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THE NERVOUS PREACHER:
HOW ANXIOUS PREACHERS CAN LEARN TO SUCCESSFULLY COPE WITH PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY

By

Matt Herndon

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

Untold numbers of evangelical Christian preachers suffer from Communication Apprehension (CA) and, more specifically, Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA). Preachers who struggle with PSA/CA (sometimes referred to in this dissertation as "pulpit anxiety") experience all sorts of symptoms, including a dissatisfaction with their calling and career, unhappiness at home, unresolved emotional problems, chronic and acute physical ailments, and ineffectiveness in the pulpit. For many preachers, this is a silent struggle. They keep their anxiety quiet, given the perceived embarrassment of being found out as a nervous speaker in a profession that requires professing. Additionally, the opportunities for nervous preachers to cope with their anxiety are limited, as the religious literature on PSA/CA is thin and only marginally helpful. This research project has been designed to fill that research gap, so that nervous preachers might have access to the best research done by public speaking experts, homileticians, and biblical scholars on the matter of pulpit anxiety. This dissertation furthermore includes a qualitative research study in which experienced preachers who have struggled with PSA/CA describe their struggles and the coping strategies they have learned to employ over the years. These coping strategies are then summarized as a set of best practices to offer nervous preachers who do not otherwise know how to cope with their condition.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Problem Statement

Mittes McDonald de Champlain quotes the following as a "corny and shopworn saying:" "A preaching class will not help you get rid of the butterflies, but will help you to get them to fly in formation."[1] If only that were true. Plenty of preachers and Christian communicators would dispute de Champlain's corny, shopworn saying regarding the effectiveness of preaching classes in reducing anxiety. The problem of public-speaking anxiety (PSA), or communication apprehension (CA), is a real one through which unknown and untold numbers of preachers quietly suffer—despite their preaching professors' best attempts to get the butterflies to "fly in formation."

The symptoms of PSA/CA are varied, but as the research will show, they are real and can be debilitating, manifesting in a preacher's physical health, thought life, relationships, spiritual contentment, and/or job satisfaction. The symptoms are not restricted to shy, inexperienced preachers, either. Take Adam, for example.[2] While attending a reputable evangelical seminary, he was assigned to preach in front of some classmates and faculty members. While Adam had never had problems speaking before, the pressure of speaking before his peers and professors unleashed a wave of anxiety that

[1] Mitties McDonald de Champlain, "What to Do While Preaching," in *Best Advice for Preaching*, edited by John S. McClure (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 112.

[2] Not his real name. Pseudonyms will be used consistently throughout this dissertation to protect the identity of "Adam," as well as his fellow research subjects "Dan," "Tim," "Bob," "Mike," "Steve," and "Paul."

took years to abet. Prior to the preaching engagement he had trouble sleeping and could not concentrate or prepare his sermon. When the time to preach arrived he had little prepared and broke down in the pulpit. From there he developed severe intestinal issues—vomiting and terrible diarrhea prior to speaking. Adam was so overwhelmed by the pressure of speaking that he struggled to maintain his commitments, even being so distracted by his anxiety that he showed up to preach on the wrong day and the wrong time. On several occasions he panicked in the pulpit and had to stop preaching. He was even hospitalized, for a time, for his intestinal issues and related symptoms.

It is not surprising that Adam experienced what so many people do when assigned to speak before an audience. What should be surprising is that Adam is a seemingly confident, extroverted man who is comfortable in ecclesiastical and Christian academic settings, having received a quality education at (in the opinion of the researcher) a top-notch evangelical Christian graduate school. What should be even more surprising is that the school faculty did not know how to handle Adam's anxiety on anything but a spiritual level. In his preaching classes, he received healing prayer and encouragement, but the faculty was unable to direct him toward genuine psychological healing. While Adam did not receive a proper diagnosis for his problem at seminary, he did while visiting with a psychiatrist in the hospital. Following the diagnosis, Adam was left on his own to learn to cope with his problems, which he did successfully. He now preaches and teaches regularly with a greater appreciation for, and ability to cope with, the psychological pressures of preaching.

As this dissertation will demonstrate, Adam is not alone. He is not the only educated, trained, seemingly competent Christian communicator who has struggled

mightily with PSA/CA. Countless others would surely share his experience, including some of the great preachers of scripture—Moses, Jeremiah, Paul and the disciples. Moses is alleged by some to have had a speech defect, and attempted to beg out of his assignment.[3] Jeremiah complained of being too young to know how to speak[4] and faced so much opposition that he cursed the day he was born.[5] Paul spoke freely of his weakness, fear, and trembling while speaking,[6] which should challenge the notion that the apostle was in complete control of his rhetorical abilities. Even Jesus predicted that his disciples would be so nervous in front of certain audiences that they wouldn't even know what to say.[7]

Countless preachers—biblical, historical, and contemporary—would testify to the reality of PSA/CA and its various symptoms. But many of these preachers (including Adam) would also testify to the possibility for improvement, having learned to cope with their condition and even overcome some of their nervousness. In addition, they would (and will) also testify to the way their struggle with anxiety enhanced the depth and quality of their preaching and their own experience with the divine presence and power of God. Regarding their rhetorical improvements, what might explain this loss of symptoms? What might explain the improvement in their preaching and quality of life? Would wisdom, time, counsel, medication, or performance adjustments account for their progress? And how can other nervous preachers learn from their experience?

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[3] Exodus 4:13, *English Standard Version.* All citations and quotations of the Bible used in this dissertation refer to the English Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated.
[4] Jeremiah 1:6.
[5] Jeremiah 20:14-18.
[6] I Corinthians 2:1.
[7] Mark 13:11.

The research is sparse in regards to these questions. Within the homiletical literature, the problem of pulpit anxiety is not directly or thoroughly addressed. Several widely-used preaching textbooks include no discussions of performance fears and reflect the homiletical academy's focus on sermon content as opposed to emotional process. Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Preaching*, Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching*, and John Broadus' *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* are thorough guidebooks for sermon preparation, delivery and evaluation, but include no discussion of the fear or anxiety involved in preaching. Two other frequently used homiletical guidebooks—John Stott's *Between Two Worlds* and Fred Craddock's *Preaching*—include brief sections on fear and courage, but (in the opinion of the researcher) the discussions are too brief and generalized to have much to offer to preachers suffering specifically from pulpit anxiety. While a handful of other preaching experts acknowledge the issue—discussions which will be summarized in chapter two—the problem of PSA/CA is never mentioned by its clinical name and never receives the full treatment it deserves. No books or articles have been written on the matter. Nervous preachers have been left to wonder how to cope with their problems on their own.

The public speaking literature has a great deal to say about public speaking nervousness, as rhetoricians and public speaking experts have researched and explored the problem of PSA/CA from nearly every possible angle. The literature is so vast on the topic that the public speaking academy has seen fit to summarize recent, disparate findings in an authoritative guide to the matter: *Avoiding Communication: Shyness, Reticence, and Communication Apprehension*. Because of the importance of this volume, it will receive serious treatment in this dissertation. Public speaking experts will readily

testify—if even anecdotally—that fear of public speaking is the number one phobia among people, with more people reporting fear of public speaking than even death.[8] The public speaking discipline has therefore extended into popular literature, offering self-help guides and manuals such as *Getting Over Stage Fright: A New Approach to Resolving Your Fear of Public Speaking and Performing* and *In the Spotlight*: *Overcoming Your Fear of Public Speaking and Performing*, both by Janet E. Esposito, M.S.W. It is the author's belief that preachers themselves are not immune to this phobia, and can benefit from this literature. However, public-speaking experts' research of PSA/CA takes place in a secular and mostly academic environment and has not been extended into a spiritual and religious context. What do Christian communicators have to learn from the expertise of modern researchers? Public speaking experts and homileticians have yet to bridge that gap.

The biblical commentary literature does a thorough job exploring the anxious predicaments of Moses, Jeremiah, Paul and the disciples. Many of these insightful commentaries will be summarized in this dissertation. However, such commentary is not extended to the ongoing experience of contemporary preachers, and does not offer much by way of direct application or advice. What do nervous preachers have to learn from the wisdom of scripture?

In addition to an obvious gap in the literature, the experience of nervous preachers themselves has yet to be assimilated into a data set from which Christian communicators can learn. No dissertations have been written to investigate this obvious problem, and no qualitative analyses of individual preachers' experiences have been conducted—at least

[8] Fensholt, M.F., *The Francis Effect: The Real Reason You Hate Public Speaking and How to Get Over It* (Ontario, CA: Oakmont Press, 2006), 25.

to the author's knowledge. While many preachers have surely learned much about PSA/CA and the best way to cope, their conclusions and discoveries have not been gathered and summarized. It is the author's belief that the absence of this research and accumulated wisdom is an obvious missed opportunity to help struggling preachers survive and grow through their PSA/CA. Preachers are left to struggle with difficult questions such as, "Am I the only one who struggles like this?"; "How can God use a nervous wreck like myself?"; "What's the best way to cope with my nerves?"; "Should I even be a preacher?" just to name a few.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to help anxious Christian preachers learn how to successfully cope with public speaking anxiety in the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of sermons. The researcher intends to accomplish this purpose in two ways. First, the relevant literature will be reviewed and applied to the problem of public speaking anxiety, not only to bring the opinions and wisdom of experts to bear on the problem but also to fill in the gap in the literature, as described above. Secondly, the researcher designed a qualitative analysis of the stories and testimonies of experienced preachers who have suffered from PSA and have wisdom to offer less experienced, nervous Christian speakers. "Experienced" will be defined as preachers who have preached regularly in ecclesiastical Christian contexts for more than five years, and have demonstrated some measure of improvement in PSA/CA symptoms, no matter how small. The purpose statement above also acknowledges that pulpit anxiety presents itself in both the behavior and thought-life of preachers, during every stage of preaching: preparation, delivery, and evaluation. This dissertation will include a comprehensive

study that investigates experienced preachers' whole-life experience with PSA/CA, and not just a report of anxiety during the preaching event.

Research Questions

In fulfillment of the aforementioned purpose, the following research questions will be investigated. First, how have preachers experienced anxiety in the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of sermons? What symptoms can be identified in individual preacher's experience and how common are those among research subjects and within the literature? Second, what coping strategies were utilized in the management of preaching-induced anxiety? Are the coping strategies identified in research subjects consistent with those discussed in the literature? Third, to what extent were these coping strategies successful in the management of preaching-induced anxiety? Are some coping strategies more effective than others? What determines their effectiveness?

Significance of Study

The significance of this study has already been presented, but can mostly be found in the near-complete absence of any major studies or homiletical aids published for the sake of nervous preachers. With such a study completed, the author hopes to help future researchers make additional contributions to the literature regarding an extensive problem in preaching. Additionally, the researcher hopes to provide nervous preachers with a resource assuring them that their experience is not unique and has been managed successfully by many other Christian communicators from whom they can learn. While the anxiety of preaching can itself be a positive dynamic in the communication that takes place between congregation and preacher, few homileticians or public-speaking experts would argue with the notion that less anxiety in the pulpit can maximize communication.

In the case of Christian proclamation, the religious consequences of increased communication include greater advancement of the kingdom of God, greater conversion rates, and deeper levels of discipleship resulting from clearer, more confident preaching. Additionally, less anxiety in the pulpit can increase preachers' sense of joy and fulfillment as they pursue their calling with greater emotional peace and harmony at home.

Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used in this study, and for purposes of clarity and mutual agreement between author and reader, their definitions are offered here:

Communication Apprehension / Avoidance (CA): An umbrella term used by public speaking experts to refer to a person's tendency to engage in or avoid communication situations of any type. CA is also referred to as "Social-Communicative Anxiety (SCA)" because of the social context that triggers the apprehension.

Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA): A particular type of CA in which a person speaking in a public setting (which is typically larger than a small group) experiences various psychological and physiological symptoms from the fear created by the public speaking context. PSA may include "performance anxiety," which often describes the psychological and physiological trauma of presenting before an audience in ways other than speaking: music, dance, acting, etc.

Stage fright: A more informal and historic term describing the anxiety of public performance, highlighting the visceral fear and fright summoned by being in front of any sort of audience. Sometimes used loosely in non-theatrical settings—for example, when a child becomes shy in front of others and her parents explain she has "stage fright."

Christian preaching: The public proclamation of Christian tradition and teaching, especially in an ecclesiastical setting. While Christian preaching can take many forms, the researcher intends to design this study around the development of a Christ-centered preaching philosophy that holds at its center the redemptive work of God in the life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Homiletics: The art of preaching. More specifically, homiletics includes the study of the analysis, classification, preparation, composition, and delivery of sermons.

Pulpit anxiety: A new term describing the occurrence of PSA/CA in a religious setting, designated by the "pulpit" – the usual preaching spot in many congregations.

CHAPTER TWO

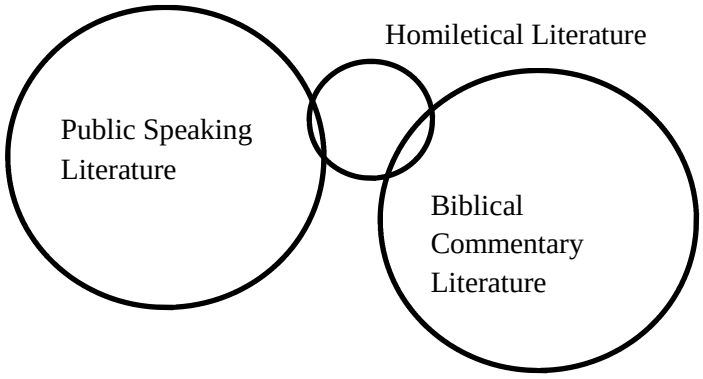
Literature Review

Introduction

In order to lay the groundwork for the qualitative research described in chapters three and four, the researcher has reviewed the literature relating to pulpit anxiety and will here summarize his findings. Three genres of literature were researched and reviewed. The first to be reviewed is literature on homiletics, in which preaching experts offer sage advice to nervous preachers. The second genre of literature is public speaking literature, which is a growing academic field blending psychological and rhetorical studies. The third genre to be reviewed is Bible commentary on the several instances of nervous speakers in the Bible.

Researchers and writers of dissertations are told to look for the overlap between areas of literature being reviewed in order to narrow down the amount of literature to review and focus on the literature most relevant to the topic being researched. In other words, if research areas are circles in a Venn diagram, a researcher should focus on literature that addresses two or three specific areas. In this particular literature review, there was not an abundance of material that covered two, much less three, areas of research. The researcher expected to find an abundance of material on public speaking anxiety in the literature on homiletics, but did not. What he did find from homileticians overlapped only slightly with the biblical literature. There was only occasional overlap between the literature on homiletics and the public speaking literature, and no overlap at

all between the public speaking and biblical literature. While the homiletical literature was very thin, the public speaking literature was vast, as was the biblical literature. The following Venn diagram illustrates the perceived breadth of literature within all three areas and the limited amount of overlap:



Practically speaking, this limited overlap resulted in no more than a few comments in articles or books addressing more than one of the research areas, and none addressing all three. It also made it difficult to narrow down vast areas of literature into more manageable chunks. Of course, this shortage of research material is why dissertations are written, and the gap is evidently a need in the literature which the researcher hopes to fill: how experts in public speaking, experienced homileticians, and biblical scholars can come together to address the phenomenon of pulpit anxiety.

Homiletical Literature: Fear in the Pulpit

As a framework to understand the opinions and observations of homileticians regarding anxiety in the pulpit, the researcher will adapt a construct from a primary, authoritative text in the public speaking literature, *Avoiding Communication: Shyness*,

Reticence, and Communication Apprehension.[9] The editors of that text segmented their work into five sections: Definition and Constructs, Causes, Symptoms and Correlates, Measurement, and Remediation. The homiletical literature had no contributions to make regarding the measurement of PSA in the pulpit, so for the sake of organization, their observations and opinions have been organized into four sections.

Definitions and Constructs

As will be seen, public speaking experts do a thorough job defining the problem they are investigating, which is usually referred to as Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) or, more generally, Communication Anxiety (CA). Homileticians, or preaching experts, are less concerned with clinical accuracy, and offer a variety of terms to describe (not define) the problem. Joseph Clifford, for example, refers to "preaching fears."[10] Mittes McDonald de Champlain identifies the problem as "performance anxiety," or "disabling nervousness."[11] James Earl Massey describes the problem as "inward pressure—indeed, as distress…."[12] In his own language, David Larsen comments that "some preachers are severely hampered by shyness in speaking…."[13]

In fact, it is less common in the homiletical literature to hear the problem defined as it is to be recognized as the opposite of the ideal. While Jay Adams, for example, does not define the problem of pulpit anxiety, he does recognize its opposite:

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[9] John A. Daly, James C. McCroskey, Joe Ayres, Tim Hopf, Debbie M. Ayres Sonandre, Tanichya K. Wongprasert, editors, *Avoiding Communication: Shyness, Reticence, and Communication Apprehension,* 3rd edition (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2009).

[10] Joseph Clifford, "From Fear to Freedom: Self Differentiated Preaching in an Age of Anxiety" (Doctor of Ministry Thesis, McCormick Theological Seminary, 2006), 6.

[11] Mitties McDonald de Champlain, "What to Do While Preaching," in *Best Advice for Preaching,* edited by John S. McClure (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 112-113.

[12] James Earl Massey, *The Burdensome Joy of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 14.

[13] David Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching: Identifying the Issues in Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 178.

> …[B]oldness is essential for preaching to the heart, and bold preaching makes an impact on those who hear…What is boldness? The Greek word, *parresia,* means freedom in speaking, openness, willingness to be frank; it is plain speech that is unencumbered by fear. A bold preacher is one who has no fear of speaking the truth—even when it hurts.[14]

While not defining pulpit anxiety, Adams identifies its opposite as plain, bold speech unencumbered by fear—whether in reference to fear of rejection or fear of not saying it well. Henry Baker Adams likewise talks of preaching with "the grace of confidence."[15]

In their attempt to frame the problem of pulpit anxiety, more than one homiletician is careful to distinguish it from another opposite: holy fear. Not only is pulpit anxiety that which inhibits boldness and confidence in preaching, but it should be distinguished from the entirely justified intimidation all of God's public servants should experience at the seriousness of the preaching act. Adams writes, "it is fitting that the preacher have a lively sense of wonder at the audacity of offering words for the Almighty to use. The preacher rightfully ponders long and thoughtfully about the responsibility assumed when one goes to the pulpit, responsibility to God and for the people."[16] James Daane also insists that "fear and trembling" in the pulpit is key to the act of preaching itself, and that "unless [preachers] regain a…sense of mystery and wonder at the event of preaching, the Protestant pulpit will never regain the power and force it once had."[17] David Buttrick is even more direct: "Stand in your pulpit scared. No glib self-confidence for you. After all, your position is precarious. You are speaking for God in the presence

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[14] Jay E. Adams, *Preaching to the Heart: A Heart to Heart Discussion with Preachers of the Word* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1983), 17.
[15] Henry Baker Adams, *Preaching: The Burden and the Joy* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1996), 83.
[16] Ibid.
[17] James Daane, *Preaching with Confidence: A Theological Essay on the Power of the Pulpit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 9.

of God."[18] Whatever pulpit anxiety is, homileticians agree that the opposite is not "glib assurance," but, according to Adams, that the preacher should come to the task with "the humility born of an acute awareness of the magnitude and importance of this ministry."[19] As Daane writes, "The cool, nonchalant, even cavalier manner in which many Protestant ministers occupy the pulpit is a travesty on its sacred and mysterious function. The holy place in a Protestant church is the pulpit; for it is there that God is present and from there that he goes forth and is heard in the midst of the congregation."[20]

Another theme in the homiletical literature is the observation that pulpit anxiety is a natural consequence of preaching itself, and therefore part of the Christian minister's vocation. McDonald de Champlain comments that "preaching in many ways is like giving birth, and there is no escape from the natural birth pangs of anxiety that go along with the office of giving birth."[21] While de Champlain does not describe the precise nature of this anxiety, it presumably includes fears related to public speaking—especially from, as the author writes, "the attendant awareness of being so personally exposed."[22] As Massey writes, "we who preach are always under scrutiny."[23]

Finally, one important homiletician observes that the anxiety preachers can feel in the pulpit is not just the result of public speaking pressures, or the holy fear that should attend preachers, but rather the result of a perpetually anxious society. In his master's thesis, *From Fear to Freedom,* Joseph Clifford analyzes the act of preaching from a family-systems perspective popularized in religious settings by the late psychologist and

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[18] David Buttrick, "Side Thoughts on Preaching for Those Who Must Stammer God's Unnamed Name" in *Best Advice: Wisdom on Ministry from 30 Leading Pastors and Preachers,* edited by William Carl (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 33.
[19] Adams, *Preaching: The Burden and the Joy,* 83.
[20] Daane, *Preaching with Confidence,* 9.
[21] McDonald de Champlain, "What to Do While Preaching," 112.
[22] Massey, *The Burdensome Joy of Preaching,* 14.
[23] Ibid., 15.

writer Edwin Friedman. Family-systems thinking identifies "anxiety" as a perpetual and ever-present condition in life and relationships, as individuals (including preachers and congregants) struggle to maintain their confidence and courage in the face of everybody else's expectations. Clifford theorizes that "anxiety…pervades current homiletics," and that the quest to answer the question of "What's wrong with preaching today?"—a perennial question in homiletical literature and preaching classrooms—is itself a reflection of cultural anxiety that gives preachers more, not fewer, reasons to be nervous about their performance in the pulpit.[24] Additionally, anxious preachers live and work in a system of ecclesiastical anxiety. In this system, a nervous congregation infects a nervous preacher (or vice versa), creating a negative feedback loop that increased performance fears. The problem is not "performance anxiety" per se, but cultural anxiety that pervades the family system of the congregation. This anxiety manifests in innumerable ways, but especially in a preacher's discomfort in the pulpit.

In summary, while homileticians do not spend much ink seeking to define pulpit anxiety (if they would agree with the use of that term), they describe it in a variety of ways (fear in preaching, nervousness), they describe its opposite (confidence, boldness), they distinguish it from the holy fear of proclamation, they describe it as a natural consequence of public exposure and the creative process, and they understand it as the same sort of anxiety afflicting all human beings who struggle to be themselves in the face of others' expectations.

[24] Clifford, *From Fear to Freedom*, 4.

Causes

Regarding the causes of pulpit anxiety, homileticians offer a variety of possible causes for the "disabling nervousness" described by McDonald de Champlain. They range from factors which make previously experienced fears worse, to factors which attempt to explain the etiology of pulpit anxiety more deeply.

David Larsen cites psychologist Erik Erikson, for example, who has theorized that "an inadequate inner base can cripple a person with acute self-consciousness and cause a tendency toward brittleness and ineptitude…."[25] An inadequate inner base should be understood as a preacher's inner confidence in his or her value as a human being and a servant of God, and sense of clarity regarding his or her calling and responsibility. Such inner confidence allows a preacher to avoid the hyper-consciousness that makes speakers (and anyone) nervous. Without this inner base, preachers are left suffering from what Massey calls "inwardness"[26]—or a preoccupation with one's own thoughts, feelings, and fears. Edward Marquart notes the questions preachers often ask at the end of a sermon: "'How did I do?,' 'Was it okay?,' 'Reassure me'."[27] He observes that "we ask these persistent questions because deep down inside, we're not sure we are OK. We persistently need reassurance that we are loved and acceptable as preachers."[28] This lack of assurance regarding a preacher's acceptability as a preacher is the "inadequate inner base" that Larsen and Erikson are describing.

Larsen observes that this inwardness and inadequate inner base can manifest in preachers as compulsive perfectionism or low self-worth. This perfectionism and low

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[25] Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching*, 49.
[26] Massey, *The Burdensome Joy of Preaching,* 20.
[27] Edward F. Markquart, *Quest for Better Preaching* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1985), 63.
[28] Ibid.

sense of worth often result in anxious preaching experiences in which nervous preachers seek approval from congregations. McDonald de Champlain observes that this preoccupation with how a sermon is going and how a preacher is doing is what often produces "unnatural, mechanical, awkward behavior."[29]

Other homileticians add additional contributing causal factors to the phenomena of pulpit anxiety. Clifford has written of the climate of anxiety in many churches, resulting from job pressures and congregational approval, which exacerbate the natural anxiety of public speaking. Additionally, Larsen comments that lack of clerical training increases preachers' inability to handle the pressures of weekly preaching, resulting in heightened anxiety and its symptoms. He cites an alumni survey from a prestigious American seminary in which "graduates wish they had received more assistance in their student days in the areas of self-understanding, self-assessment, evaluating strengths and weaknesses, and in the culture of the inner life."[30] And while his language is less than clinical, Massey attributes pulpit anxiety (among other clergy struggles) to a most mysterious thing: "the shadow." The shadow and its effects are something Massey believes preachers cannot avoid:

> The shadow will fall across every preacher's path, although we do not all experience its effects the same way. The effects of that shadow have to do with our felt limitations, our perceived needs, and our lingering fears—fear of failure, fear that we are burning out, fear that the springs of creativity have dried up—all of which can bring on panic and thwart the will to work.[31]

While the shadow is a not a clinical explanation for the etiology of pulpit anxiety, it is an allusion to the darkness and stress produced by the sacred act of preaching—a darkness and stress alluded to by many of the homileticians researched.

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[29] McDonald de Champlain, "What to Do While Preaching," 105.
[30] Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching*, 49.
[31] Massey, *The Burdensome Joy of Preaching*, 20.

Symptoms and Correlates

As we will also see in the public speaking literature, distinguishing between symptoms of pulpit anxiety and causes of pulpit anxiety is difficult. At what point does the phenomenon of pulpit anxiety become a cause of greater anxiety? Is "inwardness" a cause of anxiety or a result of the conditions causing anxiety? Because of their non-clinical bent, no one in the homiletical literature attempts to draw clear distinctions between causes and symptoms. At the same time, authors describe what seem to be consequences of pulpit anxiety that, while certainly contributing to even greater levels of nervousness, do not seem to be the ultimate cause of the anxiety itself. These symptoms or correlates can be organized into several categories: physiological symptoms, emotional symptoms, rhetorical symptoms, attitudinal symptoms, and occupational symptoms.

Regarding the physiological aspect, several authors comment on the physical ailments which have overtaken nervous preachers. Massey remembers that one of the twentieth century's most highly regarded (and, some say, emotionally mature) preachers was plagued by feelings of inadequacy. Henry Ward Beecher was so nervous about speaking that he retired to bed with a headache after preaching.[32] Similarly, the author remembers that another preacher, John Angel James, did not sleep on Saturday night as he lay awake with uncontrollable apprehensions.[33] His physiological symptoms included depression (exacerbated by his sleeplessness), irritability, and nervousness. Regarding the emotional symptoms associated with pulpit anxiety, many have written of the inner toil of public proclaimers. Massey, for one, writes of feeling "put off or rejected rather than

[32] Ibid., 19.
[33] Ibid.

accepted, [which] can give one a threatening sense of aloneness and a heavy feeling of dreadful exposure."[34]

The rhetorical symptoms of pulpit anxiety have already been described by McDonald de Champlain, who observed the "unnatural, mechanical, awkward behavior" that can result from excessive self-consciousness.[35] Regarding attitudinal symptoms, Clifford has argued that the most notorious consequences of untreated anxiety in the pulpit are not a quivering voice or wet palms, but an unproductive attitude in the preacher: "Symptoms of anxious preaching include willfulness toward the congregation, a propensity toward diagnosis, and an attitude of seriousness."[36] By "willfulness toward the congregation," Clifford suggests that a nervous preacher will soothe his (and his congregation's) own anxieties by dictating imperatives. These imperatives—which usually start with "You must!"—can be comforting, but inhibit a congregation's growth by removing responsibility from them for their own journeys. By "a propensity for diagnosis," Clifford suggests that anxious preachers will attempt to alleviate nervousness by labeling problems and people, but offering no clear-cut solutions. Labeling and diagnosing take ambiguity (and some of the anxiety) out of life and preaching. And by "an attitude of seriousness" Clifford argues that in order to measure up to their anxiety, anxious preachers take themselves, their congregations, and life itself too seriously. Seriousness is characterized by "lack of flexibility in response, a narrow repertoire of approaches, persistent efforts to try harder, an inability to change direction and a loss of concentrated focus."[37] Finally, there are occupational symptoms of pulpit anxiety,

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[34] Ibid., 15.
[35] McDonald de Champlain, "What to Do While Preaching," 105.
[36] Clifford, *From Fear to Freedom*, 27.
[37] Ibid., 27-28.

including clergy burnout, as preachers relocate or resign their pulpits to cope with the pressure of preaching.[38]

Remediation

While homileticians are brief when it comes to discussing the problem of pulpit anxiety, its causes and symptoms, they are (unsurprisingly) thorough when it comes to solutions to consider. These remedies vary between cures, which eliminate all or most anxiety, to coping mechanisms, which accept anxiety as a reality but allow preachers to continue preaching with minimal anxiety, even drawing strength and courage from the natural dynamics of PSA. As McDonald de Champlain has already said, "a preaching class will not help you get rid of the butterflies, but will help you to get them to fly in formation."[39] Relatedly, Massey observes that the only way to respond to pulpit anxiety is to be "conditioned" for the role, mitigating the effects of PSA as athletes condition themselves to endure greater levels of stress necessary for athletic performance. This conditioning will involve living through personal crises, developing healthy attitudes, maturing emotionally, gaining a useful body of knowledge, gaining wisdom from convictional experiences, and, among many other experiences and benefits, handling assignments under the guidance of mentors.[40]

The cures or coping strategies mentioned in the homiletical literature are varied and many. Several experts insist that the appropriate response to disabling "inwardness" is "outwardness," in which a preacher exchanges his focus on his own emotional condition to the needs of the congregation. Markquart quotes Brooks, who observes that focusing on the question "How shall I preach most effectively for others?" eclipses the

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[38] Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching,* 51.
[39] McDonald de Champlain, "What to Do While Preaching," 112.
[40] Massey, *The Burdensome Joy of Preaching,* 27.

emotional angst which often results from another question many preachers ask more frequently: "How shall I do it most creditably for myself?" As he instructs, "Care not for your servant, but for your truth and your people."[41] Marquart also cites Erdahl, who insists that "the best pulpit communication results from forgetting ourselves and remembering just two things: our truth and our people…. As the purpose of preaching is to call people out of self-centeredness into self-surrender and self-giving, so also the call of the Lord invites us to let go of ourselves and to preach with the abandonment of self-forgetfulness."[42] Nervous preachers should focus less on "trying to preach good sermons" and instead speak an important, honest message to the hearers.[43] Attention should be directed to the message, not the preacher.

