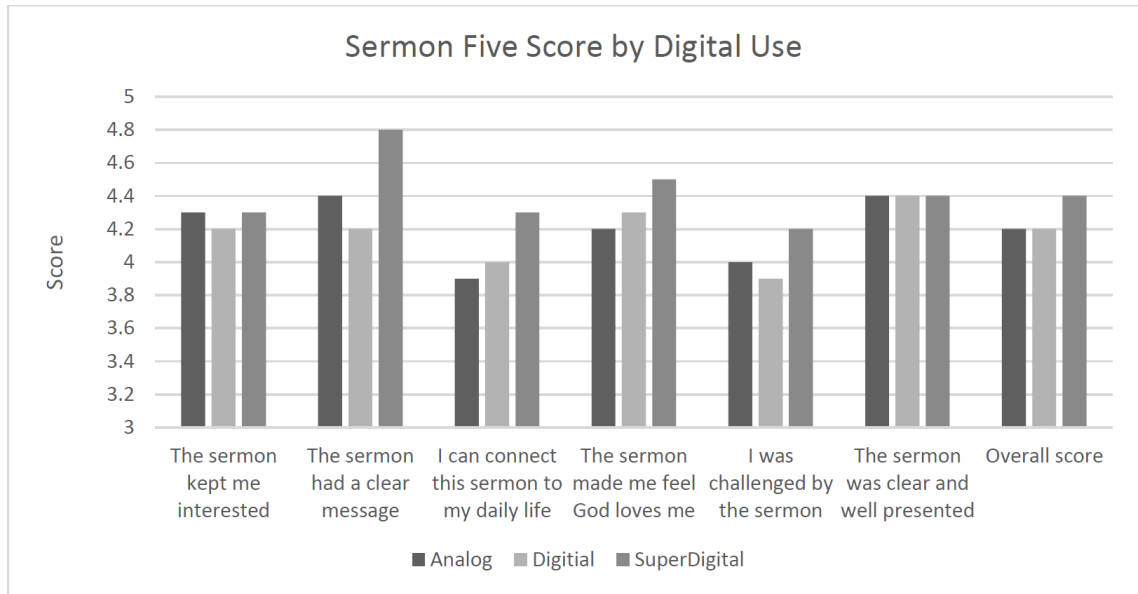
Figure 28. Sermon Five Scores by Digital Use

Table 18. Average Scores for Sermon Five Questions by Digital Use

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
Analog	4.3	4.4	3.9	4.2	4	4.4	4.2
Digitial	4.2	4.2	4	4.3	3.9	4.4	4.2
SuperDigital	4.3	4.8	4.3	4.5	4.2	4.4	4.4

Figure 29 and Table 19 show the average score for each question by generation: Olders, Boomers, Gen X, and Millennial. There were There were 9 Older, 17 Boomer, 2 Gen X, and 3 Millennial responses.
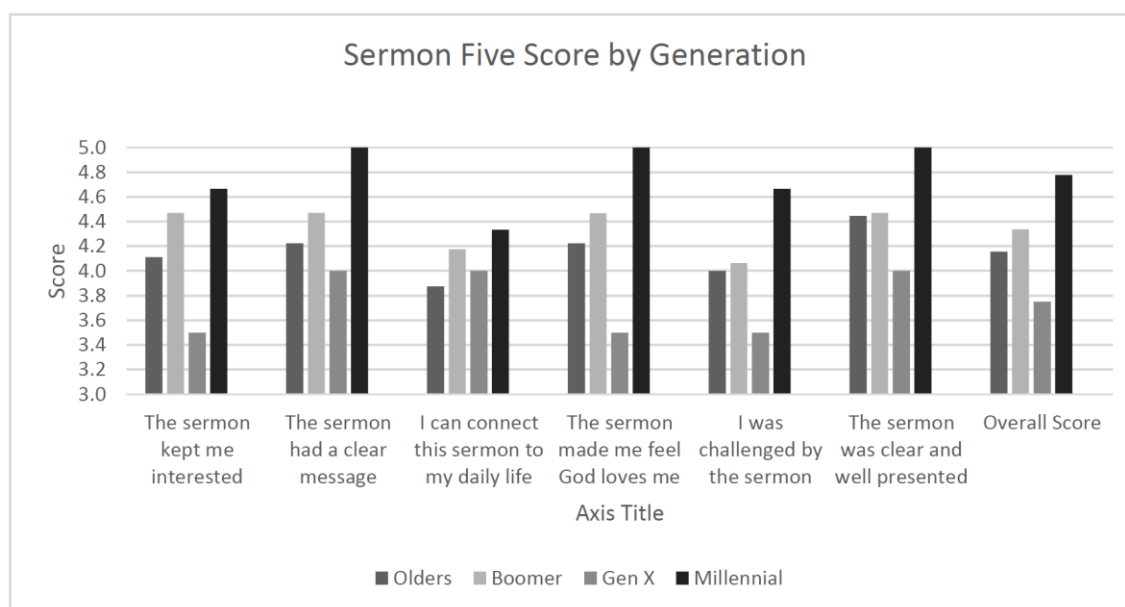
Figure 29. Sermon Five Scores by Generation