Marquart is not the only one to prescribe an outward focus on the needs of a congregation. Baker says simply that "only the preacher who has the courage born of conviction about the overriding significance of helping people confront a saving gospel will be able to make the difficult word heard."[44] Buttrick also instructs a preacher to "speak for the sake of your people, for they are a congregation God has given to your care. Ultimately, neighbor love undergirds preaching, and your immediate neighbors are in pews listening to you."[45] Massey goes on to quote Michael Polyani, who writes of the importance of moving our attention "away from the anxious self to consider the end we seek through our work." A preacher's focus must not be on the self, but on the "what" and the "why" of preaching—what is being preached and why it is important to share.[46]

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[41] Marquart, *Quest for Better Preaching*, 66.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 64.
[44] Adams, *Preaching: The Burden and the Joy*, 91.
[45] Buttrick, "Side Thoughts on Preaching…," 33.
[46] Massey, *The Burdensome Joy of Preaching*, 24-25.

In this way, McDonald de Champlain believes that greater rhetorical fluency results as preachers focus on the message and congregation, not on the performance.[47]

Another potential cure mentioned frequently by homileticians is the mitigating effects of the Christian gospel. Larsen observes that for a Christian preacher, the best (and perhaps only) response to the self-obsession which fuels pulpit anxiety is the truth of the gospel message:

> Be my problem the exacting demands of a highly developed superego and its resultant compulsive perfectionism or low self-worth, my right to preach and represent a holy God does not depend on my own meritorious good works any more than does my eternal salvation… My own inner impoverishment of self-confidence or my lack of external attractiveness or superior endowment all must yield to the decisive determinant of my essential identity—I am accepted in Christ and am being healed.[48]

Relatedly, Markquart (quoting Paul Harms) writes of the importance of preachers having the same sort of "baptismal attitude" towards themselves that God does, in which a person understands the reality of their salvation, sealed at baptism.[49] While a "non-baptismal attitude" results in magnifying one's faults and short-comings, "God begins with a baptismal attitude towards people, including, especially including preachers…. He sees the preacher through the crucified death of His Son… Baptism works to reduce the preacher's self-consciousness and turns that self to ministry."[50] Dale Rosenberger describes a memorable sermon he once observed, being delivered by a mildly mentally disabled youth group member named Drew. Drew had been chosen to deliver that Sunday's message, but started out a nervous wreck, much to the angst of an already-

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[47] McDonald de Champlain, "What to Do While Preaching," 105.
[48] David L. Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching: Identifying the Issues in Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional Publishing, 1989), 51.
[49] Markquart, *Quest for Better Preaching*, 65.
[50] Ibid., 66.

nervous congregation: "This sermon had become a homiletic white-knuckle run."[51] At a critical point in the message, though, the author writes that Drew quoted from his favorite rock opera: "I'm free. I'm free. And freedom tastes of reality." Drew went on to preach that his faith in Christ freed him from the fear of what others thought of him. Following the sermon, Drew descended the pulpit to the congratulations of his friends, and Rosenberger recalls his thought at the time: "I realized I would never preach so eloquently."[52]

Another theme in the homiletical literature regarding remediation of PSA/CA is the importance of prayer. According to Adams, the New Testament apostles' remediation techniques consisted mostly of praying to the Spirit for boldness, and this must be true of preachers today.[53] Without the Spirit's assistance, the pressures of inwardness and anxiety can spell death, unless a preacher relies prayerfully on God.[54] Homileticians also emphasize that nervous preachers must rediscover their calling. A sense of chosenness by God can do much to ground preachers against the pressures that make public speaking so nerve-wracking. Massey (quoting Gardner Taylor) believes that it is that sense of calling by which preachers can have confidence in the face of public speaking anxieties: "It is in the strength of a divinely-given call to preach that the preacher will rightly deal with the concern for 'enough inner security'."[55] On their own, Massey writes, no preacher has the resources to bear the burden of the pulpit.[56] However, experiencing the direct call and address of God as a preacher may give anxious preachers courage to face their fears.

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[51] Dale Rosenberger, *Who Are You to Say? Establishing Pastoral Authority on Matters of Faith* (Ada, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 39.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Adams, *Preaching to the Heart*, 20.
[54] Massey, *The Burdensome Joy of Preaching*, 20.
[55] Ibid., 25.
[56] Ibid., 26.

Additionally, homileticians are quick to remind preachers that another way to minimize the effects of anxiety and fear while preaching is to remember the promise of God to be present in the act of preaching, no matter how imperfectly done. "All your speaking takes place in the Presence,"[57] writes Buttrick. Redford recommends to a nervous friend that the key to his anxiety is "simple reliance for assistance from Him who has said He will never leave us."[58] In one of the few "overlap" sections in the literature, Adams offers the example of the Bible's most nervous preacher: "For Moses and the prophets, the claim that God made upon them could be undertaken only with the assurance that God would be with them, that God would strengthen them, that God would cleanse them, that God would use their feeble efforts."[59]

While the above remediations are more emotional, McDonald de Champlain offers two more clinical proposals—visualization and relaxation techniques. In visualization, a preacher mitigates anxiety by anticipating the service and sermon beforehand, maintaining a positive attitude, which promotes relaxation and confidence. Certain breathing techniques can also promote physiological comfort before entering a rhetorically stressful situation.[60]

Finally, Clifford's recommended remediation techniques come from Friedman's family-systems perspective. "Playfulness" and "self-differentiation" are the antidotes to anxiety inherent in any emotional system, which certainly includes a preaching context. Clifford explains that playfulness "is about resisting cultural anxiety. It creates an

[57] Buttrick, "Side Thoughts on Preaching…," 33.
[58] Massey, *The Burdensome Joy of Preaching,* 19.
[59] Adams, *Preaching: The Burden and the Joy,* 83.
[60] McDonald de Champlain, "What to Do While Preaching," 113.

emotional distance from it."[61] Playfulness occurs when the preacher maintains a relaxed, positive attitude which allows the preacher to maintain a healthy, emotional distance from the audience's seriousness and anxiety. Levity, lightheartedness, and distance allow preachers to counteract their own nervousness and break the vicious feedback cycle in which a nervous congregation and a nervous preacher make each other even more nervous. Self-differentiation, or a preacher's ability to maintain opinions and separation from other anxious people, can also help to break the cycle of anxiety.[62] When preachers grow in their self-understanding and personal courage in the face of others' expectations, congregations are forced to deal with their own anxieties and learn to cope in ways other than intimidating the minister.

The opinions of homileticians on pulpit anxiety are helpful and interesting, but the research is surprisingly thin and one-dimensional. How do modern research methods buttress or challenge the experience of preaching experts? Beyond the occasional encouraging comment, how would homileticians recommend preachers suffering from debilitating pulpit anxiety receive treatment? How do the insights and observations of homileticians interface with the experience of biblical characters, many of whom suffered from debilitating nervousness? The homileticians that were researched largely avoided discussing these questions with sufficient thoroughness.

Public Speaking Literature: Public Speaking Anxiety

The fields of communication and public speaking are established academic disciplines. For many years, experts have wrestled with important questions concerning the definition, correlates, proper way to measure, and best way to remediate

[61] Clifford, *"From Fear to Freedom,"* 29.
[62] Ibid., 36.

communication-related anxiety. They continue to do broad research as well as producing important data. While public speaking experts are excited by this new research,[63] Mark Wadleigh explains that this situation is both satisfying and frustrating.[64] It is satisfying in that current ideas and theories have been strengthened with additional research, instrumentation has improved, and the field has expanded into intercultural and international fields. It is frustrating that even with all the research and study, experts have yet to reach widespread agreement on the best way to conceptualize and study (let alone define) communication-related anxiety.

This diversity of opinions, combined with the richness of the data and ideas, may be seen in this summary of the research concerning communication-related anxiety, as drawn primarily from the third edition of *Avoiding Communication: Shyness, Reticence, and Communication Apprehension*—an academic-level summary of the present state of the discipline, including contributions from leading experts in the field. For purposes of this review, the researcher will be integrating the contributions of the authors with the outline employed in the previous review of the homiletical literature: Definition and Constructs, Causes, Symptoms and Correlates, Measurement, and Remediation. As the reader will see, the data is rich and helpful, but many outstanding questions remain, including the precise application of their research to an ecclesiastical setting. Most of the research on public speaking anxiety was conducted in a collegiate setting, given that the researchers are college professors.

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[63] A. Kathleen Wilcox, "Communication Apprehensions and Cognitions: Is It the Thought that Counts?" in *Avoiding Communication*, 336.

[64] Mark Wadleigh, "Contextualizing Communication Avoidance Research: Research, Scope, Realm, and Paradigm" in *Avoiding Communication*, 8.

Definition and Constructs

Public speaking anxiety exists as a subset within the larger phenomena of "communication avoidance." Communication avoidance (CA) is an umbrella term used as a catch-all for many other different descriptors, including shyness, reticence, social-communicative anxiety, and communication apprehension, as well as related constructs, including inhibition and unwillingness to communicate."[65] John Daly, John Caughlin, and Laura Stafford write that all these terms and constructs refer to "the differing proclivity of people to participate in and enjoy, or avoid and fear, social interaction."[66] For this reason they refer to the general phenomena as "social-communicative anxiety," indicated henceforward as SCA. Wadleigh explains "communication avoidance," or CA, as the tendency of a communicating source to avoid his or her target.[67] Karen Kangas Dwyer defines CA simply as fear associated with real or anticipated communication with others.[68]

Public speaking anxiety (PSA) is understood as a specific subtype of communication apprehension/avoidance. Historically, PSA has been described as "stage fright"[69] and is still labeled "performance anxiety," although the latter term has a broader range than public speaking, including musical and theatrical settings. Chris Sawyer and

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[65] Wadleigh, "Contextualizing Communication Avoidance Research," 5.
[66] John A. Daly, John Caughlin, and Laura Stafford, "Correlates and Consequences of Social-Communicative Anxiety," in *Avoiding Communication*, 23.
[67] Wadleigh, "Contextualizing Communication Avoidance Research," 6.
[68] Karen Kangas Dwyer, "The Multidimensional Model for Selecting Interventions," in *Avoiding Communication*, 359.
[69] James C. McCroskey, Virginia P. Richmond, and Linda L. McCroskey, "Willingness to Communicate, Communication Apprehension, and Self-Perceived Communication Competence: Conceptualizations and Perspectives," in *Avoiding Communication*, 97.

Ralph Behnke define PSA simply as "the fear of confronting an audience while speaking."[70] Graham Bodie offers a more thorough definition:

> Public speaking anxiety (PSA) is a specific subtype of communication-based anxiety whereby individuals experience physiological arousal (e.g., increased heart rate), negative self-focused conditions (e.g., "I'm concerned I'll appear incompetent."), and/or behavioral concomitants (e.g., trembling) in response to an expected or actual presentation.[71]

Many communication experts insist that an important distinction is required in our understanding of all types of communication anxieties and certainly public speaking anxiety in particular. Theorists distinguish between the general experience of communication anxiety across contexts, and the more isolated experience of anxiety in certain settings. Experts refer to this as the "state-trait" distinction. Wadleigh observes that trait-like apprehension is anxiety that endures across a wide range of communication situations.[72] It is a stable, individual difference or personality characteristic.[73] Regarding state anxiety, McCroskey writes that it is "specific to a given oral communication situation, such as giving a particular speech…or interviewing with an important person for a new job at a given time and place."[74] As Sawyer and Behnke summarize, the distinction between state and trait anxiety boils down to "'how do you generally feel?' and 'how do you feel at a given moment in time?'—usually, right now."[75]

The state-trait distinction developed as experts realized the difficulty of studying one communication context without distinguishing between the situational factors that incite anxious communication behaviors and thoughts and the general personality

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[70] Chris R. Sawyer and Ralph R. Behnke, "Communication State Anxiety," in *Avoiding Communication*, 87.
[71] Graham D. Bodie, "A Racing Heart, Rattling Knees, and Ruminative Thoughts: Defining, Explaining, and Treating Public Speaking Anxiety," *Communication Education* 59, no. 1 (January 2010): 71.
[72] Wadleigh, "Contextualizing Communication Avoidance Research," 13.
[73] Sawyer and Behnke, "Communication State Anxiety," 85.
[74] Wadleigh, "Contextualizing Communication Avoidance Research," 13.
[75] Sawyer and Behnke, "Communication State Anxiety," 85.

characteristics which can make someone more prone to anxiety in certain contexts. On the other hand, McCroskey, Richmond and McCroskey reject the distinction between state-trait apprehension as a false dichotomy,[76] and have expanded the distinction into a more helpful model. These researchers have conceived of CA on a continuum on which four types of communication anxiety can be placed. One side of the continuum is the extreme trait pole, and the other is the extreme state pole. According to the researchers, Traitlike CA "is viewed as a relatively enduring, personality-type orientation toward a given mode of communication across a wide variety of contexts." Generalized-Context CA "recognizes that people can be highly apprehensive about communicating in one type of context while having less or even no apprehension about communicating in another type of context." Fear of public speaking would be one example of Generalized-Context CA. Person-Group CA "represents the reactions of an individual to communicating with a given person or group of persons across time." And McCroskey et al. explain that State CA "represents the reactions of an individual to communicating with a given individual or group of individuals at a given time."[77] This continuum appears as follows:

Traitlike CA…...Generalized-Context CA.....Person-Group CA.....State CA.

Regardless of the proper way to conceive of the state-trait distinction, the construct has greatly impacted the trajectory of communication studies and will surface again in this review.

Causes

Concerning the precise cause of CA/PSA, the literature is complex. At the outset, several experts demonstrate that pinning down a precise etiology of communication

[76] McCroskey, Richmond and McCroskey, "Willingness to Communicate," 106.
[77] Ibid., 107-109.

apprehension is a difficult task, given the difficulty of performing controlled experimentation on research subjects.[78] Despite the difficulty of identifying a precise cause to CA/PSA, explanatory theories abound. John Daly, John Caughlin, and Laura Stafford summarize the four perspectives on the etiology of CA, noting also that how researchers conceptualize the primary cause of CA serves as a point of departure for subsequent research and theorizing. These four perspectives on developmental causes are (1) genetic predisposition, (2) reinforcement, (3) skill acquisition, and (4) modeling. Genetic disposition is the inborn tendency of people to manifest behaviors hard-wired into their brain. Reinforcement, based on a general learning model of personality formation, emphasizes the punishments and rewards children receive for certain communication attempts. [79] Skills acquisition explains CA as a result of poor communication development and training.[80] Lastly, modeling suggests that children tend to imitate their parents' anxious or non-anxious communication styles.[81]

While there is agreement that genetics, reinforcement, skills acquisition, and modeling are all possibly causes of CA, there is widespread (and vociferous) disagreement about which potential cause is the most determinative, and whether CA is the result of a single cause or multiple causes. For much of the history of the discipline, CA was believed to be a learned trait, resulting from environmental factors. This general trajectory shifted, however, with advances in psychobiology and brain-mapping research, which McCroskey et al. argue have "provided compelling evidence that something other than environmentally based learning is having an impact on human behavior

[78] Ibid., 113.
[79] Daly, Caughlin and Stafford, "Correlates and Consequences of Social-Communicative Anxiety," 29.
[80] Ibid., 31.
[81] Ibid.

tendencies."[82] Those in favor of this "communibiological" perspective on the genetic cause of CA point to twin studies, in which twins growing up in separate environments, with vastly different communication cultures, exhibit near identical levels of communication anxiety.[83] The shift towards heredity has also resulted from evidence that learned, environmental factors could account for only small increases in anxiety levels.[84] According to some, the data suggesting environmental causes is not only insufficiently high enough to adequately explain CA levels, but more likely the result of poorly conducted experimentation.[85]

The communibiological perspective on CA "holds that all forms of psychological functioning are products of brain activity,"[86] write Beatty and McCroskey. The perspective utilizes Gray's neurobiological model of emotion, including the behavioral inhibition system (BIS) and the behavioral approach system (BAS)—two neurological systems in the brain. According to Beatty and McCroskey, the BIS "responds to novel or threatening stimuli. When the BIS activates, arousal increases due to the systems' interconnection with the limbic system."[87] The BAS, on the other hand, "energizes goal-directed behavior, especially behavior related to the acquisition of rewards."[88] According to proponents, everyone has a BIS and BAS neurological system, but they differ in thresholds which activate the systems: "communication apprehension represents the emotional and behavioral manifestations of low thresholds for BIS activation and high

[82] McCroskey, Richmond and McCroskey, "Willingness to Communicate," 113.
[83] Ibid., 66.
[84] Ibid., 60.
[85] Beatty and McCroskey, "A Communibiological Perspective on Communication Apprehension," 65.
[86] Ibid., 55.
[87] Ibid., 56.
[88] Ibid.

thresholds for BAS activation."[89] This entire neurological process is understood by public-speaking experts as the after-effects of evolution, in which our emotions (located in the more primitive part of our brain) control our initial reaction to threatening stimuli, until the more evolved part of our brain (including the more logical neocortex) are able to "take over" with more rational thought.[90] Understood in an evolutionary construct, public speaking is an inherently vulnerable, risk-laden activity that separates speakers from the group, marking the speakers as targets of prey (or critics). The activity of public speaking thereby triggers ancient neurological processes which guard against the potential dangers of standing out from the group.[91] In common parlance, public speaking triggers a "fight, flight, or freeze" response as the more logical part of our brain (the neocortex)—the part that can deduce that there is nothing to fear in a normal public-speaking situation—is outpaced by the more primitive part of our brain, which is still guarding against the dangers of stepping out from the community, producing counter-productive responses in speakers in even non-threatening situations.[92]

While the communibiological perspective on CA has a tremendous amount of academic momentum, the perspective has its critics. Most accept that genetics plays a part, but argue that it cannot account for the improvement in public-speaking confidence seen in certain therapies. Wilcox quotes Condit, who states that "the Beatty-McCroskey communibiological model is overly simplistic, does not account for human intellect and adaptability, and wrongly discounts the influence of environment and learning on

[89] Ibid., 56-57.
[90] Ibid., 90.
[91] Fensholt, *The Francis Effect*, 18-32.
[92] Ibid., 16.

cognition."[93] This view is buttressed by the success in treatment of people who suffer from CA, regardless of the small improvements. McCroskey et al. point out that even advocates of the hereditability perspective see genetics as "the foundation for temperament, personality, and most communication traits"—not the sole cause of a person's behavior.[94] It is "the basis" for most communication traits, while most communication behaviors are learned responses to one's environment.[95] Even with this admission, though, communibiologists believe that while the genetic model is not the sole causal factor, 80-90 percent of causal variance in a person's CA levels is determined by heredity.[96]

While the nature vs. nurture debate is one theme in the literature concerning the causes of CA, another theme is the debate over single or multi-causality: Is CA the result of a single, hereditary cause or a variety of other causes? "Multicausalists" allow for hereditary and neurological factors, but argue for a more "interactionist" perspective, as does Ayres et al.: "An interactionist perspective holds that some aspects of CA are learned, some are essentially inherited, and some arise out of the overlap of the two."[97] These authors have developed a component theory in which four elements combine to determine a person's experience (or non-experience) of CA: (1) nervous system sensitivity, (2) self-perceived motivation, (3) negative evaluation, and (4) communication competence. Nervous system sensitivity "refers to the natural tendency of individuals to

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[93] Wilcox, "Communication Apprehension and Cognitions," 329.
[94] McCroskey, Richmond and McCroskey, "Willingness to Communicate," 114.
[95] Ibid., 123.
[96] Wadleigh, "Contextualizing Communication Avoidance Research," 21.
[97] Joe Ayres, et al., "A Component Theory of Communication Apprehension: Nervous System Sensitivity, Motivation, Negative Evaluation, and Communication Competence as Predictors of State Communication Apprehension," in *Avoiding Communication*, 68.

attend to their surroundings."[98] A higher level of nervous system sensitivity—which the authors would agree is the result of hereditary factors—tends to result in more apprehension in difficult scenarios, but it is not the sole cause. Ayres et al. point out that to proponents of Component Theory, the issue "is not which of these contributors is primary, but rather to what degree do these factors contribute to a given phenomenon (e.g., CA) in a given circumstance (e.g., public speaking.)"[99] Motivation, for example, is what allows a person to engage in an activity the person thinks is important despite negative feelings. The effect of motivation, therefore, serves to increase CA. The third element in the equation, negative evaluation, refers to the expectation that an audience will react negatively to a performance. Self-perceived communication competence, the third element in the equation, "can range from incompetent to competent."[100] The more incompetent a communicator feels (combined with other factors), the more apprehensive the speaker will feel about the situation. Ayres and his colleagues tested component theory to determine its accuracy in explaining peoples' experience of CA. According to them,

> The results of these investigations are quite promising. It appears that upward of 60% of the variance in CA can be accounted for by a combination of NSS, evaluation, motivation, and communication competence. To this point, we know of no other explanatory framework that accounts for variance of this magnitude in CA.[101]

In addition to the debate over genetics vs. environment and single vs. multi-causality, other themes exist in the literature regarding causes of CA. Most experts agree that while heredity, reinforcement, skills acquisition, and modeling all have some

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[98] Ibid., 69.
[99] Ibid., 68.
[100] Ibid., 71.
[101] Ibid., 83.

measureable effect on a person's experience of CA, certain situational variables have the potential to amplify anxiety levels.[102] These situational factors include the size and composition of audiences, the novelty or ambiguity of the speaking situation, and the degree of structure to the event.[103] McCroskey et al. cite Buss, who suggests that "the major elements in the situation that can result in an increased state CA are novelty, formality, subordinate status, conspicuousness, unfamiliarity, dissimilarity, and degree of attention from others. In most instances the opposite of these factors would be presumed to lead to decreased CA."[104] The authors also cite Daly and Hailey, who add two additional potential situational variables to heightened state CA: degree of evaluation and prior history.[105] In his own contribution, Michael Motley attributes much of a person's state CA to the "performance orientation" of most public-speaking situations. People tend to become anxious, writes the author, in situations that are overly formal, novel and unfamiliar, and in which the speaker is being evaluated and scrutinized.[106]

Sawyer and Behnke add that the intensity and type of stimuli will affect a person's CA level.[107] Presenting a speech to a large class for a major grade will stimulate high levels in reactive individuals, while the same speaker might be more energized in a smaller, less evaluative setting. McCroskey is careful to note, though, that these situational variables are not, in and of themselves, causes of state CA and goes on to explain that "what is reported as situation variability is merely a projection of individuals' predispositions to experience a given situation differently."[108]

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[102] Ibid., 88.
[103] Ibid.
[104] McCroskey, Richmond, and McCroskey, "Willingness to Communicate," 116.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Michael Motley, "COM Therapy," in *Avoiding Communication*, 339.
[107] Sawyer and Behnke, "Communication State Anxiety," 89.
[108] McCroskey, Richmond, and McCroskey, "Willingness to Communicate," 116.

A final theme in the literature regarding causes of CA might be called the "vicious cycle" nature of the problem. In summary, those who experience anxiety in communication tend to become more anxious as the problem reinforces itself. A speaker who is feeling nervous about a speech produces nervous behaviors, reinforcing the speaker's perception of his or herself, and thus producing a more agitated performance. To complicate things, as a nervous speaker unconsciously communicates their anxiety to an audience, the audience is made nervous on the speaker's behalf and exhibits nervousness back to the speaker, who is then made more nervous as the audience's discomfort increases. Alan Heisel and Michael Beatty explain that communicators perceive their own physiological symptoms of anxiety and "a cycle is created in which self-perceptions are assimilated into the predisposition, thereby reinforcing individuals' CA."[109] These nervous thoughts create physical symptoms which create more nervous thoughts, all the while making the audience more nervous as they listen to a nervous speaker.[110]

Symptoms & Correlates

In their essay, "Correlates and Consequences of Social-Communicative Anxiety," Daly et al. list three types of correlates that research suggests accompany a person with any form of communication apprehension. These types of correlates are personality correlates, social perceptions, and behavioral correlates.[111] Many of these correlates are more relevant than others to public-speaking anxiety as a sub-type of communication anxiety. Consequently, the researcher will highlight the correlates and symptoms that

[109] Alan D. Heisel and Michael J. Beatty, "Physiological Assessment," in *Avoiding Communication*, 198.
[110] Joe Ayres et al., "Visualization and Performance Visualization: Applications, Evidence, and Speculation," in *Avoiding Communication*, 385.
[111] Daly, Caughlin, and Stafford, "Correlates and Consequences of Social-Communicative Anxiety," 23-50.

appear more directly related to PSA, while acknowledging those high in PSA also tend to struggle with SCA/CA in general, experiencing the same sort of general behavioral and communication correlations linked to SCA/CA. The researcher will use Daly's basic framework, summarizing the research, while integrating the opinions and observations of others regarding the symptoms and correlates of SCA/CA.

Personality correlates include the "various personality and demographic variables" studied in relation to those with CA, and are broken down into gender differences, self-esteem, social-personality variables, and other variables.[112] Researchers have yet to identify a clear relationship between a person's gender and their inclination towards CA.[113] Researchers have consistently demonstrated, however, an inverse relationship between social-communicative anxiety and self-esteem. Daly states that "this relationship is one of the most consistent in the literature of social-communicative anxiety. Regardless of how either anxiety or esteem is operationalized, the inverse relationship holds."[114] People who suffer from CA have low opinions of themselves. Additionally, research demonstrates that as a person's level of CA elevates, they are less socially-oriented: less likely to self-disclose, less assertive, uncertain about strangers, more lonely, etc.[115] CA is also correlated to other non-communicative personality factors, including negative factors such as neuroticism, negative emotionalism, lower personal income, higher alcohol dependence, allergies and gastrointestinal functioning, and positive factors such as the ability to shift attention between different tasks, emotional

[112] Ibid., 32.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid., 33.
[115] Ibid., 33-34.

regulation, positive affect, constructive coping, and resilience. CA is not necessarily related, however, to intelligence, as the research is "somewhat inconsistent."[116]

Regarding social perceptions, the authors subdivide the research on correlations into the following groups: judgments made by others towards anxious communicators, judgments of others made by anxious individuals, and feelings anxious individuals have about themselves. To summarize the data on perceptions made by others' towards anxious communicators, perceptions are negative. In innumerable studies conducted in various ways, and cited by Daly et al., "the highly anxious person is perceived as less socially and interpersonally attractive…more lonely…a more difficult person about whom to process personality information…less approachable and intelligent…more tense, inhibited, and unfriendly…."[117] The only exception to the generally negative perceptions held by others toward those with CA is McCroskey et al.'s research which suggests that those with high levels of CA are perceived as "higher in character."[118] Other researchers have demonstrated that highly anxious communicators are viewed as less hostile, and perceived to be better listeners.[119] Concerning how nervous communicators perceive others and themselves, Daly et al. point out that shy people are very concerned about the impressions others have of them and try to avoid drawing attention to themselves or volunteering for tasks in which they might perform poorly.[120] They write furthermore that highly anxious communicators "overestimate the negative reactions of audience members to their presentations."[121] Generally speaking, the research indicates

[116] Ibid., 35-36.
[117] Ibid., 38.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid., 38-39.
[120] Ibid., 40
[121] Ibid., 42.

that socially-communicative anxious people have lower opinions of themselves, their abilities in general, their communicative abilities in particular, as well as lower opinions of what they perceive others' opinions of them to be.[122]

The behavioral correlates associated with CA are broken down into general communication findings, verbal tendencies, and physiological correlates. Dozens of researchers, summarized by Daly et al., have consistently found, for example, that "anxiety is inversely related to the frequency and duration of talking done by people…especially when the anxious individual anticipates evaluation…or believes the context is unsupportive."[123] This observation applies to a variety of different settings, as researchers have found that anxious communicators avoid discussions, don't volunteer in class, and struggle to make successful arguments.[124] Researchers have confirmed that nervous communicators speak to groups at different speeds than when alone,[125] but the content of a person's speech is also different. Highly anxious people

> make more negative and fewer positive self-statements, are less comprehensible, exhibit greater tension,…offer more irrelevant statements,…use less immediate language, exhibit more restricted and unvaried language, utter more rhetorical interrogatives (such as "You know?" and "You see?"),…and offer less self-disclosure.[126]

Anthony Mulac, in his essay on behavioral assessment of those with CA, identifies four communication behaviors associated with nervousness: rigidity (being stiff and unrelaxed), inhibition (self-consciousness), disfluency (lack of skillfulness in speaking), and agitation (emotional discomfort).[127] Daly makes the same observations,

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[122] Ibid., 43.
[123] Ibid., 47.
[124] Ibid., 47-48.
[125] Ibid., 48.
[126] Ibid., 48-49.
[127] Anthony Mulac et al., "Behavioral Assessment," in *Avoiding Communication*, 213.

that anxiety "is positively associated with disfluencies and speech errors, nervous smiling and gestures in speeches, face-covering, body blocking, postural tension, rigidity, and stiffness while giving speeches, longer latencies of verbal response and greater silences, and more verbal repetitions."[128] McCroskey et al. summarize the behavioral effects of communication anxiety as one of three: communication avoidance, communication withdrawal, and communication disruption.[129] Communication avoidance involves people choosing the "flight" response over the "fight" response, and turning down speaking opportunities or sitting in the back of the classroom. Communication withdrawal occurs when a person cannot avoid having to communicate, but talks "only as much as absolutely required." In public-speaking settings, McCroskey et al. continue, "this response may be represented by the very short speech."[130] Communication disruption is evident when a communicator has "disfluencies in verbal presentation or unnatural nonverbal behaviors. Equally as likely are poor choices of communicative strategies, sometimes reflected in the after-the-fact 'I wish we had (had not) said…' phenomenon."[131]

Finally, the apparent physiological symptoms of communication anxiety are obvious to anyone who has ever had to give a speech. Heisel and Beatty state the common assumption that underneath psychological research on communication behaviors is the belief that observable behaviors are caused by physiological arousal. They go on to say that "at an intuitive level, the mention of communication apprehension (CA) evokes images of certain physiological reactions. Indeed, those of us who have taught public-

[128] Daly, Caughlin, and Stafford, "Correlates and Consequences of Social-Communicative Anxiety," 48.
[129] McCroskey, Richmond, and McCroskey, "Willlingness to Communicate," 121.
[130] Ibid., 122.
[131] Ibid.

speaking courses have observed the trembling hands and flushed neck of nervous students during their performances."[132] These authors would also add elevated heart-rate to this list of observable behaviors,[133] while Ayres et al. also adds "sweating and shaking."[134] When it comes to physiological symptoms of CA, a new theme in the literature is the "narrowbanding" of these symptoms (something to be discussed further in the measurement section.) Researchers are increasingly using narrowbanding measurement techniques to monitor subjects at specific (narrow) moments in communication encounters to identify patterns of anxiety as they occur, for example, in a public speaking event. Sawyer and Behnke observe that symptoms of communication anxiety are different depending on the precise moment of the speech, noting also a pattern among most communicators. In one test, the cardiovascular patterns of speakers were monitored before, during, and after a speech, producing a changing pattern over the course of the speech. In cardiovascular terms, speakers are very calm before a speech, producing a rapidly rising level of anxiety as they begin to speak, and then declining in arousal level until the end of the speech.[135] The authors note that implications of this narrowbanded research could be important in terms of remediation, as speakers would be well-served to prepare especially for the very first part of the speech, "thereby avoiding some of the negative consequences associated with a false start."[136]

Of course, this discussion of physiological symptoms is not without nuance. Heisel and Beatty note the "complex relationship between physiological arousal and

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[132] Heisel and Beatty, "Physiological Assessment," 193.
[133] Ibid., 198.
[134] Ayres et al., "Visualization and Performance Visualization," 385.
[135] Sawyer and Behnke, "Communication State Anxiety," 92.
[136] Ibid.

CA."[137] Wilcox elaborates that physiological symptoms do not necessarily indicate communication anxiety: "[W]hat is interpreted as excitement by one person is labeled as fear or apprehension by another." As she says, this problem of interpretation "poses a thorny problem for social scientists."[138] Again, McCroskey et al. argue that no single behavioral symptom serves as a universal indicator of CA. As CA is experienced internally by the individual, "the only effect of CA that is predicted to be universal across both individuals and types of CA is an internally experienced feeling of discomfort. The lower the CA, the less the internal discomfort."[139] According to these researchers, there is an imperfect relationship between people's cognitions and their levels of physiological arousal, meaning that physiological symptoms mean different things for different communicators.

In summary, while the data is vast and complicated, a general profile of the nervous speaker does emerge. After summarizing the extensive data, Daly et al. concludes that

> the portrait these personality correlates paint is of a socially anxious individual with tendencies to be lower in self-esteem, less socially oriented, less assertive and dominant, less achieving academically, and more lonely, withdrawn, and self-conscious than a socially nonanxious person. Perceptually, highly anxious people are perceived, and perceive themselves, less positively than do nonanxious individuals. Attributionally, they tend to take less credit for their successes and more credit for their failures than their counterparts low in the anxiety. Behaviorally, the anxiety is positively related to avoidance of social experiences and, when communication is required, reduced involvement both in terms of quantity and quality.[140]

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[137] Heisel and Beatty, "Physiological Assessment," 196.
[138] Wilcox, "Communication Apprehension and Cognitions," 330.
[139] McCroskey, Richmond, and McCroskey, "Willingness to Communicate," 120.
[140] Daly, Caughlin, and Stafford, "Correlates and Consequences of Social-Communicate Anxiety," 49-50.

Measurement

While the homiletical literature gives no attention to the measurement of CA, the public-speaking literature, as a sub-set of social science, gives serious attention to the techniques and tools available in the diagnosis and measuring of the problem. Aside from conforming to the general scientific standards of modern research (an expectation most homileticians do not feel confined to), researchers also point out that people tend to fix (or try to fix) what they measure. Mulac et al. argue for a combination of both behavioral and self-report measurements so that remediation techniques take into account both the internal experience of communication anxiety and the observable behaviors seen by others.

While the matter of measurement is important, it is (of course) not simple. Three important questions emerge in the literature regarding measurement:

1. Who is measuring?

2. What is being measured?

3. How should what is being measured be measured?

When it comes to the first question of who should measure CA, there are two obvious possibilities: the communicator or observers of the communicator. Self-report assessments are the most common. McCroskey et al. argue for the priority of self-measurement, given that CA is experienced internally by the speaker. Hence, they explain, self-reports provide "the only potentially valid measures of CA."[141] According to the researchers, measuring physiological activation and observations of behavior only provides indirect evidence of CA, given the previously-mentioned "imperfect

[141] McCroskey, Richmond, and McCroskey, "Willingness to Communicate," 120.

relationship" between CA and physiology."[142] While the author believes self-assessments are to be preferred, they are limited in what exactly they can tell the researcher. McCroskey et al. explain that while "the best way to find out something about someone is simply ask her or him," what a researcher hears from that person "is true only if the person *knows the answer* and *is willing to tell you the truth."*[143] For this reason, other researchers continue to employ behavioral and physiological assessments, delivered by others. Mulac et al. note the importance of having observers measure a communicator, given the fact that anxiety is primarily a result of the degree to which a speaker believes an audience may (or may not) judge the speaker to be competent.[144]

Regarding the question of what's being measured, researchers have three options: physiological arousal, behavioral disruption, and cognitive comfort or discomfort.[145] Wilcox states simply that cognition (a person's neurological activity at the moment of anxiety) is just too hard to measure: "[O]bjective observation of cognition remains beyond present capabilities…."[146] Physiology during communication, however, is observable and measurable. Using a variety of instruments, researchers measure physiological responses that are most likely associated with fear or anxiety reactions in communication settings.[147] These responses include heart rate, skin conductivity, palmar sweating, and even brain temperature, which can indicate an increase of blood flow to the brain.[148] Other physiological indicators of CA that researchers would like to measure but have not yet discovered how include muscle tension, respiration depth and frequency,

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[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid., 176.
[144] Mulac et al., "Behavioral Assessment," 205.
[145] James McCroskey, "Self-Report Measurement," in *Avoiding Communication,* 172.
[146] Wilcox, "Communication Apprehension and Cognitions," 335.
[147] Heisel and Beatty, "Physiological Assessment," 194.
[148] Ibid., 194-95.

skin temperature, and brain-wave activity.[149] The benefits of measuring physiological indicators are obvious, the most specific benefit being that researchers get a clearer picture of what's actually happening to a person during an anxious communication experience. At the same time, McCroskey observes that for a variety of reasons, measuring physiology during public speaking is difficult to do and hard to interpret.[150] Measuring physiology accurately during a public speaking event requires more skill and training than what most public speaking teachers and even scientists have.[151] Results can be hard to interpret because, as McCroskey writes, "[a]rousal does not equal anxiety; arousal simply equals arousal. Considerable research indicates that people who report experiencing anxiety and people who report feeling exhilaration can have highly similar arousal levels."[152] For this reason, many researchers prefer behavioral assessments administered by observers. Many assessments are designed to help observers identify commonly-understood communication or behavior patterns which could indicate anxiety. Mulac mentions the Behavioral Assessment of Speech Anxiety (BASA), which allows onlookers to assess a speaker's rigidity, inhibition, disfluency, and agitation.[153] Predictably, some researchers caution against behavioral assessments, pointing out that different speakers convey anxiety through different behaviors.[154] Not every nervous speaker will have shaking hands or appear stiff and rigid.

The final question regarding measurement concerns the manner of assessment: how should anxiety be measured? The answer to this question also depends on what

[149] Ibid., 195.
[150] McCroskey, "Self-Report Measurement," 173.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Mulac et al., "Behavioral Assessment," 213.
[154] McCroskey, "Self-Report Measurement," 174.

exactly is being tested. If physiology is being tested, physiological tests are given. However, when it comes to behavioral or self-assessments, communication experts have offered a variety of inventories dealing with every sort of communication anxiety, including the Personal Report as a Speaker (PRCS), the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA), and the Audience Anxiousness (AA) scale.[155] All these assessments have been demonstrated reliable in subsequent tests.[156] Given researchers' recent interest in narrowbanding—in which a person's experience of CA can be narrowed down to specific moments—new measurement tools have been created, such as the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI A-State), which measures anxiety levels at specific moments during a speech. Sawyer and Behnke explain that measuring anxiety levels more narrowly "increases predictive validity by focusing on a restricted range of activity."[157] Consequently, McCroskey's Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA), developed in 1984, includes focused subscales that measure anxiety in narrowed public-speaking contexts.[158]

Remediation

The issue of remediation for people suffering from CA is a tricky problem for both the researcher and the practitioner (not to mention the sufferer). Given the commonality of communication fears throughout the general population, the debilitating nature of those anxieties, and the importance of being able to communicate in a variety of public situations for a variety of important reasons, communication experts understand the importance of identifying effective CA therapies. McCroskey et al. insist that "CA

[155] Ibid., 186.
[156] Ibid., 178-191.
[157] Sawyer and Behnke, "Communication State Anxiety," 91.
[158] Ibid., 92.

must be considered a central concern of any instructional program concerned with more effective communication as a targeted outcome."[159] (In this researcher's opinion, preaching professors should take note.) However, whether or not CA can be treated to any significant effect is a hotly debated question in the communication literature. In her essay summarizing the methods of treatment for CA, along with their success rates, Chia-Fang (Sandy) Hsu observes that

> in recent years there has been a marked difference in the opinion of the value of interventions to reduce communication apprehension (CA). A few scholars argued that intervention research has little merit with small effect sizes and flawed designs. Others, however, emphasized the important role of treatments in reducing CA.[160]

While acknowledging the importance of CA education in instructional settings, McCroskey et al. also doubt the effectiveness of most treatment programs. This perspective derives mostly from their opinion that CA levels are hereditary and not learned. Consequently, "because learning is, at most, a minor factor in the development of CA, additional learning (or relearning) can be expected to produce no more than a minor change in our CA. This is why highly touted behavior modification approaches…produce relatively small changes in CA."[161] Whatever statistics experts might offer supporting the idea that therapy works, these communibiologists—such as McCroskey et al.—would argue that "reductions of CA in intervention research are the results of experimental artifacts or demands, not treatment effects."[162] In other words, the experiments were done poorly.

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[159] McCroskey, Richmond, and McCroskey, "Willingness to Communicate," 124.
[160] Chia-Fang (Sandy) Hsu, "Treatment Assessment of Communication Apprehension: A Meta-analytic Review," in *Avoiding Communication*, 257.
[161] McCroskey, Richmond, and McCroskey, "Willingness to Communicate," 115.
[162] Hsu, "Treatment Assessment of Communication Apprehension," 264.

On the other hand, a second set of experts have taken up the challenge to demonstrate that therapy can actually reduce communication apprehension levels. After confirming the reliability of the methodology of several experiments testing communication apprehension, Hsu concludes that with the exception of one testing method, "all treatments were found to have either a medium or large effect on self-report CA." [163] Additionally, she noted that one therapy type had "a large effect in reducing behavioral rigidity and agitation." [164] Of course, not all therapies proved equally valuable, and according to the researcher, none of the tests reduced disfluency.

While the debate over the effectiveness of CA treatment rages on, most researchers would agree that treatments should be selected according to the nature of the problem. Not all CA problems are created alike. McCroskey et al. argue, for example, that four types of CA exist, along two crossing continuums. In addition to experiencing either high or low levels of CA, communicators are also either skilled or unskilled at communication. These two factors combine to create four types of CA in communicators, evident in the table below:

		Communication Skill Level	
		Satisfactory Skill Level	Unsatisfactory Skill Level
CA Levels	Low	1 – Rational	2 – Non-rational
	High	3 – Non-rational	4 – Rational

In McCroskey's table, the combination of skill level and apprehension levels combine to form four CA conditions, which are either "rational" or "non-rational." CA is "rational"

[163] Ibid., 273.
[164] Ibid.

in that it makes sense, from an objective observer's perspective, or is "non-rational" in that it doesn't make sense given the skills of the communicator. Condition 1 is low apprehension and satisfactory skill. This is a rational condition given that someone high in skill and low in apprehension has an objective understanding of their situation (e.g., in a helpful basketball analogy, the author compares these people to basketball players who are skillful free throw shooters and do not get nervous about it.) Condition 1 requires no treatment. Condition 2 is low apprehension and low skill. This is non-rational in that a poor speaker should be experiencing high CA, but does not (e.g., these people are poor free throw shooters in basketball, but are not nervous about it.) The treatment they require is skills training. Those with condition 3 have high levels of CA and high skills. This is a non-rational condition, given that people high in skills should not experience CA (e.g., they shoot well in practice, but not in games.) Treatment programs for those with this condition should emphasize cognitive therapy, not communications skills. Condition 4 includes high apprehension and low skills. This is a rational condition, given that people with low communication skills should feel apprehensive about communicating (e.g., they are poor free throw shooters in practice and are very nervous about it in games.) They should receive both cognitive and skills training.[165]

In summary, scholars do not necessarily agree on the effectiveness of treatment programs, but would agree on the importance of tailoring remediation programs to the particular type of CA experienced. In this section, then, the researcher will summarize each of the major approaches to CA treatment, noting their advantages and potential disadvantages. The researcher will also include a brief summary of the available data regarding that treatment's effectiveness in reducing CA levels. The treatments to be

[165] McCroskey, Richmond, and McCroskey, "Willingness to Communicate," 117-119.

summarized are Systematic Desensitization (SD), Skills Training (ST), Cognitive-Orientation Modification (COM) Therapy, Visualization/Performance Visualization, and Multidimensional Therapy.

Systematic Desensitization (SD) is summarized by Hsu as a process in which "individuals learn deep muscle relaxation while being exposed to anxiety-eliciting stimuli."[166] It is performed by an expert trained in SD, who leads the subject into a state of physical relaxation, through deep breathing and muscle relaxation. The counselor then gradually describes certain situations that are increasingly anxiety-provoking, training the subject to relax as the described situation elicits greater levels of anxiety. According to Lane et al., SD "works best when the problem is situation-specific (e.g., public speaking as opposed to a more generalized dysfunction) and when the problem does not reflect a major skills deficit."[167] The authors state confidently that "there is little doubt that communication apprehension is learned and that it is a behavioral problem that can be treated successfully by SD."[168] The reasons for SD's supposed success, though, have not been identified. Lane et al. hypothesize that it may include reciprocal inhibition (in which relaxation inhibits the anxiety response), habituation (in which an anxious response wanes as a stimulus reoccurs), and/or conscious coping (in which people simply become aware of their anxiety and learn to cope with it).[169]

Skills Training (ST) was originally introduced into the field as a coping strategy for socially-anxious situations, but has been narrowly applied to public speaking.[170] This therapy rests on the premise that many people get nervous about public speaking because

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[166] Hsu, "Treatment Assessment of Communication Apprehension," 258.
[167] Derek R. Lane, et al., "Systematic Desensitization," in *Avoiding Communication*, 286.
[168] Ibid., 288.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Kelly and Keaton, "Skills Training as a Treatment for Communication Problems," 294.

they lack public-speaking skills. Kelly and Keaton quote Curran who argues that skills deficit is a primary cause of CA.[171] ST can include a variety of types of speaking instruction, but Glaser observed that skills training programs "generally consist of the following components: (a) direct instruction and coaching, (b) modeling, (c) goal setting, (d) covert rehearsal, (e) behavioral rehearsal, and (f) self-monitoring."[172] Kelly and Keaton (quoting Robison) observe that ST is the preferred treatment in college speech classes. After reviewing the research on ST, the authors conclude that "the research…supports the effectiveness of ST in reducing self-reported and behavioral manifestations in public speaking competence."[173] It is not the most successful treatment method identified, however, and is recommended by the authors as only one component in a more varied CA treatment program.

Cognitive-Orientation Modification (COM) therapy is a very interesting and newly developed treatment. COM therapy helps a communicator change his or her perspective on the expectations of an audience and the preferred manner of communication. In his essay, Michael Motley summarizes the theoretical basis for the treatment:

> The primary assumption of the COM approach is that different public speakers have different "cognitive orientations" toward public speaking—that is, differing perspectives regarding the speaker's goals and the audience's demands. Two such perspectives are identified in particular—a *performance* orientation and a *communication* orientation. Thus, the COM technique concentrates on persuading high-PSA individuals to abandon their performance orientation in favor of a communication orientation.[174]

[171] Ibid., 295.
[172] Ibid., 298.
[173] Ibid., 314.
[174] Motley, "COM Therapy," 337-338.

Motley believes that a communicator's perception of the audience's expectations is what exacerbates PSA levels. In the minds of many communicators, an audience expects a "performance." This perspective includes factors that tend to promote anxiety, including formality, novelty, evaluation, and scrutiny.[175] Contrary to this perspective, a "communication perspective" emphasizes the fact that most audience members are not expecting a performance but the successful delivery of information. As Motley writes, "a communication orientation views public speaking as a situation calling for one's ordinary everyday communication behaviors in an effort to *reach* audience members with respect to the topic and *information* of the speech. Within a communication orientation, public speaking becomes somewhat analogous to everyday conversation."[176] According to Motley, audiences are much more interested in understanding what a speaker is saying, and why it matters, than they are "scrutinizing or evaluating the speaker."[177]

In order to help a communicator shift their perspective from performance to communication, a COM therapist will encourage speakers to communicate "directly" with the audience, using the same vocal and kinesic behaviors used in ordinary conversations.[178] An initial round of controlled tests of COM therapy among college students yielded positive results. Among those students treated with COM therapy, and using McCroskey's PRPSA instrument, PSA levels were lowered by thirty-four points. Further tests are needed, however, and Motley has also observed an important limitation of the COM therapeutic technique: public speakers will only feel more comfortable with a normal, conversational approach in public speaking (as opposed to a more literary,

[175] Ibid., 339.
[176] Ibid., 338.
[177] Ibid., 339.
[178] Ibid., 340.

performance-oriented approach) if they feel comfortable with normal, everyday conversation.

Visualization is defined by Ayres et al. as "nonverbal processes people use to create or recreate sensations associated with real or hypothetical experiences."[179] The technique was first noticed and described by Garfield, a scientist working on the Apollo moon project, who observed the peak levels of performance among the astronauts and other participants.[180] Garfield theorized that much of this peak performance had to do with their abilities to visualize the end result of the project. He went on to argue that "if an event is imagined vividly enough, one's body cannot tell the difference between the real and the imagined event."[181] On this basis, advocates believe that fear can be reduced as a communicator is able to visualize an event, through the use of therapists and scripts which can coach a speaker through a visualized event. People high in PSA can visualize a public-speaking situation in which they are more in control than an actual situation, which can alter cognitions and "supplant previous experiences."[182]

However, while data suggests that visualization can reduce a person's experience of PSA, there is "no evidence on whether visualization alters behavior during a speech."[183] In other words, a speaker might be more comfortable speaking after visualizing him or herself being more in control, but this might not affect his or her actual speech, except by the indirect consequences of feeling less nervous. For this reason, "performance visualization" has been developed as a next-generation attempt to improve on the benefits of visualization. In performance visualization, a speaker not only

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[179] Ayres, et al., "Visualization and Performance Visualization," 375.
[180] Ibid., 376.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid., 383.

visualizes him or herself in control of a public-speaking situation, but visualizes him or herself making strong rhetorical decisions. The difference between visualization and performance visualization is the difference between a tennis player imagining herself delivering a confident serve and imagining herself properly delivering a confident serve.[184] The authors conclude that performance visualization reduces rhetorical rigidity, disfluencies, and inhibition more than simple visualization.[185]

Finally, the Multidimensional model for CA therapy is based on the idea that a variety of treatments exist to help a variety of people, and that, as Kangas Dwyer writes in her essay, "[N]o single intervention will work for everyone."[186] She also notes the difficulty of even knowing which intervention will work for any one individual.[187] Multidimensional therapy, however, is not a shotgun approach which indiscriminately tries everything on anyone. The treatment program exists on the premise that anxiety is experienced in different personality dimensions, and that not all therapies may directly treat a person's anxiety levels. As Kangas Dwyer discusses in the Multidimensional Model, "individuals are taught to find the initiating personality dimension or modality involved in their anxiety and then to select a technique or techniques fitted to that personality dimension."[188] She uses a common tool to subdivide a person's personality dimensions, in order to focus their treatment more specifically to the way CA presents. The personality tool is known as the B.A.S.I.C. I.D. and includes seven interactive personality dimensions (or modalities): B=Behavior, A=Affect, S=Sensation, I=Imagery,

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[184] Ibid., 384.
[185] Ibid., 389.
[186] Kangas Dwyer, "The Multidimensional Model for Selecting Interventions," 360.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid., 359.

C=Cognition, I=Interpersonal Relationships, D=Drug and Biological Functions.[189] In Multidimensional therapy (with the guidance of a trained therapist), a communicator learns to track the firing order of CA as it presents in various personality dimensions. This process allows a speaker to get to the root of the problem, after which treatment is designed and selected to stop apprehension as it initially presents in the speaker. The therapeutic process is not much different from a game of dominos. If a speaker can keep CA from affecting the first component of her or his personality during a stressful situation, the rest of his or her personality may be less affected.[190]

All authors who describe their preferred treatment also tend to offer data demonstrating the effectiveness of the treatment in some circumstances. With so many opinions and so much data, Hsu summarizes the results of six therapies (Systematic Desensitization, Visualization, Performance Visualization, COM therapy, Multidimensional therapy, and Skills training), while also accounting for the quality of research design. In her assessment, all treatments reduced trait CA in self-reports. Four treatments reduced state CA, also in self-reports.[191] Both COM therapy and Multidimensional therapy did not reduce state CA. Only Performance Visualization was reported to have a significant impact on behavioral rigidity and agitation.[192]

Biblical Literature: Nervous Speakers in Scripture

The third genre of literature research is biblical commentators and their interpretation of the examples of nervous speakers in scripture. Since the early days of the Old Testament, many well-known prophets and preachers have experienced some

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[189] Ibid., 361-62.
[190] Ibid., 369.
[191] Hsu, "Treatment Assessment of Communication Apprehension," 261.
[192] Ibid., 273.

version of PSA, and their experiences have served subsequent generations of Christian communicators. Such an interpretation of these stories may seem anachronistic, given that biblical authors were not familiar with public-speaking literature and were not researching PSA, CA, or SCA. As will be seen, however, the strong parallels between the situations of nervous preachers in scripture and modern descriptions of PSA make these stories relevant to the topic, especially given their role in the context of Christian preaching. Consequently, four communicators will be introduced, along with the commentary discussion of their situation and its relevance to contemporary preachers suffering from PSA. These communicators are Moses (Exod. 4:10-12), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-10), Jesus' disciples (Mk. 13:11), and Paul (I Cor. 2:1-5). The commentary concerning each passage will be summarized, using the same outline found in *The NIV Application Commentary* series. In this commentary series, the editors interpret a text in three sections: Original Meaning, Bridging Contexts, and Contemporary Significance. In the Original Meaning section, a commentator summarizes the meaning of the text to the original audience. In the Bridging Contexts section, the commentary draws timely and timeless truths from the passage. In the Contemporary Significance section, the author applies the timeless truths from the passage to specific modern situations.

Moses (Exodus 4:10-12)

> [10]But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." [11]Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? [12]Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.[193]

In Exodus chapters three and four, Yahweh reveals himself to Moses and directs him to travel to Egypt, speak with Pharaoh, and secure the freedom of God's people,

[193] Exodus 4:10-12.

trapped in slavery. Moses is intimidated by this task, and reluctant to obey. Ryken writes that God's program of deliverance "required a public spokesperson with the oratorical abilities to persuade the world's most powerful leader to do something he had no intention of doing."[194] To this challenge, the future prophet offers an increasingly desperate list of excuses designed to change God's mind about his choice of deliverer. Verse ten is Moses' fourth question, or his "last objection."[195] The ESV records Moses reminding God that he is not "eloquent"—either in the past or since God first began speaking to Moses—and that he is "slow of speech and tongue." As Peter Enns writes in *The NIV Application Commentary*, the Hebrew text is more literally translated to read, "I am not a man of words…I am heavy [dull] of mouth and heavy [dull] of tongue."[196]

Moses' precise meaning is difficult to understand, and interpreters have offered a variety of opinions: perhaps Moses had a stuttering problem, or that in his time away from Egypt he had lost mastery of the Egyptian language, or that he had lost the necessary diplomacy skills for this assignment.[197] The early theologian Origen did not necessarily believe Moses spoke without eloquence, but simply recognized the feebleness of his speech compared to the eloquence and power of the divine voice.[198] James Kennedy offers another interpretation, that Moses' problem is not physical, but emotional. He writes that Moses "did not possess talent equal to the task. He could not comply with the divine directive to implead the pharaoh for the release of Israel, for what

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[194] Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory,* Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 114.
[195] J.A. Motyer, *The Message of Exodus,* The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2005), 79.
[196] Peter Enns, *Exodus,* NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 11.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Scott M. Langston, *Exodus Through the Centuries,* Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 64.

that task would require he was not adequately endowed to give."[199] In a different vein altogether, Douglas Stewart theorizes that Moses' statement here should not be taken literally, as an indication of any rhetorical or linguistic challenges. Noting that Moses proves to be quite the speaker, and that no subsequent OT narrative comments on his supposed speech difficulties, Stewart believes Moses is offering "a ritual protest."[200] The key to Moses' protest "lies not in physiology but in culture—in a style of ancient Near Eastern 'exaggerated humility,' often employed in situations where one is appealing for help or mercy from someone else or showing one's mannerly self-deprecation at being given a great assignment."[201] Enns takes a middle-path, suggesting that Moses' reluctance is a combination of "true humility" and "simple stubbornness."[202] Ryken is more cynical, however, stating that whatever the reasons for Moses' objections, they are all a smokescreen given that what Moses has is not a speaking problem but "an obedience problem."[203] Regardless of the nature of the issue, there is a more theological problem behind Moses' reluctance, which Enns describes as the assumption Moses makes in who will be delivering the Israelites from Egypt. The pressure Moses feels about this assignment derives mostly from his mistaken conclusion that he, not God, is responsible for the mission's success.[204] As Enns writes, "Moses has not yet learned that salvation is of the Lord."[205]

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[199] James Hardee Kennedy, *The Commission of Moses and the Christian Calling* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 62.
[200] Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus,* The New American Commentary 2 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2006), 134.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Enns, *Exodus,* 114.
[203] Ryken, *Exodus,* 114.
[204] Enns, *Exodus,* 111.
[205] Ibid.