Table 19. Average Scores for Sermon Five Questions by Generation

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
Olders	4.1	4.2	3.9	4.2	4.0	4.4	4.2
Boomers	4.5	4.5	4.2	4.5	4.1	4.5	4.3
Gen X	3.5	4.0	4.0	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.8
Millenials	4.7	5.0	4.3	5.0	4.7	5.0	4.8

Figure 30 and Table 20 show the average score for each question by congregations. Congregations B and C were grouped together for the chart and table. There were 6 surveys from Congregation A. There were 10 surveys for Congregations B/C (1 for Congregation B, 9 for Congregation C). There were 14 responses for Congregation D. There was also 1 survey completed by a visitor, which is not included in this analysis.

Figure 30. Sermon Five Scores by Congregation

Table 20 . Average Scores for Sermon Five by Congregation

	The sermon kept me interested	The sermon had a clear message	I can connect this sermon to my daily life	The sermon made me feel God loves me	I was challenged by the sermon	The sermon was clear and well presented	Overall score
A	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.3	4.2
B/C	4.6	4.6	4.1	4.5	4.5	4.9	4.5
D	4.0	4.3	3.9	4.3	3.6	4.1	4.0

APPENDIX E

WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SEVEN AND EIGHT

The following are the written responses to questions 7 and 8 on each survey.

Many respondents did not complete questions 7 and 8 or completed one or the other.

Responses are grouped by analog, digital, super digital. These responses are in the words

of the respondent.

Sermon One Question Seven

Question 7: What part of the sermon style (use of language, visuals, stories and
questions) did you like?

Analog

1. All.
2. Stories.
3. The way you presented and used comparisons.
4. Abraham and Isaac.
5. Stories.
6. Use of language.
7. Stories.
8. Stories.
9. All of it.
10. You told us what life was like in Abraham's day, so it was not uncommon to sacrifice your first born-I never knew that.
11. Stories and questions.
12. All.
13. I liked the history background at the start of the sermon-it put it in context.
14. All. Presented very well.
15. I liked the stories but found the whole sermon itself uplifting and very well presented. I like how you present to everyday life and easy to understand.
16. Language used kept one interested and challenged you.
17. Language and stories.

Digital

1. Relating Isaac's age to the story.
2. Stories.
3. Idea that Isaac was willing to be the sacrifice-Rock and hard place-what's my choice?-God will provide.
4. Sermon theme reinforced during sermon.
5. Stories.
6. Stories.
7. Visuals.
8. You were clear but long.
9. I like the way you put feeling into what you say-you keep my attention, make me feel the message.
10. All-well presented.

Super Digital

1. I like the story analysis.
2. It was a hard story about trusting God's love.
3. You related the story to us as parents. Wow what a sacrifice!
4. It was a tough topic, and pastor admitted as much but helped us understand it. I like that she is in the aisle close to the people.

Sermon One Question Eight

What part of the sermon style (use of language, visuals, stories and questions) did you not like?