God's initial response to Moses' protest is a set of rhetorical questions that he then answers: "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"[206] Enns interprets this verse as a statement of sovereign control,[207] in which God reminds Moses that the One who makes all things (including men's mouths and the ability to speak and see) is not challenged by the prophet's speech difficulties. Yahweh is the Creator who, as Motyer writes, is "able to give gifts or make good deficiencies."[208] As Ryken writes, "God made [Moses] exactly the way he wanted,"[209] with the exact gift set he had been given, and with God's help these gifts were sufficient for the task.

Despite his protests, God reissues the command and gives reassurance of the divine aid Moses can expect: "Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."[210] Given God's sovereign power, Moses has no choice but to obey, and also receives Yahweh's promise to be with him and assist him in the task. Ryken observes that Moses' assignment is not to conjure up impressive speeches, but to simply faithfully report whatever God gave him to say.[211] God made no promise to remove his impediment or solve his undiagnosed problem.[212] Rather, Ryken explains, God "told him the only thing that mattered, which was that God would be with him."[213]

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[206] Exodus 4:11.
[207] Enns, *Exodus,* 110.
[208] Motyer, *The Message of Exodus,* 79.
[209] Ryken, *Exodus,* 116.
[210] Exodus 4:12.
[211] Ryken, *Exodus,* 115.
[212] Ibid., 118.
[213] Ibid.

Motyer refers to this as "the Lord's masterful presence,"[214] while Kennedy sees "the adequacy of divine resources."[215] Fretheim summarizes the episode:

> God knows Moses' speech abilities well, but God still calls Moses to this task, because God is able to work even with the ineloquent in bringing the word of God to others. God, then, does not correct Moses' speech difficulties; there is no divine surgery in view here. Rather, God works in and through real human impediments to further the divine purposes. A constant reality for God![216]

Plenty of interpreters have sought to draw out timeless truths from this moment in the call of Moses (*The NIV Application Commentary's* "Bridging Contexts" section). Firstly, the story of Moses' call is one of several call-stories in the Old Testament in which the direct command of God gives authority to the prophet's words and unction to the prophet himself. Enns writes that it is understandable that Moses would be overwhelmed at the direct request of God to free a nation from slavery, especially when this God is speaking in the form of a burning bush. In fact, this episode—as well as Moses' questions and objections—"serve to draw out more concretely the nature of God's continued presence with Moses and the manner in which his power will be displayed."[217] When God calls a preacher or prophet, the subsequent doubt, dialogue, and dispute can have the effect of confirming the servant's calling and revealing the power and presence of God in an ever-deepening way.

Secondly, commentators note God's preference for people plagued with feelings of inadequacy. There is a reason that people such as Moses are selected for prophetic work. As Enns writes, God "surprises the ill-prepared and calls them out of unlikely

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[214] Motyer, *The Message of Exodus,* 80.
[215] Kennedy, *The Commission of Moses and the Christian Calling,* 58.
[216] Terrence E. Fretheim, *Exodus,* Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1991), 71.
[217] Enns, *Exodus,* 118.

settings precisely to leave no doubt that it is his power and might that is at work."[218] And of course, those who are especially dependent on the grace and power of God to fulfill their duties tend to remain so even as their ministry gains success. Thirdly, a continuing theme in the literature is the invisible presence of God, who provides support and instruction to his servants. While God did not promise success or a magical granting of rhetorical abilities, he did promise to "be with"[219] Moses along the way. Motyer writes that God "offered nothing but that he himself is the accompanying Lord,"[220] and he "meets us in our frailties."[221] Enns also writes that "God meets us where we are."[222] What these authors describe from the story of Moses' call is that God's presence can be seen and experienced as his prophets respond in faith to difficult assignments. Finally, the story of Moses' call emphasizes the importance of humble obedience. Motyer writes that the primary hallmark of God's people is not skill or pedigree, but obedience to God's word. In the end, Moses had to go.[223]

Regarding the application of these themes to contemporary situations—especially the problem of CA—most interpreters do not seem incredibly interested in drawing out specific application of the call of Moses to our modern-day lives. They are content to summarize the content or identify timeless truths. At least Enns sees the application of Moses' call to pastors and preachers who "feel weighed down by the responsibilities of their calling, perhaps to the point where they doubt the calling itself." [224] The author continues that the doubt such pastors experience can often arise from the size of their

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[218] Ibid.
[219] Exodus 4:12.
[220] Motyer, *The Message of Exodus,* 82.
[221] Ibid., 80.
[222] Enns, *Exodus,* 118.
[223] Motyer, *The Message of Exodus,* 82.
[224] Enns, *Exodus,* 123.

responsibilities and an awareness of their own inability to meet them. It is through this honest struggle with doubt that they receive the strength for the tasks ahead. Their responsibility is not to ensure success or even understand what exactly they have been given to do, but to obey to the best of their understanding: "So we plunge ahead, somewhat reluctantly," writes Enns, "into the task the Lord has set before us. We begin that conversation with a neighbor about spiritual matters. We bear witness to what the Lord has done in our lives. In doing so, we truly learn that the Lord is 'with our mouths…'"[225] Ryken also draws out the application of Moses' story in an ecclesiastical context, noting that a preacher's inadequacies only serve to help a congregation remember that "the message is more important than the man."[226] He continues:

> From time to time, when a preacher stumbles around, the congregation is reminded that whatever effectiveness his preaching has comes from God and not from the man himself. Of course, this is not an excuse for evangelists to become anything less than the very best communicators they can become. But it helps to know that even our weaknesses can be used for God's glory.[227]

As the reader will see, the commentary literature regarding Moses' supposed speech difficulties is relevant to the topic of pulpit anxiety. At the same time, the hermeneutical gap between Moses' situation and the contemporary preacher suffering from pulpit anxiety is large enough that many questions remain unanswered. Can modern preachers be similarly confident that God will be with their mouths and will teach them what to say? In a modern ecclesiastical context, in which God does not appear to preachers in burning bushes or dictate their sermons, how exactly can nervous preachers speak with the confidence of the divine Presence? Do they even have the same assurance?

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[225] Ibid.
[226] Ryken, *Exodus,* 115.
[227] Ibid.

Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:4-10)

> [4]Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying,[5] "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, / and before you were born I consecrated you; / I appointed you a prophet to the nations." [6]Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth." [7]But the LORD said to me, / "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; / for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, / and whatever I command you, you shall speak.[8] / Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, / declares the LORD." / [9]Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, / "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. / [10]See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, / to pluck up and to break down, / to destroy and to overthrow, / to build and to plant."[228]

Jeremiah chapter one contains another paradigmatic example of an Old Testament call story, in which God directs a man into a great task, overriding his objections with both sensitivity and firmness. In this case, the word of Yahweh comes to the young man named Jeremiah, living in Judah during the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, prior to the eventual capture of Jerusalem. The story of Jeremiah is that of Yahweh's persistent attempts—through a humble, underage prophet—to direct Judah from its pagan ways and guide its people through their capture by foreigners. Indeed, this was Yahweh's plan all along, and he tells Jeremiah at their initial encounter that he was "consecrated" and "appointed" as a prophet to the nations before he was born, or even formed in the womb.[229] According to Jack Lundbom, to be "consecrated" means, in this context, to be "set apart (for divine service)."[230] This news, that Jeremiah had been consecrated before birth or even conception, served to reassure Jeremiah of "a special sense of destiny."[231]

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[228] Jeremiah 1:4-10.
[229] Jeremiah 1:5.
[230] Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 231.
[231] R.K. Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations,* The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1977), 51.

God's choice of Jeremiah is not haphazard. Rather, as Harrison observes, God had been preparing Jeremiah for this task for many years, and had selected him "with an intimate awareness both of the need and the one who should meet it."[232] This sense of pre-destiny could and should serve as the foundation for Jeremiah's ministry, who could be reassured that his role in God's plan was not a cruel accident, but was determined long ago. This should, Kidner writes, serve as Jeremiah's "new centre of gravity," in which the prophet is taken "away from his sole self and from the confines of the immediate scene, back to the Creator himself and to the master-plan."[233] Additionally, this fore-knowledge and election should serve to reinforce the authority of the message that followed in his ministry, and in the rest of his written material.[234] As Peter Craigie et al. write in the *Word Biblical Commentary*, it was important that this authority be recognized, "given the negative nature of much of the message he is to deliver."[235] The skeptical audience is more likely to consider the words of the critical prophet if they have reason to believe the prophet speaks on God's behalf.

Despite this impressive first contact, Jeremiah is reluctant to receive the mantel and points out to God his youth and lack of public speaking experience: "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth."[236] The phrase "Ah, Lord God!" appears ten times in the Old Testament and generally expresses dismay or alarm.[237] Not a few commentators have noted the similarities between Jeremiah's reluctance and Moses' recalcitrance, given that both prophets point to their "limited

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[232] Ibid., 49.
[233] Derek Kidner, *Jeremiah*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1987), 25.
[234] Andrew Dearman, *Jeremiah*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 51.
[235] Peter Craigie, Page Kelley, and Joel Drinkard, *Jeremiah 1-25*, Word Biblical Commentary 26 (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 11.
[236] Jeremiah 1:6.
[237] William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 1.

speaking skills."[238] Notably, most commentators also note the differences between the two. Kidner observes that "unlike Moses, whose protestations of inadequacy rang a little hollow, Jeremiah really was young, it seems, and inexperienced."[239] Ryken suggests that Jeremiah—similar to Moses—"was not sure what to say or how to say it,"[240] and that he perhaps felt overwhelmed at the task of preaching to the nations in languages he had not yet mastered. William McKane also notes that while Moses protested his calling on the grounds of inarticulateness, Jeremiah did so on the grounds of a lack of rhetorical experience: "He is young and without a commanding presence and authority, and he has had no practice in the skills of public speaking."[241] However Jeremiah's reasons compare to Moses', he is not inclined to obey without reservation.

Importantly, though, Jeremiah's response is not a refusal. Leslie Allen describes Jeremiah's less-than-enthusiastic response as a qualified "not yet, rather than no."[242] He does not say that he won't go—only that he does not know how to speak.[243] Regardless, Yahweh's response is firm: "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'."[244] As Ryken observes, Yahweh does not argue with the future prophet about his age or speaking credentials.[245] God simply insists that Jeremiah's inadequacies be pushed aside. Indeed, Holladay describes the prophet's self-esteem problems as "irrelevant to Yahweh's intention."[246] Jeremiah's focus should remain on the simple command to go where God sends him and

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[238] Tremper Longman III, *Jeremiah,* New International Bible Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 21.
[239] Kidner, *Jeremiah,* 26.
[240] Philip Graham Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentations: From Sorrow to Hope,* Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 23.
[241] William McKane, *Jeremiah,* The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986-1996), 1:7.
[242] Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah, A Commentary,* The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 26.
[243] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20,* 236.
[244] Jeremiah 1:7b.
[245] Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentations,* 24.
[246] Holladay, *Jeremiah,* 35.

speak what God gives him,[247] with the promise that God will be with him to protect and deliver him. Lundbom calls Jeremiah God's messenger, "going on whatever errands Yahweh sends him and speaking whatever Yahweh commands."[248] According to the author, Yahweh's response is the perfect rebuttal to Jeremiah's rhetorical limitations. Jeremiah does not really need to know how to speak, given that Yahweh will be the one giving him words and speaking through him, anyway.[249] In fact, it is by this authority that Jeremiah is allowed to speak to the nations in the first place, given that he is not speaking on his own behalf.[250]

God's promise is to be with Jeremiah in his ministry, protecting him from danger. "Jeremiah is thus assured," writes Lundbom, "that his life will be preserved, whatever else happens."[251] Of course, this promise of deliverance from danger carries an ominous tone to it, as Holladay notes that the promise of protection implies a precarious existence filled with external threats.[252] Regardless, the next scene includes a transcendent moment which turns the dialogue into an anthropomorphic vision, as the Lord puts out his hand and touches Jeremiah's mouth. Harrison observes that in touching the young prophet's mouth God symbolizes the communication of the divine message.[253] Yahweh's words are now in Jeremiah's mouth with the power to pluck up and break down, destroy and overthrow, build and plant.[254] Jeremiah's ministry, according to Holladay, is "centered in his mouth"[255]—a theme that repeats in the book of Jeremiah, and in the rest of the Old

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[247] Jeremiah 1:7.
[248] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20,* 236.
[249] Ibid., 233.
[250] Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentations,* 25.
[251] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20,* 234.
[252] Holladay, *Jeremiah,* 11.
[253] Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations,* 50.
[254] Jeremiah 1:9-10.
[255] Holladay, *Jeremiah,* 36.

Testament as Ezekiel "ate the scroll"[256] and preached the divine word.[257] It is this planting of the divine word that renders Jeremiah's claims of inarticulateness irrelevant.

In terms of bridging contexts from Jeremiah's situation to the modern-day, many timeless themes emerge from the commentary literature. The centrality of public speaking as God's preferred means of revelation is a theme observed by several writers. Craigie et al. write that God expresses his will for his people through prophets, in order to make himself known.[258] Relatedly, the theme of election emerges in the story of Jeremiah, as Jeremiah is persuaded to accept the reality that God set him apart for a sacred mission before he was even born or conceived. Jeremiah's election, however, was not a secret hidden from the prophet, or a one-time occurrence for the effect of making Jeremiah feel special. Rather, Jeremiah was elected to live in relationship with God over the course of his life and ministry, and he was elected for the sake of a wayward audience. Dearman writes that "this is a primary implication of what is meant by 'election' in the Bible. A person or persons are chosen by God in order to affect the lives of others."[259] At the appropriate time, Jeremiah was given knowledge of his election in a way he would presumably never forget, serving as a timeless reminder of his role in God's plan. Kidner notes the significance of this: "The touch of God, ever creative, together with the words that clarified it, put beyond doubt the givenness of the message and the mandate of the messenger. It would not spare Jeremiah the heart-searching and mental wrestling he was to go through, but it put his commission beyond all doubt."[260] According to Ryken, this is true for every believer, and needs to be understood in the

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[256] Jeremiah 3:1-3.
[257] Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard, *Jeremiah 1-25,* 11.
[258] Ibid., 12.
[259] Dearman, *Jeremiah,* 51.
[260] Kidner, *Jeremiah,* 27.

same way, giving our commission as Christ's emissaries.[261] As Paul writes to the Ephesians, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ… For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."[262]

Thirdly, the story of Jeremiah's calling emphasizes the relative unimportance of perceived limitations and inadequacies to the success of God's mission. Dearman writes that "human frailty (e.g., youth or difficulty in speech) is no excuse before God's expressed will to grant a person the words to say and the opportunities to deliver them."[263] Indeed, as seen in the call of Moses, Yahweh selects ordinary human beings who seem especially inadequate compared to who else could have been chosen, in order to demonstrate his power and love. As Leslie Allen writes, "the credit must go to the electing God."[264] Fourthly, commentators note the authority bequeathed to Jeremiah as God's official spokesperson. Craigie et al. believe this theme of delegated authority is the "very essence of the call narrative,"[265] seen even as Jesus gives his disciples authority in heaven on earth in a manner similar to Jeremiah.[266] "The messenger of God speaks with the authority of God" and "not simply with the force of his own personality."[267]

Additionally, interpreters comment on the theme of simple, trusting obedience. While God does not seem offended by Jeremiah's initial reluctance and even responds with patience and compassion, Jeremiah's response must still be to obey. Kidner points out that "the proper question was not, 'Who am I to do this?' but 'What are my

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[261] Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentations,* 21.
[262] Ephesians 1:3-4.
[263] Dearman, *Jeremiah,* 51.
[264] Allen, *Jeremiah,* 26.
[265] Craigie, Kelley, and Drinkard, *Jeremiah 1-25,* 12.
[266] Matthew 18:18.
[267] Craigie, Kelley, and Drinkard, *Jeremiah 1-25,* 12.

instructions? Where am I posted?'"[268] Given the clarity of Yahweh's command, the only fear Jeremiah should have is the fear of not acting.[269] And finally, the story of Jeremiah also emphasizes the theme of God's presence and protection given to his servants. While all of God's servants cannot expect the same type of protection from death, they can expect God's invisible presence in their struggles, along with a limitation to the dangers that may befall them. Even Jesus reassures his disciples in Mt. 10:28 that their earthly enemies can only kill the body, not the soul. As Harrison explains, "God always supports His servants in the missions assigned to them."[270] This presence is ultimately what gives God's servants their courage, knowing that whatever happens, God's Spirit is present working the situation out for the advancement of his own good purposes.

Unfortunately, while commentators are long on the original meaning and timeless truths of the Jeremiah call narrative, they are short on the application of the story to contemporary situations—including the matter of PSA. If commentators attempt application, it is brief, and has little to do with the presenting issue in the narrative itself: young preachers who think they don't know how to speak and balk at the call of God to speak his word to the nations on his authority. Or if application is offered, it is generic, drawing a simple comparison to modern-day Christians who also face limitations but can also be confident in their election. The precise application of Jeremiah's call to modern preachers is not discussed. Important questions are not answered, including the question of whether or not God's promise of protection to Jeremiah applies to modern preachers, and how Christian preachers can know, with Jeremiah-like confidence, that they have been elected as communicators. Regarding this final question, Kidner does acknowledge

[268] Kidner, *Jeremiah,* 26.
[269] Longman, *Jeremiah,* 22.
[270] Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations,* 50.

that Christian servants usually lack the visionary, memorable calling of the teenage Jeremiah. This absence can itself create greater doubt for insecure preachers and prophets. He continues, "We could wish, perhaps, that we too were given something as tangible as [Jeremiah's call], along with God's spoken promises. But we are. He, like a friend who puts an encouraging and affectionate hand on one's shoulder, has added touch to speech. 'You were washed…'; 'Take, eat…, drink…' His are no arm's length dealings…."[271] Even with Kidner's application, questions remain concerning the relevance of Jeremiah's story to nervous preachers.

Jesus' Disciples (Mark 13:11)

> 'And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit."[272]

Towards the end of Jesus' ministry on earth, Mark records that Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives, across from the temple, and spoke of future events. One of those future events included the arrest, persecution, and imprisonment of his disciples, who would also be dragged into trial to make defense for their actions and beliefs. Anticipating that his humble, uneducated servants would be rather intimidated by this situation, Jesus instructs them to not be anxious beforehand about what they are to say while in court, but say whatever is given to them in that moment. They are to trust that the Holy Spirit of God will give them words to speak and use what they say for the sake of the gospel.

R. Alan Cole refers to this situation as "extempore Christian defense," which became a common occurrence in the book of Acts and is here previewed in the gospel of

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[271] Kidner, *Jeremiah,* 27.
[272] Mark 13:11.

Mark.[273] The disciples' concern may have been not only that they would suffer in their arrest, but that they would fail in their mission, especially given their lowly status as those unfamiliar with the ways and words of power. As Robert H. Stein explains, "The generally uneducated and powerless nature of the early church…would have caused many believers great anxiety and fear when appearing and defending themselves before powerful leaders and judges."[274] Jesus reminds these disciples of the importance of not worrying—a theme common to his ministry. According to Evans, the disciples are not to worry ahead of time about what might happen, but rather speak "in that hour…at the time they are brought to trial or are made to stand before the authorities."[275] Robert Stein observes that what is being prohibited here is not necessarily preparing what to say ahead of time, but being anxious over what to say.[276] Regardless, this promise of assurance comes in a long tradition of assurances given to preachers standing before authorities. Craig Evans theorizes that Jesus' promise recalls God's promise to Moses to enable him to speak before Pharaoh—a promise the disciples might have been surprised (and encouraged) to hear given to them.[277] Even more importantly, Jesus' promise doesn't merely hearken back to the great prophets of the past, but it hearkens forward to the age of the Spirit. Jesus assures his disciples that the Spirit will be with them, giving them words to speak. C.S. Mann sees this promise as a sign of the messianic age prophesied in Isaiah and Joel, in which members of the Christian community have the experience of

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[273] R. Alan Cole, *Mark*, Revised Edition, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 275.
[274] Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2008), 601.
[275] Craig Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20,* Word Biblical Commentary 34B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 311.
[276] Stein, *Mark*, 601.
[277] Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20,* 311.

speaking and acting by the power of God, with miraculous results.[278] As the disciples were facing arrest and possible execution, their Spirit-inspired words and behavior indicated the arrival of the end times.

According to most commentators, the timeless truth imbedded in Mark 13:11 is that anxious and ill-equipped Christians can rest in God's promise to give them words and courage in defense of their faith before persecuting authorities. Most scholars, like Cole, limit the application of Jesus' instructions to those "dragged unexpectedly into courts by their persecutors, not for those who have time to pray and prepare for some known Christian opportunity lying ahead."[279] According to a majority of interpreters, Mark 13:11 is not meant for pastors and teachers, but for "potential martyrs" who don't have time to prepare speeches before having to give a defense of the gospel.[280] In fact, most every interpreter the researcher consulted made the same point that Jesus' words should be limited to persecuted Christians dragged before authorities, and is not for "lazy preachers"[281] or even "missionary proclamation."[282] In *The Communicator's Commentary,* however, David McKenna breaks the trend and sees in Jesus' promise a reassurance given to all those called into intimidating situations for the sake of the gospel. Once, when invited to a meeting with the President of the United States, McKenna was overwhelmed with anxiety over the question, "What do you say when you meet the President?" Jesus' words to the disciples—concerning their own appearances before the authorities of their day—came to McKenna and calmed his anxieties. As he

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[278] C.S. Mann, *Mark,* The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 519.
[279] Cole, *Mark,* 275.
[280] Stein, *Mark,* 601.
[281] R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary of the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 517.
[282] William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 463.

writes, "Christ gave me the assurance that His Holy Spirit will speak through me, not for my ego, but for his sake and the President's good."[283]

Even with McKenna's bold application, questions remain regarding the application of this text to preachers suffering from PSA. Is McKenna correct that Jesus' assurance can extend beyond courtroom settings? Beyond that, what does it mean for preachers to not be anxious beforehand? How exactly will the Spirit speak through preachers who say what is given to them, and how can they facilitate that process? The commentary literature leaves these application questions unanswered.

Paul (I Corinthians 2:1-5)

> [1]And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. [2]For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. [3]And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, [4]and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5]that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.[284]

In First Corinthians, the Apostle Paul begins his letter by addressing divisions in the church in which church members have aligned behind certain leaders and apostles based on their charisma and eloquence.[285] Paul rejects these subdivisions as antithetical to the unifying work of the Spirit. God's will is not that church members align against one another by following the most charismatic leader, but that they rally together humbly behind the Sovereign Lord. In fact, the history of Israel and the ministry of Jesus have shown God's preference for the weak and foolish, through whom God works in order to expose the shallowness of the strong and the wise—which includes the most eloquent.[286]

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[283] David McKenna, *Mark*, The Communicator's Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 266-67.
[284] I Corinthians 2:1-5.
[285] I Corinthians 1:10-17.
[286] I Corinthians 1:18-31.

This preference for the weak is the wisdom and the power of God, seen even in the election of the Corinthians who themselves were not very impressive.[287]

Even the Apostle Paul admits to being a less-than-impressive leader and speaker in this sense. As he writes in chapter two, he did not preach to the Corinthians with "eloquence" or "wisdom," but with "weakness and fear, with much trembling."[288] This description of himself was a deliberate rejection of the rhetoric employed by the sort of charismatic leaders the Corinthians yearned to follow. Instead of focusing on delivering a rhetorically persuasive message by the power of his own personality and rhetorical expertise, he resolved to know nothing "except Jesus Christ and him crucified."[289] By focusing his ministry on the content of the gospel, he gave the Spirit more opportunity to demonstrate the miraculous power of God in the conversion of listeners who could not give credit for their change of heart to a powerful speaker, but rather the powerful message of Christ.

The precise nature of Paul's fear and trembling has been subject to much discussion. At the outset, Marrion Soards believes that Paul's statement of weakness and fear is enigmatic, "since today one cannot know exactly what his words described."[290] That has not, however, stopped commentators from theorizing as to the precise condition Paul is describing. Based on the occurrence of this phrase elsewhere in scripture, Raymond Collins supposes that Paul's fear and trembling is an emotional reaction to a threatening situation—a kind of "mortal dread."[291] Given the oftentimes violent

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[287] I Corinthians 1:26.
[288] I Corinthians 2:3.
[289] I Corinthians 1:2.
[290] Marion Soards, *I Corinthians,* New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 54.
[291] Raymond F. Collins, *I Corinthians,* Sacra Pagina 7 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 119.

responses Paul's gospel presentations received from audiences, this mortal dread seems justified. In fact, Kenneth Chafin supposes that Paul may still be suffering from the effects of a recent negative reaction from a Jewish audience in the city of Thessalonica, recorded in Acts 17.[292] Phillips translates I Corinthians 2:3 accordingly: "I was feeling far from strong, I was nervous and rather shaky."[293] Gordon Fee wonders if Paul is referring to some observable physical condition which affects his speaking style,[294] and Craig Blomberg wonders if this "weakness" is another reference to the thorn in Paul's flesh, described in II Corinthians 12:7.[295] Other commentators see in Paul's language a more general description of his own unimpressive presentation. Paul acknowledges in Second Corinthians that many say of him that his "presence is weak, and his speech of no account."[296] Collins opts for a different interpretation altogether, understanding Paul's statement as the self-deprecation one would expect from a leader such as Paul. Paul's weakness and fear might describe a "mock humility" he employs to win the goodwill of his audience.[297]

Still other commentators see in Paul's description the appropriate reaction of a preacher to the important task given by God. Morris supposes that Paul did not fear men but God. Quoting Kay, he suggests that Paul had "an anxious desire to fulfill his duty."[298] Fee also suggests that Paul seems overwhelmed by the task of evangelizing the city of

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[292] Kenneth Chafin, *1, II Corinthians,* The Communicator's Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 45.
[293] I Corinthians 2:3, J.B. Phillips Version.
[294] Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 93.
[295] Craig Blomberg, *I Corinthians,* NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 55.
[296] II Corinthians 10:10.
[297] Collins, *I Corinthians,* 116.
[298] Leon Morris, *I Corinthians,* Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 51.

Corinth.[299] Soards supposes that Paul's fear and trembling "is a reference to his worshipful recognition of the actuality of God."[300]

While commentators cannot agree on the true nature of Paul's supposedly shaky presentation, most commentators agree that Paul deliberately chooses a "plain, unvarnished setting forth of the simple gospel."[301] While the apostle was no doubt experienced in the ways of rhetoric, as evidenced in his letters and speeches elsewhere,[302] he strips the message of rhetorical flourish so the message of Christ can stand on its own. Morris observes that "preaching the gospel is not delivering edifying discourses, beautifully put together. It is bearing witness to what God has done in Christ for our salvation."[303] Similarly, William Orr and James Walther argue that Paul did not want people to be distracted from what he said by how he said it: "Nothing in the phraseology, diction, or rhetoric of his speeches was designed to do anything but show the man on the cross—as a telescope brings into view an object and fails in its purpose if one becomes aware of anything on the lens."[304] This is not to say that Paul didn't try to persuade his audience of the truth of the gospel, but as Blomberg notes, Paul is simply admitting that by the world's standards his presentation was merely "ordinary."[305] Commentators also agree that these sorts of rhetorical choices were frustrating to the Corinthians, who were used to more sophisticated rhetoric. Chafin writes that "the Corinthians loved big words,

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[299] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* 94.
[300] Soards, *I Corinthians,* 52.
[301] Morris, *I Corinthians,* 50.
[302] Blomberg, *I Corinthians,* 58.
[303] Morris, *I Corinthians,* 50.
[304] William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, *I Corinthians,* The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), 163.
[305] Blomberg, *I Corinthians,* 54.

clever oratory, and complex logic."[306] In his book, *Chaos and Community in Corinth,* Ben Witherington expands on this idea:

> The audience was *expected* to evaluate a rhetorical speech and compare it to others. Rhetors expected the audience to judge their oral performance. The Corinthians were not acting differently from others who had been raised in a culture that had certain expectations about rhetorical performances. It was believed that a person is as he or she speaks, that there is a correspondence between words and life, and that one who is eloquent is also wise. Paul's personal presence seems to have been weak, and by rhetorical standards this reflected on his *ethos,* his ability to establish character and credibility.[307]

This expectation of rhetorical greatness, combined with the sociological assumption that eloquence equals wisdom, helped create the Corinthians' low opinion of Paul and the divisions in the church Paul writes to confront. By contrast, Paul "had no desire to enter into competition with the master orators of the ancient world,"[308] but desired to make known the power and reality of Christ. Paul reminds the Corinthians that God's ways are not the world's ways, and that God often (even usually) chooses unimpressive agents to demonstrate his power. As Soards observes, "the contrast of Paul's weakness and God's powerful, sustaining grace reveals that the power and the results of that power are property and achievements of God alone."[309] Choosing agents who could not match up to the world's "wisdom" and "eloquence" would ultimately benefit the audience, given that their faith rested on their encounter with the truth of Christ and the reality of his Spirit. While other rhetors seek to demonstrate their power through language and logic,

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[306] Chafin, *I, II Corinthians,* 44.
[307] Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on I and II Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 124.
[308] Orr and Walther, *I Corinthians,* 162.
[309] Soards, *I Corinthians,* 54.