Analog

1. Questions.
2. Him giving his own son.
3. Difficult story to comprehend sometimes.
4. All fine. If you don't understand your sermon (or parts) why use this?

Digital

1. Questions.
2. Not sure if it was necessary to tell all the other stories about Abraham.
3. No visuals.
4. Use of language.
5. Use of language and questions.
6. Too long and not related to us as we live today.

Super Digital

1. That God asked a man to sacrifice his son.

Sermon Two Question Seven

How important is it to you that the hymns and words of the liturgy reinforce the sermon and it scripture text? Why or why not?

Analog

1. Very important they relate to all ages.
2. Very.
3. Good connections and meaningful.
4. I think it's important, we need reinforcement always.
5. God is with you always looking down on you.
6. Remember it better that way.
7. Helps so much.
8. Not always.
9. It's a 4.
10. Greatly.
11. It's important, why-change our thought.
12. Very important.
13. Very important. It helps everything to fit together and makes it easier to hear and understand what that Sunday's message is about.
14. Sermon very important, was very great.
15. It's not that important to me. I would just as soon sing familiar songs as anything.

Digital

1. It is important to have a theme helps to bring the message all together.
2. I find it necessary to make a connection and make things easier to understand.
3. Yes, it is important to me. The hymns help follow along with the sermon.
4. The Kyrie is uplifting great rhythm and melody rather than the LBW, liturgical Kyrie! The spirit moves connected words, music, scripture.
5. Very important.
6. Important. sermon song reflects today's sermon "Borning Cry."
7. Not important.
8. I appreciate that it does. Hearing and seeing things in a different way is helpful.
9. Very! Helps to ties the entire service together. Makes you listen to the readings.
10. I appreciate music in worship and when it all ties together it's even better.
11. I like the connection, but I really like the new modern songs.

12. Some songs are hard to sing (and the respondent underlined "why not" in the printed question).
13. One of the 3 hymns should reinforce the sermon, but I prefer the sending song to be upbeat and uplifting.
14. Pretty important because you can learn from songs as well as readings.
15. Important to tie everything together to connect better with the sermon.
16. Very important to have a clear message.
17. Fairly important to reinforce the meaning of the sermon.
18. Extremely.
19. Somewhat.
20. Important, continues the message.
21. Yes, the songs bring more meaning to me.

Super Digital

1. It's easier to follow everything if they all go together.
2. It is fairly important to me because it really helps connect the dots in a way and fill in the blank spaces.
3. Yes. I like it when the hymns help me follow the message of the sermon. It helps me follow the sermon.
4. I like when they are both along the same idea, but not if the songs chosen are so hard to sing that the congregation does not sing.
5. It is important it ties it all together.

Sermon Two Question Eight

What parts of today's worship service do you think connected with the message of the sermon?

Analog

1. The songs, love the upbeat songs, gets our young people going.
2. That God is always with us.
3. All parts.
4. I really like your conclusions at the end of the sermon. The songs chosen for today were great.
5. God is with you everywhere you go.
6. All.
7. Some songs and the readings.
8. All.
9. God is always there.
10. All parts.
11. All.
12. God is with us everywhere and always.

13. All of the message.
14. I felt connected when you said God is with us all the time, not just in church on Sunday.

Digital

1. The music and the children's sermon.
2. The songs.
3. That God is with you everywhere no matter where you go.
4. Be Thou My Vision Jacob had a vision; C's song after sermon; Borning Cry also referenced in sermon. Blessing as so appropriate and meaningful; confession and creed also effective!
5. Music.
6. God is with us everywhere we go, in good and difficult circumstances.
7. I feel like today's sermon was something I already do.
8. Jacob's ladder.
9. Sermon hymn.
10. It was all connected. Songs and liturgy, and sermon. Great Sunday! Blessings to you Ramona!
11. Sermon song.
12. The reading, psalm and gospel.
13. The call to worship, Cody's song while we completed the survey, hymn "Borning Cry."
14. Gospel and songs.
15. That God's with me every day in my life and daily activities.
16. Sermon song, blessing.
17. Readings, prayers, hymns, blessing.
18. Music.
19. All of the readings and music.