Witherington explains that Paul's "demonstration"[310] is the "experiential proof that the powerful Spirit had changed the Corinthians' lives when he preached."[311]

Several themes emerge in the literature as commentators seek to draw out divine truth from Paul's specific situation, along with the application of those truths to our modern-day scenario. Commentators emphasize, for example, the centrality of the gospel truth and the potential that our methods might distract hearers from its essence. Chafin writes in *The Communicator's Commentary* that "matching a simple gospel with a complex message would seem ridiculous, and to shape either the message or the presentation of that message to please the audience would be wrong."[312] Blomberg also insists that highly polished rhetoric must never "overwhelm the clarity and correctness of the essential message." He goes on to suggest that in many large and gifted congregations, "we need more worship and less performance."[313] As public-speaking researchers have argued, it is the very nature of these performance expectations that create such anxiety and fearfulness in communicators. Commentators also observe the temptation of preachers and leaders to compete with the rhetorical forms and expectations of the world. While Paul had no desire to compete with the rhetorical masters of the ancient world, many preachers and churches, in our commercialized setting, find it hard to not measure up to those expectations. Again, Chafin reminds us that "the desire to succeed and the need for approval of the crowd present Christians with constant temptation to compromise."[314] Most importantly, though, commentators believe the most applicable theme from Paul's testimony in First Corinthians 2:1-5 is that God prefers to

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[310] I Corinthians 2:4.
[311] Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth,* 125.
[312] Chafin, *I, II Corinthians,* 44.
[313] Blomberg, *I Corinthians,* 61.
[314] Chafin, *I, II Corinthians, 44.*

act through human weakness, to the encouragement of the messenger, the benefit of hearers and the greater glory of God himself. Concerning nervous speakers overwhelmed by their inadequacies, "Paul gives great encouragement that God can use even them in powerful and mighty ways as they rely not on themselves but on his strength."[315] And concerning the audience, Barret observes that preaching which depends on the logic and rhetoric of the preacher would produce faith based on the same, meaning that greater shows of rhetoric or logic could easily overpower such shallow Christian "faith."[316] Hearers are better off choosing to follow the gospel based on the simple message of what they've heard and the testimony of God's Spirit in their hearts and lives.

Tying all these three themes together, David Prior calls Paul's words "the perfect touchstone for all preaching." Paul's words are helpful not just for the rhetorical strategies he rejects, but the essential message he embraces. As he writes,

> There are searching questions here for the preacher. Is our preaching genuine proclamation? Do we proclaim the mighty acts whereby God has borne witness to himself in Jesus? Do we obscure our proclamation with *lofty words* or anything else? Have we made a firm decision to make Jesus Christ and him crucified both the theme of our preaching and the centre of our living? Do we experience proper tentativeness and do we taste our own vulnerability as preachers of the gospel in a pagan, hostile world? Does our preaching demonstrate the power of the Spirit? Do the *results* of our preaching demonstrate the power of the Spirit? Are people's lives being changed? Do they know the power of the Spirit in their own lives?[317]

These are important questions, and Prior is right to raise them. At the same time, commentators of Paul's words to the Corinthians are once again overly generic about issues of application. For example, how simple a rhetorical method must preachers employ? What type of rhetorical devices distract from a message, and which enhance the

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[315] Blomberg, *I Corinthians,* 26.
[316] C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* Black's New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1968), 66.
[317] David Prior, *The Message of I Corinthians,* The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1985), 49.

message? In terms of PSA (Paul's "fear and trembling"), is it to be accepted as an obstacle God desires to work through or did Paul himself have any success with CA remediation? The literature is silent on the application of Paul's words to the specific problem the researcher hopes to address.

Summary

This literature review has summarized three areas of research relevant to how nervous preachers can successfully coped with public speaking anxiety. On their own, each of these research areas have much to contribute to the question of coping with pulpit anxiety. Homileticians offer the wisdom of experience in homiletical and ecclesiastical settings. Public-speaking experts provide research of how to understand and address PSA. Biblical commentators help put the issue of pulpit anxiety into a biblical and theological context. While these areas of research are all highly relevant to the topic, no one has yet tied the research areas together. There is no "sweet spot" to the literature, and virtually no overlap. Through this research and dissertation, the writer hopes to make a focused contribution to the topic of pulpit anxiety by incorporating insights from these three research areas together with additional qualitative research and analysis, to be described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this research project was to discover how nervous preachers may best cope with the symptoms of PSA/CA in the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of sermons. The literature review revealed what has been learned about pulpit anxiety, and how speakers can learn to cope with public speaking anxiety and communication anxiety (PSA/CA). Building on this data from the literature review, the researcher designed a qualitative research project to gather new data from experienced preachers who have personal experience with communication apprehension while preaching. This data included personal experiences of pulpit anxiety but also the most successful techniques, used by these preachers, to deal with the effects of their PSA/CA. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodology of the research project that was conducted, while also identifying the limitations of the project and the position of the researcher.

Design of Study

The research design of this study followed a qualitative approach. According to Sharan Merriam, author of "Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation," qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative research, is interested in understanding "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences."[318] Merriam goes on to identify

[318] Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 5.

four primary distinguishing components of qualitative research. These include a focus on meaning and understanding, in which a researcher attempts to understand participants' interpretation of a given phenomenon.[319] Qualitative research also involves the researcher as the primary instrument of data-collection, utilizing all the advantages of human observation in the collection and analysis of data.[320] Additionally, Merriam explains that qualitative research is an inductive process, in which "researchers gather data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively testing hypotheses as in positivist research."[321] Lastly, qualitative research includes, what Merriam terms, "rich description." While quantitative research uses numbers to describe phenomena, qualitative research uses more descriptive words and pictures from a variety of sources: interviews, excerpts, documents, and notes.[322]

Merriam also identifies several sub-types of qualitative research, including basic and applied. In basic research the focus is on understanding a phenomenon and adding to humanity's intellectual understanding of the phenomenon, while in applied research the goal is to "improve the quality of practice of a particular discipline."[323] Merriam further subdivides applied research into evaluation studies and action research. In evaluation studies the researcher collects data to serve as a basis to evaluate a given program, process, or technique; while in action research the goal is to address a problem in a certain context, which may be a church, academic, or workplace setting. The type of research used in this study is applied, action-oriented qualitative research.

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[319] Ibid., 14.
[320] Ibid., 15.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid., 16.
[323] Ibid., 3

Pre-Interview Research Subject Selection

The researcher interviewed seven experienced preachers who have successfully coped with preaching-induced anxiety. Six of the seven candidates who fit the study's criteria were located using the "snowball, chain, or network" type of purposeful sampling, in which key participants refer the investigator to other potential subjects.[324] The seventh subject was identified through an advertisement, in the Christian periodical *Leadership Journal*, soliciting potential interview candidates. After making initial contact with potential participants, the researcher distributed a list of criteria to each potential research subject to confirm that each potential subject had experiences which qualified him for inclusion in this study. The criteria were as follows:

> 1. Research subjects experienced PSA/CA levels that have inhibited the quality of their sermons, their enjoyment of preaching, and the quality of their lives and ministry.
>
> 2. Research subjects were experienced preachers with ten or more years of preaching experience.
>
> 3. Research subjects have preached regularly in local church settings—at least five times per year.
>
> 4. Research subjects are Christian communicators who preach Christian sermons.
>
> 5. Research subjects, over the course of their preaching ministry, have experienced some improvement in their public-speaking anxiety levels.

As potential research subjects were identified, the researcher sent a short, online questionnaire to each potential subject to confirm that he met the criteria for the research project.[325] The questionnaire was assembled using information from the literature review that identified common symptoms of public-speaking anxiety in a homiletical context.

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[324] Ibid., 79.

[325] The online survey questions, along with results from all the potential research subjects, can be found in Appendix 1.

The purpose of the questionnaire was fourfold: to gather basic information about how often and for how long a subject has been preaching, to assess the level of PSA/CA and ascertain whether it is serious enough to offer the sort of "richly descriptive" data Merriam says should be typical of quality qualitative material,[326] to identify the level of improvement in a preacher's PSA/CA levels, and to identify possible lines of inquiry with the research subject during the interview. Consequently, the questionnaire was divided into four sections: (1) personal information, (2) previous experience with pulpit anxiety, (3) influence of pulpit anxiety on quality of life, (4) improvement of pulpit anxiety.

Research Subjects

While a great many preachers were contacted concerning this research project, eight felt that their experiences might meet the criteria for the study. Of those eight to complete the online survey, the researcher selected seven that seemed to offer the best potential for the rich description Merriam argues is necessary for a qualitative research analysis. The selection of subjects most qualified for participation in the study was not a quantitative process, in which their answers to survey questions were assigned numerical values that were then compared against each other or any theoretical norm. Additionally, subjects were not selected because they indicated an especially profound struggle with PSA/CA or certain identifying symptoms. Rather, the researcher reviewed their pulpit anxiety survey responses,[327] communicated individually with several of the subjects, and looked for experiences with pulpit anxiety that might be instructive for other preachers struggling with the same symptoms. Some subjects (such as Tim and Dan, introduced

[326] Merriam, *Qualitative Research,* 16.
[327] The pulpit anxiety survey and survey answers from all eight potential subjects are included as an appendix at the end of this dissertation.

below) were clear-cut cases of long-serving preachers who had dealt with pulpit anxiety and had learned to cope in effective ways. Other subjects (such as Adam and Mike) were less clear-cut, either because the tenure of their preaching experience seemed short compared to the research parameters (Adam), or their experience with PSA symptoms was not as profound as those of other subjects'. However, it was decided by the researcher that subjects with the most limited experience and the least serious symptoms still had valuable data to include in the research project. (The one subject who completed a survey but was not included in the research was not selected because, in the opinion of the researcher, his experience with PSA/CA did not seem significant or instructive enough to merit inclusion.) What follows is a brief introduction to each subject and a description of his experience with pulpit anxiety.

Tim is a fifty-seven year-old senior pastor and preacher at a medium-sized evangelical church in a Midwestern suburban setting. He has been preaching regularly—nearly every week—since 1980 after graduating from seminary. He preaches in a moderately contemporary setting combining traditional liturgy with modern worship. Tim experienced a great deal of physiological and cognitive symptoms of public-speaking anxiety starting in college when he completely shut down in speech class, unable to even look at the audience. Currently, he even wrestles with "Sunday afternoon blues," replaying the sermon and regretting his supposedly poor performance. He was selected as a research subject for this dissertation because after many years, through counseling lifestyle alterations, he has learned to cope with his condition.

Bob is a forty-five year-old associate pastor who has preached about six times per year for twelve years. He was educated at a Reformed seminary and serves in a medium-

sized Reformed church, located in a northeastern, ivy-league setting. He preaches in both a traditional and a blended (contemporary/traditional) worship setting. Bob had terrible stage fright and avoided seminary for a time because he didn't want to have to preach, despite feeling called to the ministry. During seminary and afterwards, his preaching experiences were anxiety-ridden with his heart racing and his vision blurring, which made it impossible for him to see his notes. He even froze several times in the pulpit. Bob was selected as a research subject because he learned, through perseverance and with the help of a supportive community, how not to let his phobia of speaking overwhelm his sense of calling. Over time, his symptoms have been minimized.

Mike is a fifty-three year-old senior pastor at a large church in a suburban Midwestern setting with a contemporary worship style. Since 1992, he has preached forty to forty-two times a year, twice every Sunday. He was educated at a Reformed seminary and leads a Reformed congregation. While Mike enjoyed the act of public speaking, the pressure of preaching regularly to a congregation, from the Christian scriptures, as one vested with incredible responsibility left him feeling "scared to death." The weekly fear of representing God to his congregation manifested itself not in physiological symptoms, but in emotional and relational stress. In addition to the mental distraction of preaching, he also said that he's impossible to live with from Saturday lunch through the completion of church on Sunday, and that his wife did not want anything to do with him while he was preparing a message. He was selected as a subject for this research because, with the help of professional counseling, he learned to accept some pulpit anxiety as healthy, while not letting unhealthy fear negatively affect his preaching, his emotions, or his relationships.

Steve is a forty-three year-old senior pastor of a medium-sized church plant, also in the Reformed tradition, and also located in a Midwestern, suburban setting. He was educated at a Reformed seminary. Steve has been preaching regularly since 1992, and currently preaches year-round, two times per week. Steve experienced great physiological symptoms before preaching, including headaches, shakiness, and sleeplessness. While in preaching class in seminary, he became physically sick before having to preach and had to call the professor and beg to get out of the sermon. Steve was selected for this dissertation because he learned to change the way he preached in such a way that helped to minimize his PSA/CA symptoms.

Dan is a fifty-one year-old senior pastor of a medium-to-large-sized church in the Independent Baptist tradition, located in a suburban Midwestern setting. He attended two Baptist seminaries and received two graduate-level degrees. He has been preaching for twenty-five years, and preaches one to three times per week. Dan described the pressure of preaching as "hell" and even left a pastorate to avoid the pressure of having to preach weekly. Dan was selected as a research subject because he learned to make adjustments in his thinking and preparation that have allowed him to preach weekly in the same church setting, while also coping with the early effects of PSA/CA.

Paul is a sixty-five year-old staff member of a large mega-church in a suburban Midwestern setting. He helped plant the church as an Independent Bible church, and now serves as one of its many staff pastors. He attended an evangelical seminary. At the height of his ministry, he preached once every three weeks as part of a preaching team. Even with this arrangement, Paul recalls becoming a different person while getting ready to preach, and resorted to unhealthy perfectionism that negatively affected his family and

personal happiness. Through prayer and spiritual disciplines, and relying on support from a healthy church staff, Paul minimized the symptoms of his anxiety enough to continue his preaching ministry for many decades.

Adam is a twenty-seven year-old professor at a Christian college with ten years of pulpit supply experience in Christian congregations. Adam had the most severe PSA/CA-related physiological symptoms of anybody the researcher interviewed, and was even admitted to the hospital for headaches and intestinal problems. He was selected for this research project because of the severe and acute nature of his PSA/CA symptoms. Just as importantly, Adam was selected for this study because, despite having only ten years of preaching experience, he experienced profound psycho-spiritual healing through the assistance of psychiatric experts and loved ones. This healing was confirmed in the new approach Adam took to preaching, which helped reduce his PSA/CA symptoms.

Data Collection

Following the selection of the seven research subjects, the researcher contacted each to set up a sixty to ninety minute interview to discuss their experiences with pulpit-speaking anxiety. The interviews took place in their private offices, and were recorded using a digital voice recorder. A semi-structured interview protocol was used during the interview, as opposed to a highly-structured or unstructured format.[328] In a semi-structured interview, the conversation includes a loose framework of specific questions that are interspersed with other lines of conversation according to the subject's answers and the researcher's curiosities. The questions serve as springboards into additional lines of discussion that open up over the course of the interview before returning to the other

[328] Merriam, *Qualitative Research,* 89.

questions that the researcher needed to ask. After getting specific details on the type and frequency of preaching done by the preacher, the interview questions followed the general structure of the research questions identified in chapter one. Firstly, how has the preacher experienced anxiety in the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of sermons? Secondly, what coping strategies did the preacher use to manage this preaching-induced anxiety? Thirdly, in the preacher's opinion, to what degree were these coping strategies effective? Other questions were added to this basic format, such as whether the research subject would recommend these coping strategies to other nervous preachers experiencing similar symptoms.

At the beginning of each interview, the purpose of the research was explained to each participant. Additionally, they were informed of the policies of the Doctor of Ministry Program at Covenant Theological Seminary concerning the confidentiality of their answers. Each signed a consent form allowing their answers to be used in this project, on a confidential basis, with recordings and transcripts being destroyed at the completion of the project.

Data Analysis

Following the interviews, the questions and answers were transcribed for analysis. The researcher utilized the "constant comparative"[329] method of analyzing the interview data, which involves not waiting for the completion of data-gathering to begin processing information. This "constant comparative" method allows the research to improve each interview after the prior interview, as the researcher can refine the questions as the data accumulates. The data was analyzed using an open-coding approach.[330] In open coding,

[329] Ibid., 175.
[330] Ibid., 178.

the researcher scours the data for words and ideas within the subject's answers to interview questions, without any pre-set categories or themes. These data units are selected from the interview because they are "heuristic" and reveal information relevant to the study's research questions.[331] The data units have been reduced to the smallest size they can be while still standing as a separate unit of information.[332] The goal of this coding is to break information down into its smallest parts so that it can be grouped together in categories, or themes, within the larger category of an individual research question.

Researcher Position

In qualitative research, the investigator serves as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.[333] Understanding this position is critical in helping to identify how the researcher's own perspective will impact this study in questions asked, conclusions drawn, and intellectual assumptions made.

By profession, the researcher is a Christian minister with a Masters of Divinity from an evangelical Christian seminary, and one who specializes in weekly preaching. This position allows the researcher to understand homiletics and pastoral theology, as well as the stories and testimonies offered by other ministers. However, his own pastoral context will naturally serve as the paradigm through which he hears the experiences of other ministers, who work in other contexts. More objective, non-ministerial investigators might not have equal familiarity with the language and responsibility of preaching ministry, but might be able to hear more authentically the experiences of others without filtering them through their own paradigm. Relatedly, the researcher is dedicated to his

[331] Ibid., 177.
[332] Ibid.
[333] Ibid., 15.

calling and profession as a Christian preacher and pastor. This zeal can cloud his ability to hear others objectively, without offering advice or solutions. It can inhibit his ability to respect people's experiences and positions as entirely their own.

By religion, the researcher is an evangelical Christian with a high view of scripture. He understands the central tenet of the Christian faith, and subsequently of his own life, as the grace of God made fully known in the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, which is described in the Christian scriptures. He understands that these convictions may lead to (and certainly have led to) skepticism regarding other worldviews, which he views as not only different but inadequate. (He already finds himself regarding secular literature from the public-speaking sector as helpful but limited in its ability to truly speak to the sinful condition of mankind.) He cannot abandon this religious posture, but can be aware of its effect on his research. With greater self-awareness, the researcher can allow his religious perspective not to dominate his research, but can allow himself to be challenged by the insights and observations of others outside his own paradigm.

By temperament, the researcher is an anxious preacher who selected this subject matter because of an obvious, vested interest. This lack of objectivity could lead him to find solutions before he has completely understood a subject's testimony or an article being researched. His responsibility as a researcher will be to separate, but not divorce, himself from his anxiety while investigating the problem.

Study Limitations

The researcher hypothesizes that different preachers have learned over time to cope with their anxiety in different ways. This hypothesis reveals one of the limitations of

this study, which is that only a handful of subjects can be interviewed, thereby potentially cutting out the different coping strategies of countless other Christian preachers. The causes of PSA/CA can come from many different sources, and how one preacher learns to cope may not be directly helpful for how another needs to learn to cope. Additionally, while the researcher will do his best to understand and make meaning of the testimony of his subjects, many preachers learn to function as preachers on a sub-conscious level, without understanding or being able to articulate how they learned to achieve a healthy mindset in the weekly routine of preaching. The preachers being interviewed are also like-minded in terms of their theological beliefs, ecclesiastical settings, and immersion in an evangelical worldview. This research is therefore highly relevant to the sort of suburban, evangelical, religious context in which these preachers live and work. However, the limited nature of the type of preacher interviewed will mean that extending the findings to other contexts—religious or otherwise—should be done with great care. At the very least, the language utilized in this dissertation and subsequent discussions may require an extra step in interpretation for researchers in other sub-cultures.

Another limitation discovered by the researcher in the execution of this research study was the limited number of willing subjects who came forward to discuss their anxious experiences. After aggressive outreach, advertising in a nationwide Christian periodical and extensive networking with potential candidates, the researcher was disappointed to identify only eight potential subjects. In the nature of full disclosure, the original criterion for inclusion in the research study were stricter, as preachers were initially required to speak at least thirty times per year for over twenty-five years. However, these strict criterion would have eliminated the data of most of the research

subjects that came forward to be interviewed. Consequently, the researcher concluded that lowering the requirements for inclusion in the study was more important than finding six to eight perfect research subjects, as long as candidates met key requirements for participation. Aside from the issue of appropriate criterion, the research subjects selected were those that demonstrated marked improvement in PSA/CA symptoms over ten years or more. By that more simple standard, the researcher found seven ideal research subjects.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher's methodology has been explained as a qualitative-research based study. The selection of research subjects was explained, and those research subjects were introduced as qualified for inclusion in the research. The interview approach was explained as a semi-structured interview and the method of data analysis was presented, in which transcripts of interviews are mined for data relevant to the research questions. The researcher's understanding of the limitations of this study was laid out, along with his position as a researcher. In the next chapter, the data from the research interviews will be presented, after having been organized according to the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Report and Analysis

Introduction

This study was designed to help nervous preachers cope with anxious thoughts and behaviors in the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of sermons. In order to complete the study, several research questions were formulated to guide the research and reporting. Firstly, how have preachers experienced anxiety in the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of sermons? Secondly, what coping strategies were utilized in the management of preaching-induced anxiety? Thirdly, to what extent were these coping strategies successful in the management of preaching-induced anxiety? In order to answer these questions, the researcher conducted qualitative interviews with experienced preachers. These preachers were introduced in chapter three, along with the manner of their selection and the interview strategy. In this chapter, the researcher will organize and analyze the data gathered in the interviews with research subjects in order to be able to answer the research questions and make best practice recommendations in chapter five.

While most dissertations would organize the interview data around the research questions, the researcher has chosen to take a more comprehensive approach. In each interview, the researcher invited the research subject to discuss their experience with pulpit anxiety in general—more broadly than the research questions themselves—in order to give context to their answers and voice to their experience. Without exception, each interview subject described their experience with public-speaking anxiety and

communication apprehension (PSA/CA) in a highly personal, narrative format. As the data from these interviews accumulated, consistent themes emerged in the experiences of each preacher. More than themes, these commonalities can be understood as chronological phases experienced by most research subjects, with regard to their pulpit anxiety. Consequently, instead of organizing the interview data around the research questions themselves, the researcher has opted to organize the research according to the narrative phases common to the nervous preacher. Each interview was mined for data specific to the chronological themes identified across the interviews. This presentation will give context to data most relevant to the specific research questions, and also help fill in the literature gap when it comes to pulpit anxiety.

After sifting through and organizing the data around irreducible themes,[334] the following eleven chronological phases have been identified within the compiled experiences of experienced preachers who have experienced pulpit anxiety: (1) compelling ministerial call; (2) early public-speaking apprehension; (3) unremitting symptomatic experience; (4) exacerbating professional factors; (5) decisive climax; (6) search for causes; (7) practical adjustments; (8) cognitive restructuring; (9) long-term maintenance; (10) spiritual reflection; (11) homiletical coaching. Each chronological phase will be described with data from the interviews offering information most representative of that particular chronological phase.

Phase 1: Compelling Ministerial Call

"You need to do this." –Steve

Within the interviews, each research subject recounted their calling into vocational, pastoral ministry. These callings occurred at various ages, over various

[334] Ibid., 173-188.

lengths of times, in various settings. Dan, for example, felt the call of God early: “God tapped me on the shoulder early and I responded. I was twelve years old at the time, and when asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I knew I was supposed to be a pastor or something. I took it very seriously, and made a commitment to our church to go into vocational ministry.” Bob also felt an early call. He always had a strong desire to be in church, and found himself serving naturally in leadership roles with a student ministry. After spending a prayerful summer in India during college, he returned home and told his parents, “I think I’m being called into ministry.” Later experiences affirmed this calling. While reading a book on pastoring, he “panted” and “savored” his way through: “It created such joy in me to think about pastoring, and serving in that capacity and caring for people and teaching the word.”

Tim also described a foreign missions experience in which he had a “huge experience with God” while abroad in Guatemala, discovering that he had “the heart of a pastor.” Paul’s calling experience took place soon after college in which he worked temporarily for a campus ministry: “I saw so many people who didn’t have a clue what the Bible meant, how it affected their life, and I thought preaching was the place where you help deepen that. When I teach through the Bible I just see change taking place in peoples’ lives, as the lights come on and you make good application of the scriptures.” Adam heard the gospel at age sixteen in church and was compelled enough to investigate and later, convert. Almost immediately his entire life was changed: “People saw this dramatic turnaround and they began to see me as a spiritual leader, and gave me lots of speaking opportunities.” Out of this experience, he committed himself to vocational ministry.

Steve summarizes the calling experience of many of the research subjects when he described his own sense of God's will: "I just felt like it was what I was supposed to be doing. It was inescapable. If I wasn't doing this I wasn't doing what I should be doing. It was gradual, with a lot of people telling me, 'You need to do this'." Including Steve, six of the seven research subjects described very compelling calls into pastoral ministry. They were not without inner conflict, but their desire to respond to God in service to his people overwhelmed personal fears and apprehensions (to be described in phase two). The vividness and compelling nature of these calling stories helped sustain their commitment through some ugly public-speaking experiences. After describing the frustration of his later experience with PSA/CA, Dan explains why he persevered in the midst of his symptoms: "I cannot go back on the call…I believe in the call of God. I believe that he called me. I wouldn't be in the ministry if I didn't have that sense of call."

Phase 2: Early Public Speaking Apprehension

"I was the worst speaker in the whole class." –Tim

Despite the definite calls most research subjects felt, they nonetheless had strong apprehensions towards preaching. These apprehensions were frequently encountered in the interviews as subjects described an eagerness to serve in a pastoral setting—the "front line of ministry," as described by Adam—but also an apprehension about the public-speaking responsibilities involved in pastoral work. Tim, for example, described the tension between his desire to serve as a pastor and the fear of having to preach:

> When I first started out I remember my speech class in college. It was awful. I was the worst speaker in the whole class. I remember this one speech in which people were supposed to heckle you while speaking. We were supposed to heckle each other. I completely shut down. I couldn't handle it. I was the worst person in the class. It's one of the reasons I wanted to be a dentist, so I didn't have to speak.

> I told God that "If you want me to be a pastor, I'm going to have to preach, and that's going to have to be a supernatural thing you do."

Bob described a similar experience. As the president of FCA in high school, he assigned others to speak at group meetings so he could avoid the anxiety of having to preach. Upon arriving at seminary, he found he couldn't avoid public speaking any more. Once, while in seminary, he was asked to read scripture in church: "It was a disaster. I'd get there and the room would start spinning on me. When I'd look at the page it would become blurry. I could only see one word and I couldn't see the word next to it." Bob nearly left seminary because of his public-speaking apprehension. But Bob and Tim are not the only ones to have described early, ugly public-speaking events. Steve had been assigned to preach in class one day without a manuscript—a mode of preaching he was unfamiliar with. He described the experience: "I threw up, I got very sick, and I called my professor that morning and said 'I can't do it, I just can't do it.' My stomach was in knots, I was throwing up, had the chills, couldn't sleep for three days beforehand, and it was awful."

Only one of the subjects, Mike, felt gifted in public speaking: "I've never been afraid of crowds. I took a speech class in high school and it was my favorite class." As will be explained later, while Mike felt comfortable in front of crowds, he experienced severe PSA/CA symptoms from the ecclesiastical and spiritual responsibilities of his profession. Most of the other subjects agreed that while they eagerly desired to pastor, they did not feel gifted as preachers, nor did they know (at the time) how to reconcile their fears with the homiletical responsibilities involved in their pastoral calling. How would they proceed? Compelled by their calling, Bob and Tim pressed forward and learned to tolerate preaching in seminary. With some encouragement from seminary

preaching professors, Bob completed his seminary homiletical training without any major disasters: “I got up there, did my twenty minute sermon, and survived it. Okay, I survived this, maybe I can survive another one.” With seminary behind him, he proceeded on to his first pastorate. And Tim had his supernatural experience:

> We came to a point in the preaching class where I had to preach in front of a video camera. That was the turning point for me, because I watched myself preaching and I was getting a little better with practice. I thought, ”I could listen to this. This isn’t bad.” And from that point on, I thought I could do this if I worked at it. I thought God had touched me or supernaturally enabled me. I didn’t feel like it was part of my natural gifting.

Most of the research subjects followed their calls and endured humiliating, early public-speaking experiences to make their way into the pastorate. In Tim and Bob’s case, their early experiences became surprisingly motivating. They had survived the daunting challenges of public speaking without life-threatening incident, giving them confidence and perspective—at least enough to keep on preaching.

Phase 3: Unremitting Symptomatic Experience

“I go through hell some weeks. It’s horrible.” –Dan

Even though all seven subjects committed themselves to vocational ministry, their PSA/CA symptoms did not go away. The variety of their experiences is so wide that the researcher has chosen to organize them into three categories: before the sermon (preparation), during the sermon (delivery), and after the sermon (evaluation).

Before the Sermon / Preparation

All research subjects indicated the presence of severe PSA/CA symptoms in the preparation of sermons, from weeks before the sermon right up to the first step into the pulpit. These included loss of cognitive function, obsessive preparation, avoidance of preaching opportunities, feelings of fear and dread, sleeplessness, withdrawal from

others, relational irritability, digestive problems and other physical illnesses. Several subjects' experiences are described below to give a colorful sense of the seriousness of their symptoms.

Tim, for example, reported having severe diarrhea before having to preach: "I probably went to the bathroom two or three times before preaching." On several occasions, Paul became so sick with fevers and intestinal problems, that he called an associate on Saturday to fill in for him on Sunday. Steve recounted similar physical symptoms: "I had to pee and pee and pee before I preached…. A couple times I had to leave the pulpit area before the sermon to go pee. That was how it worked for me. Bladder squeeze. Open up the spigots, baby, it's coming right through. I got headaches, but peeing was the main thing. A little shakiness before the sermon." Adam had a similar physical experience, and described his internal organs shutting down, supposedly due to stress. "In some churches," he remembered, "right before going to speak I would be in the bathroom either throwing up or experiencing diarrhea because of the anxiousness."

Once while assigned to preach at a nearby congregation, Adam was so incapacitated by his anxiety that he showed up on the wrong day: "I was there a week early because I was thinking so much about it and forgot what day I was supposed to be preaching. I would literally drive an hour to go do pulpit supply the wrong date because I was in such a haze."

In addition to physical symptoms prior to preaching, several subjects described being obsessed with the composition of their sermon, even to the neglect of their family, personal health, and happiness. Bob explained that he "had a hard time putting the sermon to bed before sometime late on Saturday night, thinking 'What else can I add or

how can I make this more clear?'" Steve would also "wrestle over words and phrases," working his manuscript to perfection: "I'd come back to it on Saturdays and I would tweak it to get the words just right and then on Sunday mornings I would get up and I would go to church two hours early and I would practice it two to three times." Paul shared this experience, eventually concluding that his obsessive preparation was motivated by unhealthy perfectionism. During the preparation of his messages, he was obsessed with making the sermon as close to perfect as he could, "right up to the bell." Instead of reading two commentaries, "I might read five or six to get a different insight or something that would pull it together for me."

All this obsessive, perfectionist preparation had a negative consequence on subjects' relationships and family lives. Mike described himself as being "impossible to live with from Saturday lunch on":

> My wife didn't want anything to do with me. I would come home, typically finish my sermon prep by noon on Saturday, and have the afternoon and evening, but I couldn't think about anything else. I couldn't have a conversation. If my kids had a sporting event I was there bodily, but I was not there emotionally, and I'm just thinking "Is that sub-point two illustration the right one? Maybe, but maybe there's a better one." I was just amped up.

Dan also understood the relational stress that can accompany sermon preparation. According to him, the only time his marriage became strained was during periods of sermon anxiety. Paul's pre-sermon anxiety was so great that his wife told him "You're preoccupied, you're here but not here, you're a different person when you're preaching." He realized that it "obviously affected the way I related to people. When at home, you're thinking about the sermon on the back-burner. You're not engaging, not being proactive. You're just trying to get to the next week."

In addition to relational and physical symptoms, several research subjects described intense feelings of fear and dread that the sermon would be a failure. Mike, for example, was plagued by the fear of getting lost in the middle of his speech: "The thought of being lost in my sermon, not knowing where I was supposed to be…the thought of that just scared me to death." Dan experienced similar feelings of dread: "This is going to be the week that it's a wash. This is the week I'm going to totally bomb. I might never get there, and I might hate everything I've got, and never get there. And that's the anxiety for me." Adam also talked about the "sense of dread" he felt when he had the sudden realization of having to preach and the fear that he might not have anything to say. Dan summed up, for many of the subjects, the sense of fear and dread they experienced in the preparation of their sermons:

> It's feelings like, "I'm going to stand in front of people speaking and not having anything to say or not having the right thing to say or be biblically inaccurate or for whatever reason not have my mind on straight that day and bore people with the most important message in the world… I go through hell some weeks. It's horrible."

During the Sermon / Delivery

Once in the pulpit, some research subjects reported a diminishing of symptoms. Steve explained that "once I got going, it was okay." Other subjects described an intensification of symptoms and a change in the type of symptoms experienced. Those symptoms included a freeze response, increased heart rate, distractability and difficulty concentrating, verbal disfluencies, and other physiological symptoms.

On many occasions, while preaching or speaking in public, Bob experienced a freeze response he described as "flatlining," by which he meant a shutting down of speaking abilities at the worst possible moment. "I flatlined frequently," he said, "and

when I say ‘flatline’ I’m not exaggerating. I would get up there and have no idea what to say. I get up there and cannot think of what to say. I get up there and stare out and cannot think.” Adam also experienced this freeze response: “I would just stand there silent, for quite a bit of time. And then I said, ‘I apologize, but I am experiencing some technical difficulties,’…then another long pause, severe long pauses that weren’t for dramatic effect.” At another time, while preaching before his seminary faculty, Adam got up to speak but found he could not think clearly enough to preach his sermon. He explained to the audience that he couldn’t continue and returned to his seat.

In addition to the flatline-freeze response, subjects reported other symptoms. Tim relates a hyper-sensitivity to the sight and sounds of the experience that threated to distract him from his sermon and audience. As he told the researcher, “It’s really hard for me to look people in the eyes while preaching. I keep trying hard to overcome that. I am so stimulated by sights and sounds. It’s so distracting to me if cell phones go off, babies start crying, people are going in and out. I’m always thinking, ‘Ohh, someone’s mad at what I just said’.” Mike also described the inner battle going on inside his mind while trying to choke out a sermon. When asked by the researcher about what he’s thinking about while preaching, he spoke quickly: “What’s going on inside? What’s going on inside is, ‘Can I keep track of what I’m saying? Can I make sure I follow my notes? Do I have an outline that works for me? Just the fear of getting lost in the sermon. What point was I on?’”

After the Sermon / Evaluation

After the conclusion of the sermon, none of the research subjects were able to mentally set the experience aside and move on to the next preaching assignment. Neither

were they able to simply think positively about the experience and learn from their mistakes, celebrating their successes. The symptoms of PSA/CA described by the research subjects in the evaluation of sermons include shame and guilt, replaying of sermon mistakes, mental and physical exhaustion, a sense of failure, feelings of relief, and dread of the imminent arrival of an upcoming sermon to prepare for and deliver.

For example, Tim describes the period following a sermon as "the Sunday afternoon blues." As he explained, "Sunday afternoon I'd just be around the house and all of the sudden I'd just go 'Ohhhhh!' out loud because of something I said in the sermon. I'd just scream out loud. My wife would say, 'What's wrong? Why did you say, "That's so stupid"?'" Adam remembered the feelings of dread prior to a sermon being replaced by feelings of failure after a sermon, which included "debilitating self-criticism." Mike described the "all-day critique," in which he would spend the day wondering, "Man, I really screwed that up. Was that okay? I don't know. Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't. I thought it was pretty good but then I heard somebody say this." Steve also described a critique session following a sermon that grew worse as he interacted with listeners who offered their own comments. As he recounted, "People will come up to you and they make their own notes about the text. They'd say, 'I always thought this about the text,' and I hadn't said anything about that. So I would feel guilty that I didn't cover that or think of it myself. A lot of times it was excellent observations, so I would feel guilty sometimes." While Steve felt guilty because of insights made by listeners, Dan felt shame because of his own feelings of hypocrisy and letting God down: "Here I am preaching this, teaching this, and I can't trust God for this in that moment? That's not good."

In addition to guilt, Steve felt exhausted that he had just "dumped [himself] out emotionally." Tim felt this way as well: "Preaching just drains me. Sunday night is my best time to get in an argument with my wife, overeat, do all sorts of stupid things." But Steve, for his part, also felt relief that the whole sermon experience was over. "That was the biggest feeling," he said, "I'm done for this week." Mike also felt relief, but it was tinged with a creeping realization that the sensation of relief would not last long. "I could relax a little bit on Mondays," he said. "But then Tuesday arrives, and here it comes again. It's just always with you."

Phase 4: Exacerbating Professional Factors

"We don't suffer fools gladly here." –One of Bob's congregants

During the interviews, each subject described several professional factors which made his experience with PSA/CA worse. These factors are external, taking place in their preaching and ministry setting. They were not the cause of their chronic anxiety but helped to increase the intensity of a subject's PSA/CA symptoms.

Two subjects mentioned the formality of the preaching context as heightening their pulpit anxiety. While he got used to it, Tim agreed that the highly liturgical setting of his first church increased his angst. He explained that he grew up "in a country church. These people were pretty country. I could just get up there and talk. Didn't have to put on any airs. But when I came here, my mentors were telling me you gotta act like this, do like this, dress just right, be all right, all that kind of stuff." Mike had an identical experience when he first began preaching in a similarly formal setting: "You've been inside [First Community Church's][335] sanctuary. It's a beautiful sanctuary, the pulpit's

[335] The name of the church has been changed to protect the subject's anonymity.

big and old. It's everything the quintessential American preaching experience has become. And it was nerve-wracking. It was anxiety."

These large, old, intimidating churches were also filled with intimidating people. Bob was educated in an Ivy-league setting and began to work in an Ivy-league community. A famous, visiting preacher once preached as a guest in his church and commented after the service, "Man, this is an intimidating crowd." Bob agreed:

> This community is so educated it's mind-blowing. Prep-school world, everybody wants their kids to go Ivy. Most people in the church have Ivy-league degrees. When I interviewed here, after they interviewed me for two days, they asked, "Do you have any questions for us?" I said, "I'd just like to hear from this committee, what are your expectations for this new associate? I read what you have, but I want to hear from you." The first guy said, "Oh that's easy. We don't suffer fools gladly, here. So when you preach it better be coherent, cogent, it better be intellectually challenging." And the next guy in line said, "Yeah, I agree with the first guy. We don't suffer fools gladly, here." And they had no idea who they were talking to.

Even in the Midwest, the research subjects recounted intimidating crowds that heightened their anxiety levels. Steve learned to preach in a seminary setting, and then in churches with local faculty members, and could not shake the accompanying fear:

> When I looked out and saw [my professor],[336] and some of the old guys, I was just shaking in my boots. You're so afraid of mishandling the text. These guys are guys you look up to. Learned guys. I should not be preaching here. Now they would never, ever say they felt that way. When they're there, they're under the word. I just didn't want to disappoint these guys.

In his early preaching setting, there was a high standard of preaching and exposition in the church Steve served in. Additionally, thanks to the internet and mass media, his audience had become accustomed to famous, highly-skilled preachers who seemed entirely comfortable with the pressures of preaching. As he summed up, "Most of us regular guys just don't measure up. So get ready for that."

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[336] The name of the professor has been changed to protect the subject's anonymity.

Adam also attributed the onset of his anxiety to his first appearance in a sanctuary filled with seminary professors. “I had never experienced pulpit anxiety in the slightest,” he said, “until my ministry internship. I was supposed to deliver a sermon, and I discovered that some of my faculty were going to be in the audience, and immediately it was like my brain went blank. I couldn’t sleep all night.” In Adam’s experience, not only was his professor-laden audience intimidating, they were not supportive. While he had grown up and begun his preaching ministry in a loving, accepting setting, he did not feel that support while at school: “When I got to seminary, it was a new place, with new people who didn’t know my background. I honestly didn’t feel a genuine acceptance or love, and I think that rattled my cage. I felt like when I got up to preach I was up on stage, and I never felt like I was on stage before.”

Other research subjects mentioned feeling intimidated, but associated it with anonymous crowds more than powerful, intimidating professors. When Steve arrived to his first pastorate, he realized “I was a new pastor there. When you’re with new people and you don’t know what they think of you, you don’t like to make mistakes.” Mike also described the anxiety of preaching on “special days,” when there are lots of anonymous, out-of-town visitors:

> …like on Christmas Eve and Easter when you know there are a lot of people there and it’s the one time a year they come, and this is my one shot at them. That’s a bit more nerve-wracking…. I don’t know these people, I don’t know where they’re from. I don’t know what they want to hear. I get that kind of feeling on those kinds of occasions. I feel that way at funerals, that kind of anxiety, because you know the family, but don’t necessarily know other folks, and have no idea what their spiritual experiences are or aren’t.

In addition to intimidating settings with intimidating, anonymous audiences, both Bob and Steve reported, with some irony, that the type of homiletical training they

received in seminary increased their anxiety. While in seminary, Steve's training emphasized accurate and thorough exposition as the primary responsibility of preachers. It left him feeling that he was required to research a biblical passage from every possible angle before even attempting to preach it: "I'm checking John Stott's commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, and I don't want to screw up something John Stott says, I want to get that right, and I want to make sure I'm rightly reflecting the doctrinal, historical, biblical, exegetical truths of this text. That's what my seminary and most seminaries teach you to do." As he continued, "This is a problem with seminary…it deadens your personal spirituality in favor of knowledge." In Steve's opinion, this emphasis on information transfer has the effect of intimidating young preachers into over-research and obsession with theological detail, instead of managing the complex, emotional process of sharing God's truth as a broken, homiletical vessel. Bob agreed, but from a different perspective. His seminary required their preaching students to preach without notes in class. He described himself, however, as a man of the "written word" with a "poetic inclination" who loves the composition and delivery of manuscript sermons. This method was disallowed in his homiletical program, which not only increased his anxiety but prevented him from preaching to his strengths. A year after graduating, Bob visited his seminary and was remembered by his preaching professor for his inability to work with the program: "I went back to visit my seminary and I was coming up the stairwell, and there was my preaching professor. He said, 'Hey Bob, are you still using notes?' I hung my head and said, 'Yeah,' and he said, 'Get free, brother, get free'."

The research subjects mentioned several other anxiety-increasing professional factors, including the fact that they didn't necessarily feel called or gifted as a preacher,

but were required to preach anyway. The modern pastoral job description allows for little specialization and, in fact, requires a broad assortment of gifts that a pastoral candidate may or may not have. Dan, for example, summarized his sense of calling quite simply: "I wouldn't say I was called to preach. I'm called to pastor." He preached because he has to in order to pastor, not out of a deeply-felt love of preaching. Relatedly, several research subjects cited the overwhelming responsibilities of pastors which leave little room for sermon preparation, increasing weekly anxiety to compose quality messages. Bob explained, "[A]s an associate I don't have the time built into my week to build my sermon," and Paul observed that when his church began to grow from three hundred to fifteen hundred people, "[W]e didn't hire a lot of staff, we just increased responsibility. The pressure became greater and greater. Some of these responsibilities had to get done and there's so many…no matter how hard I work I just can't get finished."

Finally, Dan explained in his interview that one of the worst exacerbating factors of preaching anxiety was the lack of understanding and empathy he received from his pastoral peers. At a particularly stressful and anxious moment, he went to some fellow pastors for help, but they couldn't understand his struggle: "I've confided in some other pastors, and they just don't go through this. It's like, 'Dan, what's wrong with you?'" He even sought professional counseling once to discuss the problem, and was dismissed:

> I've always been embarrassed about anxiety while preaching. I would rarely talk about it. I went to a counselor once. That was hard for me to do. Long time ago. It was a Christian counselor. I put it out there that I really struggle. The counselor said that if I had really been called…he really said this…if I had really been called, I wouldn't struggle like this, and there's something wrong with me spiritually. It didn't resonate, but it definitely wounded me. That made me withdraw a little more. That was the first time I really sought out help.

Phase 5: Decisive Climax

"You know, you're a real jerk on Saturdays. Is this how it's going to be?" –Mike's wife

Eventually, each research subject decided that his experience with PSA was not sustainable and was hindering his effectiveness in the pulpit and hurting his quality of life in general. Consequently, each subject decided to address the problem one way or another.

In some instances, this climax was reached through the counsel of loved ones. When asked if there was a moment in which they realized their anxiety was a problem, both Paul and Mike described conversations with their wives. According to Paul, "That moment was my wife. She said, 'Honey you're spending an inordinate amount of time on the last ten percent of this message. Just let it go and give them the ninety percent you have and go for it. You're being too perfectionistic." Mike's wife was less gentle: "Towards the end of that first year she said, 'You know, you're really a jerk on Saturdays. Is this how it's going to be? Because I got a feeling you're going to be doing this for a long time, and I don't like it.' She was the one who challenged me on that, who brought it to the surface." As Mike explained, he didn't enjoy the confrontation but realized its importance: "That was a good thing. Didn't feel good, but it was a good thing. I realized it was not acceptable, and I had to address that."

When asked about their own decisive climax, the other research subjects described more internal decisions. For Adam, the moment of decision was forced upon him during a hospitalization following anxiety-related symptoms. Dan realized his anxiety required serious assistance when he found himself becoming someone at home he did not want to be: "As the anxiety builds I find it coming out in my life with an anger

turned inward and that anger turned inward either makes me depressed or angry or a combination of both. My pent-up anger comes out at home more in rage. Those have been the times when I've been more apt to say, 'I think something inside me is not right. I need help'." Bob and Steve experienced similar moments of crisis. Steve took a new pastoral post and decided he could not endure the anxiety-inducing stress of preaching as he had at his previous church: "When I got to my new setting, I said, 'I have to change'." Bob made a similar resolution on the road, when taking a new pastoral post out of seminary. Driving to the town in which he had taken a new job as pastor he said to himself, "It's time to go now, and I just have to cope with whatever anxiety I feel, and whatever pressure I feel. It's just part of my personality that I refuse to give up or quit on anything."

Phase 6: Search for Causes

"I never really dealt with these issues." –Adam

The resolution to address PSA/CA, for all research subjects, included a search for the causes of their anxiety. The researcher's interview question, "What do you believe caused your anxiety?" elicited detailed responses from all subjects, indicating that they had each processed the topic and always very thoroughly. The subjects' explanations of the origins of their anxiety can be grouped into three categories: innate personality, lack of early parental support, and childhood trauma. These will each be discussed below, with details from their experiences explaining the category itself.

Innate Personality

After counseling and personal reflection, Tim came to the realization that much of his PSA is the result of who he has always been and the personality he's always had. Ever

since he was a child, he remembers blushing at the attention of others: “People would be sitting around a room and they’d just ask me a question in front of everyone. I didn’t feel like I could answer so I’d start blushing. They’d start laughing and I’d blush some more.” Eventually he realized this shyness is part of who he’s always been, and has even been reinforced over time. “I’m sensitive…I’m an anxious person”—a realization confirmed by personality tests and assessments. In his search for the cause of his anxiety, Bob also concluded that his fear of public speaking was partly the natural result of who he was and who he had always been. He did not suffer childhood trauma and had a supportive family growing up, but nonetheless grew up with a public-speaking phobia. This phobia was reinforced repeatedly with poor public-speaking experiences: “Growing up, I never had a positive experience doing public speaking. Every time I did it I would flatline, and so that’s created more fear.” His shy, communication-avoiding personality was reinforced by frequent negative occurrences.

Lack of Early Parental Support

The majority of research subjects also explained their PSA/CA as the result of a lack of adequate parental support. Several grew up with parents (especially fathers) that did not give them the affirmation, love, and encouragement they believe they needed in order to handle confidently the pressure of public speaking and other challenges. Steve spoke for several of the research subjects when he explained, “The confidence a father can instill in his son or daughter, when they know that he loves them and even if he has to correct or discipline them he still loves them…I just didn’t experience some of those things. I’ve always lacked a little bit of that confidence that even if I screw up, it’s okay, I’m still loved.” Tim admitted that while growing up, “I never wanted to be like my dad.”

His father was a driven, hard-working pastor that was loved by everybody but not a strong presence at home. “I really didn’t bond with my father and part of it is that he was a very strong disciplinarian,” he remembered. “I wanted to make sure I did it right, wanted to please my father-god,” but he never grew up with the sense that he had. Paul grew up with a similar experience. His grew up in a long line of successful men: “My dad came from a high-performance family. My great-grandfather was a United States senator and a state governor. He’s the only politician in [a certain state][337] to be U.S. congressman, U.S. senator, and a governor of the state.” Because of this legacy of accomplishment, Paul grew up with a father who pushed him to succeed but did not provide the emotional support and affirmation he believes he needed. Paul’s father paid for his tennis lessons, but was too busy to come watch his matches. He explained that, consequently, “in my family there’s this aspect of performance and high expectations, and these things trickle down.” He sees his perfectionism as a lingering effect of his family’s high expectations, and he traces his anxiety back to the lack of genuine acceptance he felt from them.

Mike also traced his anxiety back to feeling disconnected from his father: “[F]or me it was growing up with an alcoholic father. He always provided for us. We always had a roof over our head, but he would get home and drink until he passed out. I never had a relationship with my father. My relationship with my father was based on fear and disappointment.” According to the subject, his anxiety over sermons was the result of an overbearing pursuit of excellence so that he might eventually hear his father tell him “I love you.” He spent months with a counselor discussing this: “One of the things I learned in that process is that I was probably never going to hear my Father say ‘I love you.’ And

[337] The name of this state has been omitted to protect the subject’s anonymity.

he died two years ago. He died having never said he loved me." Mike had to learn to accept that disappointment, otherwise "it would always impact my preaching."

Childhood Trauma

Finally, research subjects listed childhood trauma as a cause of their PSA/CA. Dan and Adam both recalled extremely difficult childhood experiences that left them nervous about life in general. Adam described his painful memories: "I've experienced quite a bit of trauma in my life. I was burned severely as a young man, 30 percent of burns all over my body." Additionally, Adam was born with a cleft pallet, requiring constant surgeries and speech therapy. "It wasn't until grade seven that people could truly understand me," he remembered. As his public-speaking anxiety began to overtake his ministry early in his teaching career, he talked with his wife, psychiatrist, and mother and began to realize that these early traumas had left him feeling nervous and afraid. "I felt so afraid," he remembered, "like I never really dealt with these issues in the past." He remembers compensating for his insecurities by learning to speak publicly, but the unresolved fear was unleashed by the academic pressure of seminary. Similarly, Dan also remembered experiencing a difficult childhood: "In grade school I was the little kid. The intimidating and bullying and all that has affected what levels of confidence I feel in group settings…I don't know where I fit in, I don't feel adequate." He learned to be a people-pleaser in order to feel accepted by the group, but it did not address the deep-seated nervousness of not knowing his place. He explained:

> I think my anxiety goes back to my childhood experiences in peer groups. It was not safe. That still comes up. If something goes wrong and I get embarrassed, I have pretty intense feelings that come inside me. If I say something stupid…a more healthy person in those settings would blow that off and not worry. But the people-pleaser part of me would kick in, and I'd be thinking of fifty ways of how I can better tell somebody what they want to hear or do something so I don't look

> stupid, which is really stupid because that usually makes it worse. That's the way I see it.

Dan explained that his traumatic experience growing up was not localized in the home, but in social settings with peers. However, his early insecurities weren't counteracted by his parents or family life. "I didn't grow up with an alcoholic father or anything, but for whatever reason, my sister and I have very few childhood memories in the home…We both struggle with perfectionistic tendencies and people-pleasing, those kind of things."

Phase 7: Practical Adjustments

"Even if it's going bad, just keep smiling." –Bob

Following their search for the causes of their anxiety, each research subject attempted a variety of practical adjustments to limit their experience with PSA, with varying degrees of success. These adjustments were not cognitive in nature, in which a preacher tries to alter his mental approach to the responsibilities of preaching. These cognitive adjustments will be discussed later in the following section. The adjustments described in phase seven are practical changes in the task of regular preaching. Each research subject attempted to alter their homiletical situation in a variety of ways, hoping these practical adjustments would mitigate the seriousness of the symptoms. While the practical adjustments are wide and varied, there are also similarities between different research subjects' experiences.

Paul does not believe he would have ever been able to handle the anxiety of preaching if he hadn't embraced the team-teaching model used by his church, in which three preachers share the pulpit equally. Paul essentially mitigated his experience with PSA/CA by preaching less frequently.

Preachers unable to lessen their preaching load through team-teaching attempted to address the problem in other ways. Several subjects, for example, minimized their experience with pulpit anxiety with greater long-term planning of their preaching schedule. Some of the anxiety they felt on a week-by-week basis came with not knowing what to preach on the following Sunday. Not only did they have to write a sermon, but they had to select a topic, and a good one at that. As Dan remembered, "Preaching in a series has helped me a lot. In the early days, just preaching sermons one week out of John, the next week out of First Corinthians; there were times I would spend hours trying to figure out what to preach on instead of preparing a sermon." Mike also found that long-term planning eliminates some of the anxiety of figuring out what to preach on: "I do long series, mapped out. I'm always six months out in overall planning." Relatedly, several research subjects experimented with different weekly schedules to allow themselves more time to prepare for sermons. They realized that much of the PSA/CA they experienced in preaching was the consequence of feeling rushed towards the end of the week, afraid they wouldn't have anything to say. Tim, for example, used to take a day off early in the week but realized that pushed back his sermon preparation making it more likely he would feel the pressure of Sunday morning right around the corner. "So now I get my sermon outline completely finished," he explained, "then I take my time off"—usually on Friday. Mike, Dan, and Paul also minimized their weekly anxiety by adjusting their schedules to allow more sermon preparation earlier in the week. Mike explained his method: "[O]ne of the conclusions I came to was that by Thursday I really need to have a good idea where the sermon is going, so that after my day off on Friday, Saturday is

really just cleaning it up. That way I can enjoy my Saturday better, and when I wake up on Saturday I'm not on edge."

Steve altered his method of preparation to minimize his PSA/CA, but in a different sort of way. Given that the cause of his anxiety was a fear of doing injustice to the text by not completing enough research, he disciplined himself to research differently. Instead of researching the text from every angle in order to impress seminary professors who weren't even in attendance, he started the research by assessing the relevance of the preaching text to the hearts and minds of his congregants. Consequently, the background research became more pointed, helping him explain the relevance of the text to his congregants' lives and not answering all the exegetical questions about the passage that the audience didn't have. He explained, "[T]oday, I could get up at six on Sunday morning and completely change my sermon, completely change the outline very easily, because it's coming out of my heart rather than external sources. It's changed radically in five years."

Another practical adjustment made by several of these nervous preachers was attempting a different style of delivery more suited to their personalities. While many seminaries today emphasize preaching without notes, both Tim and Bob eventually ignored that advice and gave themselves permission to compose and deliver from scripted sermon texts—which they liked doing better, anyway. This new approach allowed them to focus their preparation toward a style that accorded their gifts and minimized their fears. Tim noted, "[A] manuscript gives me the assurance I need if there's anything I need to focus on." He explained that the manuscript allowed him to be "highly prepared, which is one of the keys to preaching anxiety: being highly prepared." Bob added:

> I'm a manuscript guy….I have to have a manuscript because I still have this great terror. The potential for me to flatline is always so great. Without having something in front of me, that would create angst for me, whether or not I look at it. I look at it less and less, but I still always have something with me when I'm teaching. I don't do outlines. I write everything out.

While Bob and Tim allowed themselves to use sermon manuscripts despite the current homiletical ethos, Steve realized that his own style of manuscript preparation was increasing his anxiety, not lowering it. His obsession with accuracy and preparation, coupled with the fear of saying something wrong, had led him to labor obsessively over a sermon manuscript, which increased his symptoms. Eventually he gave up manuscripting and decided to limit himself to short outlines, trusting that he could make a solid homiletical point without reams of research or finely-tuned, pre-written pages. "I stopped writing manuscripts," he remembers, "because I knew that if I wrote one I would use it. That would free me from the need to turn the phrase exactly. So I stopped." As he recounts, it worked. He realized his manuscript-less preaching style not only required less preparation, but allowed him to feel more natural as himself in the pulpit, without pretending to be more prepared or learned than he actually was.