Super Digital

1. All of it especially the music loved it!
2. The songs.
3. The Gospel related to the sermon in how God is everywhere always looking down on you.
4. Songs
5. You did a great job on this!
6. The hymns.

Sermon Three Question Seven

Did telling the pastor's story using the language from the 1 Samuel 3 story help you think about how God might speak today? How did or didn't it help?

Analog

1. Yes.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. (Respondent underlined "did" in the written question).
5. Yes.
6. Very much so. He speaks to us and we are not listening to his message. I will think about every situation why?
7. Yes/keep open the thoughts and signs.
8. Yes, I should listen more closely to what He is asking me to do.
9. It helped.
10. It did. Something I don't think about often.
11. Yes. Still don't realize it's a calling.
12. Yes. You just have to listen and act on it.

Digital

1. Yes, God speaks to us, but we might now always be hearing what he has to say.
2. She certainly related the story to her own personal life.
3. Yes.
4. Yes.
5. Reminder that God continues to call me. Renew and open eyes and ears to hear him.
6. Yes, just try to listen better to God.
7. Yes, because she used a life situation.
8. Yes. I need to "listen" better-God may be calling and I didn't listen or recognize his call.
9. Yes, it related to my everyday life.
10. Yes, applying to daily life.
11. Yes. made me be more aware of my surroundings.
12. I enjoyed hearing the children's version the best.
13. Yes; reading/talking about the children's sermon helped explain that God speaks to us and wants us to share his good word.
14. Yes. We were told to listen in our quiet times.
15. Yes. I wonder as a special ed teacher, is that my calling, should I be doing more.
16. Yes! It took scripture and combined with real life story to make it relatable.

Super Digital

1. Yes, it reminded me to still my soul and heart, so I may listen better to what God is saying to me.
2. Yes! tied together well.

3. ??
4. Yes, God calls for you.

Sermon Three Question Eight

How did hearing the pastor's story help you think about the ways God might be speaking to or calling you? If it didn't help, what would have helped?

Analog

1. Yes.
2. Helped me think.
3. It helped.
4. Made me think about God is calling me.
5. Just be good a good listener and be ready.
6. The way it was told.
7. Keep an open mind and listen.
8. Just listen.
9. Could help many who receive a calling
10. It helped a lot. Sometimes very difficult to listen close and understand what God is saying.
11. Yes, to listen more.
12. I need to listen more intently.
13. Yes.

Digital

1. He is calling me to be a better servant.
2. Everyone's calling is different.
3. I will listen this week!
4. Yes.
5. Started thinking about new ways to serve.
6. Just feel that God speaks to us in many ways.
7. Of her thinking her name was being called.
8. God might be using a friend or family member to speak to me.
9. I need to listen for God's voice better.
10. Made me think about everyday calling of the Lord.
11. Pay attention, take time to "hear."
12. I need to stop and give myself more quiet time and empty my mind to listen for God's voice. {additional note in margin} age can sometimes be an obstacle, ex: start seminary when you're in your 70's? try to find something else?
13. It makes me think I should listen more and what he wants me to do with my life and how I should be a role model.

14. It helped reassure me that God has/is speaking to me at times throughout my life. before I just dismissed the throughout but now I realize God was speaking to me.
15. Yes.
16. It reminds us to slow down and listen for what God is already trying to share with us.

Super Digital

1. Serve in ways which you can!
2. God calls me to tend to the elderly daily and those who might not be befriended easily. I know this because every time I tried and did leave and look away from these things there was a constant pull and tug in my heart to return and be there for these people, so I continue to be here for them. Great Blessing!
3. Makes me realize that God wants me to do more every day to live my life in his way.
4. Serve in ways which you can!
5. By the pastor saying God wanted her to be a pastor.

Sermon Four Question Seven

What do you think about sermons that give the congregation an opportunity to participate in some way, such as making some sort of response, asking questions, or otherwise providing some form of input?