The researcher would note that most of these practical adjustments centered on the way a preacher prepared for sermons, which helped to minimize their PSA/CA in the build-up to Sundays. However, the adjustments seemed to have residual benefits on the anxiety experienced during the delivery of a sermon and in the evaluation afterwards. As they would explain, delivering a sermon that has been more adequately prepared is an obviously less anxiety-producing experience. In Tim and Bob's case, delivering a sermon that has been written out allows them to know what to say, while in Steve and Mike's case, delivering a sermon from an outline frees them from the anxiety of feeling like they

need to say just the right thing. Additionally, evaluating a sermon that was more prepared in its composition produces fewer post-sermon jitters than evaluating one that was poorly prepared at the last minute.

In addition to different modes of preparation and delivery, research subjects recounted even more specific adjustments in their attempts to cope. After a few short months in the pulpit, for example, Bob remembers a co-worker approaching him with a tip he's never forgotten:

> I had been here for three or four months and I had preached twice, and this very kind associate came up to me. She's been here twenty years, and she said, "Greg, can I make a suggestion? You know everybody loves you here, because you're very warm and have an engaging personality. But you get in the pulpit and you're a totally different person. I'm sure it's because you're nervous." I said, "That's right." "Just try to be yourself. And just be yourself when you preach and people will love you. And here's the first tip: Smile. You have this huge smile that God has given you. So use it. If you smile, that will make you less nervous. Even if it's going bad, just keep smiling." That was significant for me, because I heard that and I really have tried. It's actually loosened me up a bit.

Along with more thorough preparation, better management of weekly responsibilities and time off, and different methods of preparation, Bob would add smiling-in-the-pulpit to those practical adjustments which helped minimize his experience with PSA. Said more technically, he found that projecting confidence and joy helped him feel more confident and positive about how things were going. Projecting confidence arrested the negative feedback loop in which a visibly nervous preacher makes an audience nervous, which then makes the preacher more nervous still. And in terms of dealing with the post-sermon evaluation, Tim learned to make another simple adjustment which helped mitigate symptoms. After preaching on Sunday and feeling the Sunday afternoon blues of regret and exhaustion, he recalled that "Sunday night is my best time to get in an argument with my wife, overeat, do all sorts of stupid things. I'd just have to tell myself: Just

go…to…bed. Usually by Monday I'm starting to feel better." In addition to combating anxiety with smiling-in-the-pulpit, Tim would add going-to-bed as another way of arresting the anxiety cycle in which nervous preachers find ways to make themselves more nervous, in this case, by replaying that morning's sermon.

Phase 8: Cognitive Restructuring

"Every day I would keep a journal of what I was thinking.
I would begin to see where the lies were." –Adam

Making practical adjustments to preparation, delivery, and evaluation only went so far in the personal experiences of the research subjects as they battled PSA/CA. They all realized that cognitive restructuring was required, in which they learned to approach the task from a different intellectual and emotional perspective. Given that their cognitive experiences with preaching were different from the outset, they each required and recounted a different type of cognitive restructuring.

Bob, for example, was reminded by church members that his fears of flatlining were irrational given the degree to which his congregation accepted him, despite his failures and mistakes. Once, before preaching at his home church, he was sweating with fear and confessed his anxiety to the lead elder. The elder responded quickly: "Bob, I'm going to tell you something and you really need to believe me. Every person out there, they love you. They absolutely love you. Whatever you say it doesn't matter. They still love you. You're among family. We love you. Just share your heart." Reconceiving his audience as a loving, accepting family required a significant, cognitive restructuring. He battled judgmental comments, negative critiques, and his own self-doubt by reminding himself that the congregation was not as intimidating as he had, for whatever reason,

come to believe. Over many years he began to trust the words of his elder-friend ("you really need to believe me") and grew more comfortable "just sharing his heart" with loving family members.

For his part, Tim attempted to reframe the task of preaching as a responsibility more in line with his gifts. While preaching on Sunday morning felt like an intimidating, unnatural assignment, a counselor helped him learn to re-conceptualize the event as something he actually enjoys: camp-directing. In his interview he retold the story:

> I've had little bits of professional help with a counselor and we talked about preaching anxiety. I direct camps. My counselor found out the things I enjoy in life, where I feel like I'm most comfortable. I founded a camp for many years. It was a very successful camp. A lot of kids came to Christ. I feel so natural in that setting. He just encouraged me to think of Sunday morning like I'm directing a camp instead of being a pastor. How do I direct a camp? I greet people, I love on people, I teach the kids. This church has a very formal liturgical service. I might be putting on a robe but in my heart I'm just being myself.

As Tim learned to see the Sunday morning preaching experience as something he actually enjoyed, apart from the apparent formality of the event, he found his anxiety levels decrease and even came to enjoy many aspects of preaching.

Paul learned to think differently in his own context. He learned to reject the cultural expectations of many of his listeners, which he discovered only increased his anxiety. In his mega-church setting with high standards of performance, he knew that his church was "consumed with the American dream," and not really processing the gospel message he was preaching. These cultural values were made clear to him one morning when a woman came up to him after a sermon, telling him, "Man, I keep trying to get my husband to wear his slacks the way you wear your slacks, the way they break over your shoes like that." He wondered, "[T]hat's what you're thinking about during the sermon? I mean, really? And you start getting realistic about where people are and how much

they're processing." Developing realistic expectations of how people will respond to a sermon helped him re-conceptualize his preaching by detaching how he felt it went from how people reacted: "In the early days you sweat over an outline and then you realize that half the people don't take notes. And they could care less what your outline says or looks like. Even in the early days, it's not so much about you and them but you and you, about what's acceptable to you. All this learning process allows you to be able to accept you." He realized that in a healthy church, the sermon only plays a small part in the overall ministry. "Don't make it more than it is," he cautioned.

Bob made the same discovery from a different angle. He came to recognize the inherent limitations in preaching, which allowed him to focus his ministry on more relational tasks:

> One of the best pieces of advice I got in seminary was, "If you just love 'em, they'll overlook a lot of your faults." And I think that was true. I just tried to love 'em as much as I could, and poured myself out. They said, "You just do whatever the Lord tells you and we'll follow you." It wasn't about the preaching. It was about getting people involved.

Finally, several subjects described the process of theological reorientation they underwent in order to address the symptoms and underlying causes of their PSA/CA. Paul articulated the thoughts of most research subjects when he explained, "[I]t's about my identity. My identity in Christ and my acceptance being in him. What does God say about who you are? Walk in that. If I'm not walking with him, not spending enough time in the world, then it's easy to get focused back on me, and what I do, and how I accomplish this." Here Paul is referring to the Christian doctrine of justification, in which believers are accepted by God because of Jesus Christ's action on the cross, which

eliminated the guilt of sin and the consequences of their ungodly failures. Adam trained himself to focus on the reality of his acceptance by God in Christ:

> I just began to confess that I wasn't finding my significance and security in Christ, that my focus wasn't eternal. I began to cultivate that awareness and sensitivity that Christ is my significance and security, in him alone is my strength. I began to do a thought analysis. Every day I would keep a journal of what I was thinking. I would begin to see where the lies were. A lie: "If I don't speak well, I'm inferior, I won't be loved," like my acceptance came from my voice. Once I began to discover the lie that I would be accepted by what I do, I could tell myself the truth, that I am accepted in Christ.

To facilitate this thought-analysis, Adam developed a "God-Can"—an actual coffee can with the label, "God-Can." In the God-Can he deposited prayers he wrote out for confidence and security. Eventually he would empty out the God-Can and throw the prayers away, believing they had been answered.

In summary, all the research subjects made various attempts to retrain their minds in the task of preaching in order to eliminate the perspectives and thoughts that they believed increased their anxiety. Some attempted to reconceive of their audience as a loving family, not hostile spectators. Some attempted to mentally reframe the experience in a way that allowed them to be themselves, preaching more in line with their gifts. Some developed realistic expectations about what could be accomplished during a sermon. And most subjects attempted a theological reorientation that separated their personal sense of worth from audience response and attached it more closely to the Christian doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone.

Phase 9: Long-term Maintenance

"I'm sure I'll slip back into it, but I just don't feel like
the message is all about me anymore." –Paul

After years of practical adjustments and cognitive restructuring, each research subject found a way to continue preaching despite the distraction and pain of their lingering symptoms, which were minimized but not eliminated. They learned to proactively manage their condition so as to continue preaching in fulfillment of their calling for the edification of their congregations. Most of them even mentioned learning to enjoy preaching once their symptoms became manageable. This long-term experience is best understood by listing and describing the variety of factors pertaining to this chronological phase of the struggle discussed by the research subjects in their interviews. These factors include a lessening of the most serious symptoms, an acceptance of some anxiety levels as normative, confidence to be able to handle preaching stress as it presents, boundary markers to indicate red-line PSA/CA symptoms, and improved quality of preaching. In this section the researcher will describe each of these factors with evidence from the interviews.

To begin with, all the research subjects enjoyed a lessening of the most serious symptoms, allowing them to continue preaching as a matter of course. At some point in each interview, every subject offered a "then-now" comment, in which they recognized where they once were and how far they believed they had come. Those then-now comments are listed below:

> Tim: "I'm really not as nervous as I used to be…I've got more confidence. I've got my routine down."
>
> Bob: "I'm sure I've improved considerably."

> Steve: “Today, when I go to the pulpit I have a good level of spiritual weightiness, but I don’t feel anxious at all. I just don’t feel anxious about the act of preaching…it’s gone, it’s been a deliverance from the Lord.”
>
> Mike: “That part of the anxiety has gone away. I don’t get anxious. I can go out with friends on Saturday night. I’m a little distracted. I’m still thinking about it. But it’s not like it was.”
>
> Dan: “[Now] I am rarely very anxious when I step up, and I’m rarely feeling bad when it’s over. I’m not saying it never happens. Sometimes it does.”
>
> Paul: “I don’t experience anxiety. I can’t say I never do. You put me in the right situation with too little preparation, I’m sure I’ll slip back into it, but I just don’t feel like the message is all about me anymore.”
>
> Adam: “I don’t have the fear of man in me. I have freedom in my inner man. I used to have the fear of man in me and that’s what drove me to succeed…But now I don’t have that fear of man.”

Relatedly, and as can be observed in those then-now comments, every research subject had come to accept some measure of PSA/CA as normative to their preaching experience. Their symptoms became tolerable and were also newly understood as necessary, given the seriousness of the task. Paul, for example, came to accept the wisdom offered him by a preaching professor in seminary: “If you don’t feel some butterflies when you get up to speak, you’re in trouble. There needs to be a sense of, ‘This is important, something’s on the line, here’.” According to him, “I continue to experience that. But I don’t experience the other [type of anxiety].” Mike also came to accept some of the anxiety of regular preaching, given the responsibility: “For me, it’s not the size of the crowd, it’s the size of the responsibility. I’m responsible if there are five people or five thousand. If you’re opening the Bible and you’re saying “This is what scripture says,” whether it’s a one-on-one conversation or you’re Billy Graham talking to thousands of people, that is a serious responsibility.” Additionally, Tim grew to

understand anxiety as a physiological response appropriate to an inherently nervous activity. While leaving the church and shaking hands with the pastor, congregants had commented on how cold and clammy his hands felt. Originally self-conscious about this, he learned this symptom was to be expected as a normal response to a potentially threatening situation: “It’s adrenaline. It’s part of the stress reaction God put in us so when early men were being chased by animals, we could run more freely.” These research subjects, over the years, have come to understand their anxiety as a normal part of a serious job. This realization itself seems to have mitigated their symptoms.

As it seems from the interviews, the research subjects gained confidence from their ongoing struggle, which allowed them to continue preaching while also experimenting with their approach to preaching in hopes of improving their experience. Mike pointed out, “[I]t’s not like it was [because] I’ve done it so much.” If he runs out of time to finish his sermon on Saturday night, he can go to bed peaceably knowing he can get up early on Sunday to finish the sermon without any problem. Tim has found confidence in his routine: “I get up early on Sunday. That helps with my anxiety. It helps to get the metabolism going…[s]o I don’t have diarrhea on Sunday mornings anymore. I’ve got more confidence.” Even when Adam experiences a revisiting of PSA/CA symptoms, he has a better response because he has learned confidence “inside of himself.” As he explained: “Every once in a while, when I experience those moments, it never rocks me. It just unnerves me. It’s almost like when you’re playing music, I can miss a couple bars, but I don’t miss a whole line. I know it inside of myself that I missed a couple beats, almost like I briefly stumbled, but I didn’t trip and fall.”

Because of this increase in confidence, each of the research subjects experienced a lessening of symptoms and a replacement of unhealthy anxiety with appropriate nervousness consistent with the serious task of preaching. They also learned to monitor their anxiety levels and make adjustments as necessary when their symptoms veered into unhealthy red-line territory—another factor involved in the long-term maintenance of PSA/CA for preachers. Mike, for example, continued to rely on his wife to help him identify "unhealthy fear." His friends and wife helped him notice when he was veering into old patterns. He noted, "They're the ones who say, 'What's going on with you?' That gets my attention." Dan learned to pay attention to his "internal gauge" which told him when he was feeling anxious so he could step back to handle it. And Adam came to recognize when he was relapsing and starting to believe the lie again that his sense of worth is dependent on his performance. He referred to this as getting "duped," and immediately confessed his relapse, translated it into a prayer for a renewed sense of acceptance, and deposited it in the "God-Can."

Finally, through the long-term maintenance of their pulpit anxiety, most of the research subjects indicated that the quality of their preaching, and not just the intensity of their symptoms, had changed for the better. After learning to focus on what he understood to be the true purpose of preaching, i.e., heart-change in the congregation, Steve believed that he's improved as a communicator. "I think I've gotten better over the years," he said, "at making the main thing the main thing. For me as a preacher, you need to have this message in your heart, and if this message is not in your heart, it's going to be hard to get it in anybody else's heart." Paul also believed that his abilities as a preacher have improved as he waged his struggle against anxiety. He remembers

receiving compliments from others, such as: “I feel like you guys are real and transparent.” He attributed those compliments to the fact that he has grown more comfortable preaching as an anxious human being sharing honest struggles with other anxious people. Adam agrees that with his new sense of humility he’s been able to foster “a greater connectivity with the audience.”

Phase 10: Spiritual Reflection

“This is my limp.” –Adam

As they learned to cope with their condition, each research subject reflected on their experience with PSA, both as a function of their identity as Christian believers who find meaning in struggle and in their heightened spiritual sensitivity as Christian ministers. They each had plenty to say about what their struggles with PSA/CA have taught them as people and preachers, which will be listed here as the virtues they frequently, and repeatedly, described in their interviews.

Humility

When asked if he learned anything important about preaching, life, and ministry in his struggle with PSA/CA, Bob responded simply: “The importance of humility.” Just when he felt he had made significant progress against his symptoms and felt like he was at the point at which he could get up and preach without feeling nervous, he would have a setback. Dan, as well as Paul and Tim, responded to the same question with the same answer: “It keeps me humble.” Tim explained that through this struggle he has discovered that “I’m never going to be a great preacher, but I know God has chosen me to communicate with the people in my church.” He learned the humility to accept his

limitations, while also believing that God had chosen him to serve his congregation with both his strengths and his weaknesses.

Dependence

Along with and related to humility, many research subjects listed "dependence" as a positive consequence of their struggle. Bob explained that his struggle with anxiety "certainly kept me in a place of dependence." He continued, "Gordon Fee said that preaching causes you to make deep facial impressions in the carpet of your study. This struggle with anxiety has kept me in that place where I have no ability to do this on my own. And no resources to do it, and no giftings to do it, so I cry out for help." Tim also cited dependence as a benefit of the struggle, manifesting itself in desperate prayer: "It's constantly brought me closer to God. I have to depend on him. I can't do it on my own strength. If I were just a good public speaker and didn't have anxiety and could wow crowds and felt like it was easy, I probably wouldn't be praying, asking God…Could you please help me?" Adam went so far as to say that

> there would have been almost no other way to experience the intimacy with God that I have without this experience. I think God almost needed to give me this severe of a wakeup call to deal with these issues that I've had for so long, and compensated for with outward performance rather than inward security and significance in Christ. I think God knew what he was doing. Almost like Jacob's limp. He deliberately gave Jacob that limp to continuously remind him of what God did in his life. This is my limp.

Trust

Through his own struggle, Steve learned to trust in God's plan. After many years of preaching, in his mind, unimpressive sermons that nonetheless did not inspire a congregational revolt, he learned that God's church is in good hands aside from his preaching. He explained, "I don't feel like the weight of the world hangs on the stuff I deal with as a pastor. That might be because of my experience of going through this

process as a preacher and emerging on the other side. I'm still here, I'm still alive, I'm still doing it, people are still benefiting from it, even though I went through this terrific struggle." Mike also learned to trust God's plan aside from his own supposed importance. "As pastors we can be the most narcissistic people in the world and make it all about us," he says. "It's not all about us, and at the end of the day, I could fall over and die of a heart attack, but somebody else is going to pick up the Bible next Sunday and preach the word. God's kingdom is not going to be advanced or thwarted by me. God may choose to use me, but he doesn't need me." In not eliminating his anxiety altogether, Mike felt God telling him, "Trust me." He explains that "God could have had my Dad tell me that he loved me before he died, God could have done that. But he didn't. He said, 'Trust me.' And I think that's the place of vulnerability that every pastor has through some experience in life." Through his unresolved struggle with rejection and performance, he learned to trust God's plan and continue with what he had been given to do.

Self-Understanding

In his struggle with pulpit anxiety, Paul had to come to terms with his own giftedness, which differed from the other preachers on staff at his church. While he spent his early years in ministry trying to compete with and emulate them, he eventually realized that much of his anxiety came from trying to be the type of dynamic preacher he wasn't. He learned to embrace his giftedness, asking "What is my unique style or contribution?" He learned how his own giftedness in teaching the scriptures and encouraging the broken could contribute to the holistic work of God in his congregation. Bob and Tim also learned, through their anxiety, to accept their more introverted natures and prepare sermons in a scripted manner that allowed them to use their strengths.

Discipline

Related to the virtue of dependence, several nervous preachers explained that their struggle with anxiety forced them to be disciplined in their ministry, sermon preparation, and emotional and spiritual health. Several subjects explained that the discipline of time-off was required, to enable them to keep their personal and family lives ordered, knowing that disorder at home and in their heart would likely result in an increase of symptoms. Tim explained that he exercises regularly to keep himself mentally and physically able to approach the task of preaching with energy and focus. Paul insists that the stress of preaching has required him to be disciplined in his spiritual walk. He thus journals and meditates regularly on truths that he knows he will forget if he doesn't set aside time to contemplate who he is as a Christian.

Compassion

Dan alone explained that his struggle with anxiety has given him a remarkable ability to empathize with others and their struggles with anxiety and similar problems. He quoted II Corinthians 1:3-4 in which Paul praises the "God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." As Dan says, "I feel like I understand other people really well, just because I've been through such a painful ordeal over this."

Grace

Grace was another lesson cited by the research subjects. As they came to terms with their limitations and recurring anxiety, they also came to appreciate God's unmerited favor more vividly. Mike came to internalize the Apostle Paul's realization in II Corinthians 12:9:"'My grace is sufficient for you.' Every pastor has to discover that in

some capacity in life, and that's a gift from God." Paul made the same realization over the course of his struggle:

> The grace of God has become so much more real and important to me. I think over the years as I've taught and studied more, I've learned that, 'You know what? God's not a works-oriented God. He doesn't base his love for us on how well we do things, [or expect] that every bit of the law is going to be fulfilled through us. It was fulfilled in Christ and that's what he credited to our account.

Phase 11: Homiletical Coaching

"Release the fear, brothers." –Steve

Finally, many of the research subjects felt deeply enough about the importance of their struggle with pulpit anxiety that they eventually looked for opportunities to help coach younger preachers in their own journeys. The research subjects found additional meaning in their difficulties by sharing their homiletical lessons with younger preachers in order to save young Christian communicators some of the agony they themselves had endured. Some have found younger preachers to mentor while some have become professors of preaching and talked directly to students about their own anxieties. Their advice seems to follow the pattern of their own experience. Bob, for example, would emphasize the importance of endurance, as he had to push his way through the anxiety until he found improvement. With time and perseverance "it does get better," he would tell a nervous preaching pupil. Steve also challenges his students to quickly learn the lesson that it took him many anxious years to acquire, i.e., that preaching from the heart is less anxious than preaching from the head. "Is it something you have identified yourself in?" he asks his students, "Is it something you know you need the grace of God in, and you're going to carry this message with all the warts and brokenness of your life into the pulpit, with the remedy of the gospel?"

Steve also challenges his students to free themselves from anxiety-producing techniques, which can often be the result of preaching from a manuscript. While he understands the importance of understanding your giftedness, he pushes his students: “I teach at the seminary and there are a lot of guys who want to preach from a manuscript, and I hammer them. I’m not telling you not to preach from a manuscript, but this is the place to try. I’m going to give you a B, or an A, so release the fear, brothers.”

In general, the subjects attempt to help their students deal with their own anxiety with grace and understanding, and not the cold judgment that Dan and Adam felt from some of their own instructors. The subjects give their students permission to experience the fear as a healthy function of preaching God’s word in a public setting. As Bob explained, “You never want to move past this. This is also your strength in that you remain in this place of dependence.” Bob goes on to tell a story of a preacher in seminary who explained to the seminary audience that if they ever got to a place where they felt like they could wing it, when they could just get behind a pulpit or lectern without going to a deep place of prayer and crying out to God, “very soon you’re going to be like many of my colleagues in the seminary who like Samson shake themselves and don’t realize that the Spirit has left their ministry.” In addition to affirming the importance of healthy fear and nerves, the research subjects also explained the benefits that can come from the struggle. They encouraged their students to contemplate their fears, looking for the root cause so that they may find strength and healing in their spiritual relationship with Christ. “Don’t ever lose the healthy fear,” Mike said, “but try to get to the bottom and root of the unhealthy fear. Seek wise counsel, seek mentoring, discipleship, prayerfully ask the Lord to deal with it.” Adam also challenged his students with similar words, telling them,

“Who you are as a speaker comes from what you think of yourself and who you are before God. Once you get that sorted out, the rest is just mechanics.” He thus recommended to his students a course opposite the one he took in his own ministry training: deal with insecurities first, then technique.

Summary

In this chapter the data from qualitative interviews has been organized to tell the story of experienced preachers who struggled with PSA/CA and learned to overcome it in various ways with various degrees of success. In chapter five, the data from the literature review and the qualitative interviews will be assimilated so that the researcher can make “best practice” recommendations to other preachers who struggle with PSA/CA.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

In this final chapter, the researcher has summarized the findings of his research. This summary includes findings from both the literature review and qualitative research interviews, and is organized according to the research questions. Additionally, chapter five includes closing recommendations for nervous preachers struggling with pulpit anxiety, along with recommendations for much-needed, additional research. Finally, chapter five is the chapter in which the researcher reveals himself as a nervous preacher doing research pertinent to his own condition. The researcher's summary findings and closing recommendations will be considered in the context of his own experience with public-speaking anxiety.

Summary and Findings

This study was designed to help nervous preachers suffering from pulpit anxiety learn to cope with anxious thoughts and behaviors in the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of sermons. As has been established by the qualitative interviews and supported by the literature review in this dissertation, pulpit anxiety is a definite condition that afflicts an unknown but significant number of preachers, negatively affecting the effectiveness of their preaching and their enjoyment of life and ministry in general. Christian preachers experience PSA/CA with respect to all kinds of anxiety-producing questions. These questions include the following: How will the congregation

respond to my sermon? Will I finish preparing my sermon on time? What will my supervisors think of my sermon? Will I responsibly interpret Scripture? Will I get so nervous that I won't make it through the sermon? Will I say something regrettable? Should I preach with a manuscript or not? Did I do enough research on the sermon? Should I really even be a preacher? These questions frequently combine with pre-existent fears of public performance and exacerbating professional factors to form a condition the researcher has referred to in this dissertation as "pulpit anxiety." In order to assist preachers afflicted by this condition, three research questions were formulated to guide the research and reporting in this dissertation. Each research question is listed below, along with the data from chapters two and four, which is summarized and organized according to each individual question.

Research Question One: PSA/CA Symptoms

The first set of research questions focused on symptomology: How have preachers experienced anxiety in the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of sermons? What symptoms can be identified in each individual preacher's experience and how common are those among research subjects and within the literature?

As described in chapter four, the research subjects experienced a variety of PSA/CA symptoms in the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of sermons. None of these symptoms were experienced universally by all subjects, nor were they experienced to the same degree, but they were all memorable enough to be cited in the subjects' personal narratives. During the preparation of sermons, some of the symptoms research subjects experienced included loss of cognitive function, obsessive preparation, avoidance of preaching opportunities, feelings of fear and dread, sleeplessness,

withdrawal from others, relational irritability, digestive problems and other physical symptoms such as headaches and frequent urination. During the sermon, some of the symptoms preachers experienced included the "freeze" response, increased heart rate, distractibility and difficulty concentrating, verbal disfluencies and difficulty communicating, as well as other physiological symptoms such as cold and sweaty hands. In the evaluation period after the sermon, some of the symptoms preachers experienced included feelings of shame and guilt, replaying of sermon "mistakes," mental and physical exhaustion, feelings of failure, and the dread at having to preach again. While individual preachers experienced a variety of symptoms in different ways, certain symptoms were more common than others. Prior to the sermon, irritability and dread were most commonly mentioned as symptoms. During the sermon, mental distraction was most commonly cited as a symptom. And following the sermon, regret, self-critique, and the dread of having to preach again were commonly listed as symptoms.

All of these symptoms are somewhat consistent with all three sections of the literature. The biblical commentary literature, for example, does not portray Moses, Jeremiah, Paul, and the disciples in public settings, and there is ongoing disagreement about the precise nature of their problems. However, it is acknowledged by commentators that the fear of public speaking had some bearing on their situations, and that certain PSA/CA symptoms can be observed or deduced from these texts. Moses dealt with feelings of inadequacy, avoidance, dread, and difficulty speaking.[338] Jeremiah attempted to avoid his preaching assignment, and was also plagued by feelings of inexperience and inadequacy.[339] The disciples had pre-sermon anxiety,[340] and Paul trembled and had

[338] Exodus 3:1-4:17.
[339] Jeremiah 1:4-19.

trouble communicating.[341] Each of these symptoms were mentioned at some point in the qualitative interviews.

The homiletical literature is also consistent with these PSA/CA symptoms. The reader will remember that in the homiletical literature review the symptoms were organized into physiological, emotional, rhetorical, attitudinal, and occupational categories. Massey described headaches and sleeplessness (physiological symptoms) and feelings of loneliness and dread (emotional symptoms).[342] McDonald de Champlain described the "unnatural, mechanical, awkward behavior" of nervous speakers (rhetorical symptoms).[343] Clifford mentioned that nervous preachers often develop attitudes of willfulness and seriousness (attitudinal symptoms) in which they "take out" their anxiety on equally nervous congregations.[344] Larsen also documents the burnout that nervous preachers can suffer, leading them to leave the pulpit in favor of a less stressful calling (occupational symptoms).[345] Each of the research subjects described these same symptoms in their own personal narrative, even, and including, Clifford's "attitudinal symptoms" of willfulness and seriousness. Steve, one of the research subjects, responded to his own public-speaking anxiety with an unhealthy seriousness towards his own highly critical congregation. This seriousness only served to elevate his own anxiety while also increasing the congregation's tendency to criticize his preaching.

There is also significant overlap between the public-speaking literature and the symptomatic experiences described by the research subjects. The reader will recollect

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[340] Mark 13:11.
[341] I Corinthians 2:1-5.
[342] Massey, *The Burdensome Joy of Preaching,* 15, 19.
[343] McDonald de Champlain, "What to Do While Preaching," 105.
[344] Clifford, *From Fear to Freedom,* 27-28.
[345] Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching,* 51.

from chapter two that the correlates and symptoms of PSA/CA were organized into personality correlates, social perceptions, and behavioral correlates. Within behavioral correlates—the section most pertinent to this research question—the literature subdivided further to describe three categories of PSA/CA symptoms: general communication findings, verbal tendencies, and physiological correlates.[346] Generally speaking, people with PSA/CA avoid public communication, because of the physical and emotional discomfort such situations create.[347] People with PSA/CA also tend towards rigidity, inhibition, disfluency and agitation in their verbal communication.[348] Physiologically, public speaking experts list several symptoms including trembling hands, flushed neck,[349] elevated heart rate,[350] and sweating and shaking.[351] Each of these symptoms were mentioned by the research subjects at some point in their narrative.