Analog

1. We are all here to love and serve the Lord.
2. Good.
3. Agree, makes it interesting.
4. Ok.
5. Nice (had "asking questions" crossed out on form).
6. Very good!
7. It's up to the pastor-if they think it will get the message out, do it.
8. I guess it was ok.
9. No, but other times yes.

Digital

1. OK!
2. Can be useful-making us think.
3. Keeps us engaged.
4. Makes it more interesting.
5. Good idea, but it brings out people's fears of being wrong or saying something wrong.

6. Engagement is good.
7. I like that.
8. I think it adds to the sermon in a positive way.

Super Digitals

1. I would rather not participate because we are such a small group.
2. I liked the connection of the talent show, and general info the sermon regarding talents.
3. I don't mind if not required.
4. They keep everyone interested.
5. I think it's great. However, that put people out of their comfort zone.
6. Readings.
7. I think it keeps the congregation engaged.

Sermon Four Question Eight

Today's sermon invited you to interact by thinking about a question, by writing something down, and by blessing someone. How did (or didn't) each of these activities help you connect the sermon to your daily life?

Analog

1. I am someone who never gets out.
2. It helped.
3. Anew.
4. Makes me think about the sermon during the week. I will tape the card to my mirror.
5. Will probably think about it more during the week.
6. Good reminder of what we need to do.
7. If you write it down, it will be on your mind and you will dwell on that more.
8. Helped to bless and help others.

Digital

1. It was helpful.
2. Sometimes what we do doesn't seem so important until we think about it.
3. all of them helped.
4. Gets you thinking.
5. It helped to personalize the message.
6. It made me think more deeply about the message being presented.

Super Digital

1. Made me wonder if I'm worthy.
2. I really liked the cards and I really liked the final prayer.
3. It made me connect my daily activities to my service to God.
4. It made me think hard about what God has blessed me with and how I can use those talents in my life to serve Him.
5. You ask questions and write stuff down every day.
6. Made me think of things I do daily that I could use to help others.

Sermon Five Question Seven

Today's sermon incorporated different techniques meant to appeal to various learning styles. Which techniques-visuals, nature imagery, movement/tangibles, spoken word, time for personal reflection-did you find the most helpful?

Analog

1. Visual, spoken word.
2. Bone flower cross.
3. Visuals. spoken word.
4. Visual/spoken word.
5. Spoken word.
6. Spoken word.

Digital

1. Visuals, movement/tangibles, spoken word.
2. I found holding the dry bone helpful in visualizing the barren parts of my life. I loved the visual of tying the flower/cross around the bone-very powerful.
3. Song, and bones/flowers; LOVED the poem.
4. I liked the bone and then the addition of flower and cross.
5. All of the above worked together-hands on will keep it more memorable.
6. Liked the O'Keefe picture.
7. I always like to have visuals.
8. Bone visual was excellent.
9. Time for personal reflection.

Super Digital

1. Visual, nature imagery.
2. Spoken word.
3. The visuals helped to bring the sermon to life.
4. Poetry.

5. I loved the bones being brought to life with the flower and the cross.

Sermon Five Question Eight

Did the sermon help you connect the biblical story to your life? How?

Analog

1. Brought up questions of resurrection-when does it occur?
2. Yes, God loves us, we will rise again.
3. I had never connected this story to my daily life.
4. Yes.
5. Some.
6. It helps me see how the world is changing and I feel the sermon taught me.
7. Not really.

Digital

1. Yes. I've been waiting for the breath. Maybe I should ask God for help. What can I do to help get started?
2. Even though there are so many tough times in life, God brings hope into "dry bones."
3. Yes.
4. Yes. not to be a zombie with no spirit or purpose.
5. We all need to remember that God is there for us and can help in troubled times.
6. To wake up spiritual life a bit.
7. Dry bones are low points in life-with God they come alive just how he helps with the trouble in life.
8. Not very much, but some.
9. By giving time to reflect.

Super Digital

1. Yes, interpreted a story about resurrection into a more general message of hope.
2. Yes.
3. Not directly. could use more "inspiration."
4. Yes, all the bad things happening, there is still life and hope.

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