Research Question Two: Attempted Coping Strategies

The second set of research questions focused on the coping strategies of nervous preachers: What coping strategies were utilized in the management of preaching-induced anxiety? Are the coping strategies identified in research subjects consistent with those discussed in the literature?

The research subjects attempted to cope with their PSA/CA symptoms in a variety of ways—again not universally, or to the same extent. These strategies included practical and cognitive adjustments. The practical adjustments described by research subjects were the lessening of preaching responsibilities, greater long-term planning, altering the

[346] Daly, Caughlin, and Stafford, "Correlates and Consequences of Social-Communicative Anxiety," 23-50.
[347] Ibid., 47.
[348] Mulac et al., "Behavioral Assessment," 213.
[349] Heisl and Beatty, "Physiological Assessment," 193.
[350] Ibid., 198.
[351] Ayres et al., "Visualization and Performance Visualization," 385.

weekly schedule to allow earlier preparation, preparation focused on application instead of research, experimentation with presentation styles more conducive to their gifting, more confident presentation, and healthier lifestyles to cope with stress. Cognitive adjustments included recasting preaching as a family function in a loving environment, altering expectations more in line with what can reasonably be expected from a sermon, theological reorientation through Christian-identity formation, perseverance training, frequent reminders of calling, and professional counseling to cope with communication fears and insecurities.

There is some significant overlap between these coping strategies and those recommended by the biblical commentary literature, although mostly in the cognitive realm and not the practical. The Bible does not tell us, for example, whether or not Moses made any practical adjustments to his weekly sermon preparation schedule in order to alleviate the slowness of his speech and tongue. (In fact, the Bible does not tell us if Moses even *had* a weekly sermon preparation schedule.) The biblical commentary literature notes that God directed Moses to address his fears by internalizing his calling and depending on the ever-present Spirit.[352] Similarly, Jeremiah was assured by God that the Lord would sustain him through many trials, and that he had been chosen for the particular task he had been given.[353] The disciples were instructed by Jesus to depend on the Holy Spirit during anxious times,[354] and Paul dealt with his anxiety by understanding God's plan to draw glory to himself through the use of frail human instruments.[355] The research subjects mentioned the importance of those coping strategies, which include

[352] Exodus 4:12.
[353] Jeremiah 1:8.
[354] Mark 13:11.
[355] 1 Corinthians 2:4-5.

calling, dependence on God, and acceptance of personal limitations. There is also significant overlap between the research subjects' attempts at coping and the coping strategies recommended in the homiletical literature. Homileticians mentioned many strategies to help nervous preachers, including conditioning through trials,[356] focusing on the needs of the congregation instead of the inward need for approval,[357] finding your identity in the perfect life of Christ and the atoning sacrifice of his death and not in public performance,[358] constant and earnest prayer,[359] reclaiming a sense of divine calling,[360] and dependence on God's ever-present Spirit.[361] The preachers interviewed for this dissertation often cited these same coping mechanisms. They did not, however, list the coping strategies prescribed by McDonald de Champlain, which included visualization and relaxation.[362] Nor did they list playfulness and self-differentiation, as described by Clifford in his thesis investigating the application of family systems theory in a local church setting, and the best way to cope with anxiety.[363] The researcher supposes that these more clinical and psychological approaches were too far afield for evangelical preachers who generally operate in an evangelical cultural bubble.

While there is significant overlap between the experience of the research subjects and the biblical commentary literature and homiletical literature, there is little overlap between these coping strategies and those recommended by public-speaking experts. No research subject mentioned systematic desensitization, skills training, cognitive-oriented (COM) modification, visualization, performance visualization, or Multidimensional

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[356] Massey, *The Burdensome Joy of Preaching,* 27.
[357] Marquart, *Quest for Better Preaching,* 66.
[358] Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching,* 51.
[359] Adams, *Preaching: The Burden and the Joy,* 47.
[360] Massey, *The Burdensome Joy of Preaching,* 20.
[361] Ibid., 52.
[362] McDonald de Champlain, "What to Do While Preaching," 113.
[363] Clifford, *From Fear to Freedom,* 29.

theory. Presumably this is because of the aforementioned cultural gap between more clinical and secular university settings and the world of evangelicalism, in which public-speaking experts and homileticians are unaware of each other's struggles and do not share the same solutions or language. A case can be made, however, that research subjects were unknowingly attempting the recommendations of public-speaking experts, albeit informally and with a different vocabulary. Skills training, for example, operates on the theory that many people get nervous about speaking because they have not been properly trained to speak well.[364] The key to minimizing anxiety is therefore to address this skills deficit. The research subjects interviewed commonly mentioned that as they learned to speak publicly through weekly experience, they got better at coping with the anxious emotions the task unleashed within them. It did not involve the coaching or clinical setting recommended by the experts, but operated on the same simple premise. Additionally, cognitive-orientation (COM) therapy trains speakers to focus on communicating content, as opposed to ensuring a satisfying performance for the audience.[365] Several research subjects learned, through self-instruction, that preaching "performances" were often overrated, as listeners failed to demonstrate significant life-change even after a magical homiletical performance. (COM therapy without the acronym.) These subjects eventually learned to focus on sharing meaningful content with those listeners in the congregation who truly wanted to learn and grow aside from a dynamic presentation. Additionally, visualization and performance visualization attempt to help speakers learn how to speak by imagining themselves delivering a successful speech. None of the subjects used the word "visualization," but at least one subject, Tim,

[364] Kelly and Keaton, "Skills Training as a Treatment for Communication Problems," 294.
[365] Motley, "COM Therapy," 337-338.

described a similar coping strategy in which he came to see the act of preaching differently, as something he enjoyed doing and could even do well.

Perhaps the greatest overlap between the coping strategies employed by the research subjects and those recommended in the public-speaking literature is the Multidimensional theory advocated by Kangas Dwyer.[366] The Multidimensional model recommends a multi-pronged approach to a public speaker's anxiety, after identifying a speaker's anxiety trigger. Again, not a single research subject used the phrase "Multidimensional" in their personal narrative or described any type of clinical therapeutic process, but they all described a long-term attempt to cope with their anxiety by trying several different coping mechanisms, hoping something worked for their particular struggle, personality, situation, and background. In the opinion of the researcher, most of the research subjects were practicing a Multidimensional approach to their anxiety, albeit in an informal and self-directed way.

Research Question Three: Success of Attempted Coping Strategies

The third set of research questions focused on the success of various coping strategies: To what extent were these coping strategies successful in the management of preaching-induced anxiety? Are some coping strategies more effective than others? What determines their effectiveness?

With regard to the question of effectiveness, every research subject expressed improvement in their experience with PSA/CA. Their rates of improvement varied in both degree and pace. Some reported significant improvement in a shorter amount of time (e.g., Adam), some significant improvement over a longer period of time (e.g., Paul), while some experienced substantial but less significant improvement in a shorter amount

[366] Kangas Dwyer, "The Multidimensional Model for Selecting Interventions," 359-374.

of time (e.g., Bob), and some substantial but less significant improvement over a longer period of time (e.g., Dan). Without a more quantitative analysis, it is difficult and perhaps impossible to assess which coping strategies were most effective for the research subjects and should be recommended for other nervous preachers. However, strictly based on the number of times a strategy was mentioned by the research subjects, the most popular coping mechanisms included earlier preparation, recovery of calling, recasting of the event, expectations adjustment, stylistic experimentation, perseverance training, and Christian identity formation. Furthermore, if one considers assistance and accountability from loved ones and professional counselors a coping strategy, it was by far the most frequently cited and apparently most successful means of coping.

It is difficult to compare the apparent effectiveness of the research subjects' means of coping with the research literature, given that the researcher did not test quantitatively for the most successful coping strategies. Additionally, the homiletical and biblical commentary literature have little to say on the success of various strategies. It can be deduced, however, that whatever coping strategies Paul, Moses, Jeremiah, and the disciples attempted turned out to be rather successful, as the biblical evidence suggests that their preaching ministry endured even as threats around them intensified. Moses effectively retrieved Israel from Pharaoh's clutches in Egypt, Jeremy encouraged Judah through its deportation to Assyria, the disciples quickly spread the gospel throughout the Mediterranean region, and Paul is largely responsible for founding the Gentile church—despite his rhetorical weakness.

In her chapter on measuring various remediation strategies to identify which have the best chance at helping nervous speakers, Hsu concluded that desensitization,

visualization, performance visualization, COM therapy, Multidimensional therapy, and skills training all reduced trait communication apprehension, and that all but COM therapy and Multidimensional therapy reduced state CA.[367] From a non-quantitative perspective, the most successful coping strategies described by the research subjects do not contradict Hsu's results, but the different cultural contexts (secular/university/clinical vs. pastoral/evangelical) and the different natures of the experiments (quantitative vs. qualitative) draw into question the significance of any perceived overlap.

Recommendations for Practice

For preachers dealing with the symptoms of public-speaking anxiety, the researcher would first like to offer reassurances, based on the interviews with research subjects, that they are not alone in their experience. The examples of nervous speakers in the Bible even show that Christian tradition has regarded public-speaking apprehension—when combined with a genuine sense of divine calling—as beneficial for the preacher and even the congregation. PSA/CA can teach preachers humility and dependence on God while also drawing greater attention to the Holy Spirit of God who, according to the Christian scriptures, should alone get the credit for the fruit of successful ministry (I Corinthians 2:4-5). PSA/CA should therefore be accepted and even embraced as a preacher's opportunity to learn about the source of his fears as well as accept his limitations as a chosen yet broken vessel of God. Even from an evolutionary perspective, public-speaking experts observe that PSA/CA can be instructive in the way it clarifies the dynamics at play in a public-speaking setting.[368] While audiences are not predatory wolves going after weaker, separated members of the pack, the evolutionary perspective

[367] Hsu, "Treatment Assessment of Communication Apprehension," 261.
[368] Fensholt, *The Francis Effect,* 18-32.

helps speakers understand that there is much to fear in public speaking, which can be a dangerous task requiring great courage.

Nonetheless, it is no insult to God to accept the blessings that come from PSA/CA while also learning to cope with its symptoms in the hopes of eliminating the worst of its negative effects. Successful remediation strategies have already been mentioned but are worth reiterating. Firstly, much of public-speaking anxiety can be lessened by earlier, and more deliberate, preparation. Fear of failure often pushes speakers to avoid preparing until the last minute, which (predictably) only increases the chances of poor performances, which only increases a speaker's fear of speaking. Secondly, developing a style that minimizes anxiety is important for a speaker, even if it contradicts the instruction of much-beloved homiletics professors. Preachers inclined to speak from manuscripts should probably speak from manuscripts. Preachers inclined to speak a message of application from their heart should do so, and avoid the hours of laborious preparation reading esoteric texts that their professors often expect from them. Thirdly, preachers should gain a realistic understanding of what is typically possible during a sermon. Much pulpit anxiety comes as the result of exaggerated expectations of large numbers of listeners (many of whom aren't even listening), hoping to make profound discoveries and major lifestyle changes as a result of a brilliant thirty-minute stemwinder. These dreamy expectations are only exacerbated by the internet medium, from which listeners can find those types of sermons delivered by supernaturally gifted preachers seemingly able to inspire significant change in listeners on a weekly basis. Many anxious preachers need to learn to scale back their expectations regarding how many people are truly listening to sermons, so that their minds are not forced to deal with such

cumbersome expectations that are impossible to meet. More importantly, they need to decide whether a sermon by itself can really lead to the sort of change that the Bible says only God can inspire.[369]

Additionally, anxious preachers need to make use of professional counselors and supportive friends and family to internalize, ever more deeply, the message of grace inherent to the Christian gospel that slowly frees God's workers from feelings of inadequacy due to their own failures. It is oftentimes through repeated failure, either real or perceived, that people come to develop a robust understanding and appreciation of the Christian gospel, in which their failures in all walks of life are justified by the perfect performance of Christ on earth. Coming to terms with this message of Christian grace is a communal event, in which God's preachers are forced to receive the accountability, prayer, direction, and scriptural encouragement of loved ones. Nervous preachers suffering from pulpit anxiety would be well-served to find a professional counselor or wise friend with whom to discuss the types of therapeutic topics described by the research subjects in this dissertation. These therapeutic topics may include possible causes of anxiety (childhood trauma, innate personality type, lack of early parental support and related attachment issues), the application of the Christian gospel to performance anxiety, and remediation attempts that might be worth trying. Finally, part of the solution for nervous preachers may also come in the wisdom of secular texts and experts. Evangelicals can be loath to venture beyond the walls of Christendom, but hopefully this dissertation has demonstrated that the most thorough research done in the area of PSA/CA is by secular researchers in university settings. Their wisdom is not bathed in biblical tradition, but offers important insights into cause and remediation. The

[369] John 6:63.

researcher recommends that preachers struggling with PSA/CA pick up a secular text to glean its insights or, at the very least, to feel less unique and alone in their symptomatic struggle.

While this research project focused on arriving at recommendations for nervous preachers, the researcher would also like to briefly make further recommendations to two groups of people who have important lessons to learn from a struggle not necessarily their own: homiletics professors and non-anxious preachers. As was noted in chapter four, several research subjects commented on their homiletical struggles in seminary and described preaching professors that failed to adequately equip them to successfully cope with their pulpit anxiety. The frequency with which this theme emerged in the qualitative interviews has persuaded the researcher that it cannot be ignored. Consider that Bob, one of the research subjects, was educated for several years in seminary by (in the opinion of the researcher) a highly-respected and well-known homiletics professor and author of many books on preaching read by thousands of students. Yet even after several years on the same campus, this esteemed professor apparently never really came to understand just how terrified of preaching Bob was, forcing him into a mold of preaching that did not, in any way, suit his personality or gifts. While it is true that other research subjects acknowledged being successfully coached and counseled by different professors as they dealt with their own public- speaking anxiety. Yet, Bob was not the only one to describe less sensitive treatment. The researcher hypothesizes that much of this disconnect between professors and nervous students is due to the fact that many preaching professors are of the more extroverted, confident type that struggle to empathize with the insecurities of more introverted, apprehensive students. Regardless, homiletics professors

need to understand that many young preachers are nervous enough about preaching as it is, and their casual disregard for the depth of these students' fears exacerbates their students' sense of failure at the outset. Pre-set manners of preaching and preparation oftentimes worsen the experience, and chip away at students' sense of calling. While every preaching professor is entitled to advocate a style and approach to preaching, the character and personality of each individual student must be considered as raw material that may not fit the professor's homiletical mold. The researcher recommends a far more personal approach with students, in which preaching students receive individual coaching that respects their unique gifting and deals more sensitively with the issues that have oftentimes produced debilitating but well-founded fears that professors may not understand.

Secondly, the researcher would care to speak to non-anxious preachers who do not necessarily suffer from acute PSA/CA symptoms. First of all, it would be worthwhile for all preachers to understand how nervous they do *or do not* get during the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of sermons, and why they do or don't.[370] While most preachers might not believe they suffer from pulpit anxiety per se, there might be some particular aspect of the homiletical task that arouses anxious thoughts, feelings, or behaviors. Such increased self-awareness regarding the degree and cause of a preacher's anxious symptoms (if any exist) may not only lead to opportunities for remediation, but may also create a more supportive, accepting climate in which Christian communicators are more comfortable discussing their communication struggles. Perhaps the question to ask young preachers is not, "Do you struggle with pulpit anxiety," but, "What part of preaching

[370] The issue of diagnosing any preacher's PSA/CA levels is briefly discussed in a later section, "Recommendations for Further Research."

makes you most nervous, if any part does?" If, even after such self-evaluation, preachers conclude that they have no such struggles, they would also do well to appreciate more and understand better the gift of confidence the Lord has bestowed on them. The preaching community would be well-served as more confident preachers, for the sake of empathy and compassion, could find a way to deal more sensitively with their nervous peers, for whom preaching is a far more emotionally vulnerable act requiring incredible courage. At the very least, nervous preachers might have a lesson or two to share with non-anxious preachers who do not get nervous in the pulpit but who do have other phobias for which they need healing.

Recommendations for Further Research

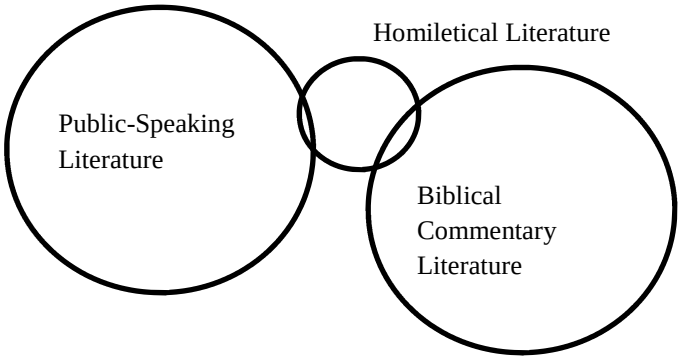
Additional research must be done in order to further close the gap in the literature regarding pulpit anxiety. Beginning with the present study, a broader sampling of nervous preachers would only help to refine the data. While seven subjects were interviewed, the number of nervous preachers sweating in the pulpit is surely larger than the sample set, and an additional study with additional subjects would provide additional insights on pulpit anxiety and the best ways to cope with its symptoms and causes. The study could also be broadened to include preachers from beyond the cultural setting of the researcher. Female preachers may have important experiences to share and observations to make, given the researcher's anecdotal understanding that many women respond to anxiety differently than men. And while the religious-theological setting of this research is evangelical-Christian, perhaps other denominations and religious communicators of other faith traditions would have experiences to share and recommendations to make. African-American gospel preachers, for example, preach in a decidedly different way from most

white evangelical communicators, and it would be worth researching how their public-speaking anxiety levels compare to the subjects interviewed here.

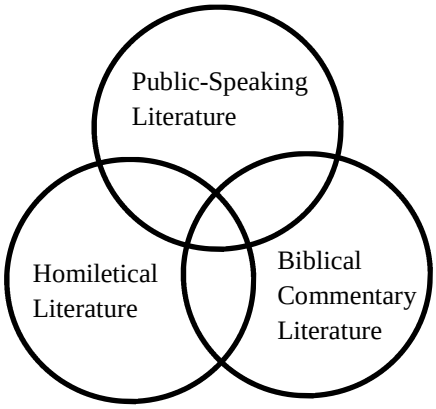
As a further area of research, additional data could be gathered to help distinguish between severe pulpit anxiety requiring treatment and normal nervousness endemic to the natural dynamics of public speaking and the personality of the preacher. How does a preacher distinguish between simple butterflies in the stomach and a flock of angry birds tearing up his intestines? This question would depend largely on what is "normal anxiety" for a preacher, which would be hard to measure. As the public speaking literature demonstrates, measuring PSA/CA is a challenge fraught with methodological problems including the effectiveness of the types of diagnostic tools being used, the symptoms being measured, and what the results even mean. Nonetheless, it surely must not be too complicated to devise a measurement technique to assist preachers in knowing if their anxiety is healthy nerves or disabling PSA, and what might be done about it.

Beyond these two areas of recommended further research—additional subjects from other sub-cultures and investigation into the difference between "normal" nerves and unhealthy PSA—any additional research on pulpit anxiety would only help to close the gap in the literature regarding this important topic. The reader will remember from chapter two that the literature on pulpit anxiety is thin. Returning to the Venn diagram from chapter two regarding the overlap between what certain types of literature have to say about pulpit anxiety, any research which helps increase the overlap between two or all three of these areas could help future researchers and practitioners in any of those three disciplines. Ideally, the available literature on pulpit anxiety would look more like a normal Venn Diagram—the figure on the right.

Current state of the literature with respect to pulpit



Ideal state of the literature with respect to pulpit anxiety



In order to close this literature gap, the following research topics, which include two or more of the above areas of literature, are proposed. Firstly, how effective are the remediation techniques offered by public-speaking efforts on the experience of nervous preachers? Few nervous preachers had any familiarity with the research or recommendations of public-speaking experts who study fear of public speaking for a living. Secondly, how likely is it that the examples of nervous preachers in scripture (i.e., Moses, Jeremiah, Paul, and Jesus' disciples) were actually struggling with PSA/CA? The commentary literature is brief and conflicted. Thirdly, what does the history of religions and religious communicators have to contribute to the observations of public-speaking experts when it comes to public-speaking anxiety? Public-speaking experts seemed uninterested in PSA/CA in a religious context, much less learning from church history which has a massive data set of public speakers and preachers that goes back further than public-speaking experts have been researching.

Finally, other questions surfaced during this research that would also help fill in the literature gap. How do most preaching professors handle the issue of pulpit anxiety in their preaching classrooms, and what would experienced homileticians recommend from their own classroom experience? Several subjects commented on their experience in preaching class as being either a help or hindrance when it came to their anxiety levels. Also, given that several research subjects commented on the matter of manuscripting sermons, it might be worth considering if the current emphasis on preaching without notes has run its course and reached the point at which preachers now feel unable to preach in their own voice and style. It could be helpful to research the various delivery styles of preachers and the effect they have on anxiety levels before, during, and after preaching.

Personal Reflections from the Researcher

Finally, the researcher would like to bring the research full circle by admitting to his own public-speaking anxiety and by adding his own narrative to the data to be considered by future readers, researchers, and preachers. This final step in the dissertation will be taken, not as an act of self-indulgence, but as an example of one preacher trying to apply the wisdom of the literature and the counsel of experienced preachers into his own personal and professional setting. The researcher's admission may help other preachers make personal sense of the data as they seek to make their own applications. This step will also bring the research full circle, as it was the researcher's pulpit anxiety which necessitated and inspired this dissertation in the first place. Excluding this final act of self-application would run the risk of this dissertation being little more than a well-

researched academic dead-end. The researcher will complete this step within the same narrative framework outlined in chapter four.

Like the seven research subjects, I felt called by God to serve in pastoral ministry (Phase One: Compelling Ministerial Call). While in the formative years of college I discovered, with the help of mentors and friends, that I had a gift-set well suited to the responsibilities of Christian ministry. I even liked preaching. I had spoken publicly in high school, participated in debate and student government, performed in school plays and musicals, and had even spoken several times in church. These public performances generally went well and seemed to prepare me for the public performance aspect of vocational ministry. After preaching to a large college group once, I felt so natural as a speaker and so positive about the audience's response that I could not imagine doing anything else with the rest of my life. A mentor-friend of mine agreed, and we both regarded the experience as a divine affirmation of the way God had blessed me to serve others through preaching. However, behind my early preaching and frequent public performances lay an unresolved anxiety that left me terrified of stepping in front of others in class, church, or any sort of audience—no matter how well it went (Phase Two: Early Public Speaking Apprehension). I kept these fears hidden from others, and learned to speak publicly in ways that avoided but did not alleviate the symptoms. I spoke from manuscripts, worked hard to memorize text, and generally utilized years of theatrical training which allowed me to perform while scared.

The symptoms of my PSA/CA only grew with time, however—especially as my preaching and teaching load expanded (Phase Three: Unremitting Symptomatic Experience). Prior to a sermon, I would experience severe diarrhea, physical shaking, and

cold and clammy hands. I would dread the experience, be irritable with others, and have a hard time concentrating on anything other than the upcoming sermon. I prepared obsessively, writing out a manuscript word-for-word and practicing it out loud four to six times. During a sermon, my mouth would go dry, I would struggle to stay focused, and I would be mentally divorced from the content of a sermon while furiously trying to combat negative thoughts of how terribly it was surely going. If I did not have a manuscript to use I would struggle to communicate coherently, freeze in an effort to think of what I needed to say next, and have to keep myself from running off the stage to escape the situation. My physical symptoms did not abate, either. Once, as I got up on stage to preach, my stomach became so nervous that I had to excuse myself from the podium to use the restroom for several minutes. After most sermons, I struggled to sleep or concentrate, due to feelings of regret at what I had said. I fantasized about quitting the ministry and felt a palpable desire to call every church member in attendance and apologize to them for the sermon, explaining to them that I could do much better if they would just give me another chance.

The anxiety I felt was only made worse by the dynamics of professional ministry. (Phase Four: Exacerbating Professional Factors). For starters, I was serving as a young church-planter with no staff and a growing, yet struggling church. Writing sermons for a church-plant that was not yet established and struggling for survival added extra pressure that I, in my inexperience, did not know how to handle. Other church plants had started up around mine with much more gifted preachers than I. I heard about them from former parishioners of mine that left my church to join theirs. Additionally, my Masters of Divinity program made various attempts to help their students deal with personal fears

and other “issues,” but these had no application to preaching. My homiletic program focused exclusively on content and homiletical strategy rather than the personal intersection between the sermon and the preacher.

Several years into full-time ministry, the weekly pressure of preaching nearly forced me out of the pulpit. Preparation was laborious and exhausting, sermons felt lousy, the congregation seemed unmoved, and recovery was slow and painful. In desperation, I resolved to address my anxiety and decide if I had made a mistake in becoming a preacher in the first place (Phase Five: Decisive Climax). I sought the counsel of a Christian therapist who helped me think through the source of my anxiety and the best way to cope with it (Phase Six: Search for Causes). Like several of the research subjects, I grew up in a successful, middle-class family that provided for my physical needs but left many of my emotional needs unmet. This vacuum left me desperate for attention and affirmation. I found these in public performance, but also found that performance did not satisfy the depth of my need. Furthermore, I found that audiences and congregations are not always that attentive or affirming, and that their rejection and criticisms only served to worsen my pre-existing sense of inadequacy.

Having identified a cause, I experimented with several coping strategies to help alleviate and hopefully cure my condition (Phases Seven and Eight: Practical Adjustments and Cognitive Restructuring). Practically speaking, I decided that if manuscript preaching saves me from the worst of my PSA/CA symptoms, even if it robs the sermon of spontaneity, it is an exchange worth making. Having a written text in front of me not only allows me to prepare according to my giftedness, but also gives me the reassurance of knowing I will know what I want to say if my mind goes blank.

Additionally, I disciplined myself to attempt sermon completion by Saturday morning (for a Sunday morning sermon), so that I could enjoy time with my family and relax my body and mind the rest of the day in preparation for Sunday. Cognitively, I attempted to free myself from the perfectionism that had formed within me due to a desperate desire to be affirmed by others. I learned to preach imperfect, incomplete sermons as well as I could, slowly realizing that the world does not end if every point is not made or illustrated perfectly. I have also come to learn that while preaching can change lives, it has no power to convert and compel unless coupled with listening ears and a willing heart—things that are far beyond my control. Partly because of this, I have learned and am learning to preach shorter sermons. There is no use in preaching forty-minute sermons that are stressful to compose and do not generally convict most people in the congregation when, in fact, truly eager listeners are happy to receive the same instruction in shorter bursts, anyway.

These practical and cognitive adjustments are still being made. However, I have found my symptoms have abated significantly and have also found a sustainable long-term course that slows me to preach even in my greatly reduced nervous condition. (Phase Nine: Long-term Maintenance). My stomach is less nervous on Sunday mornings. When preparation is difficult, I no longer “lock up,” but can make decisions regarding content and composition. If sermon delivery is going poorly, I can bear down and “get through it,” knowing I’ll have another opportunity next week. After a mediocre or poor sermon, I still feel guilty and embarrassed and want to call everyone in attendance to apologize. However, I’m able to recognize that response as normal, if unhealthy, and can move on into preparing for the following weekend. Like the research subjects, I’ve

learned that my PSA/CA is typical for many public speakers and indicative of the sort of dangerous, stressful task I have committed myself to. Also like the research subjects, I have learned a great deal through this struggle—lessons that I likely would not have learned had I not sweated my way through so many messages over the years (Phase Ten: Spiritual Reflection). I have come to empathize with anxious people. I have been forced to admit my weaknesses. I have had to confess my jealousy of others who are more gifted than I. I have been forced to study scripture and connect emotionally with the other nervous preachers of the Bible.

Most importantly, I have come to see my struggle with PSA/CA as a gift from God, so that I may understand better what it means to be a human being in relation to my heavenly Father. Most people attempt to find personal happiness in some source other than being chosen as God's children. In my case, I sought to find happiness in the acclaim and affirmation of audiences. Even with discipline and hard work, I discovered that the most positive congregational response to the most compelling sermon will not satisfy the inner longings of the preacher's soul. In fact, audiences and congregations can be as critical as they can be affirming, and their rejection and insults have been like acid poured into the void meant only for God. I have found that God's love and grace, mediated through the life of Jesus Christ and the presence of his Spirit, is a balm that can heal the hurt inflicted by ignorant, critical listeners. Furthermore, his love and grace alone can fill the void for significance I was hoping an audience would fill even as I first stepped into the pulpit. My struggle with PSA/CA has taught me that while it can be incredibly fulfilling to preach truth to a listening audience that responds in obedience to

the preacher's burden, it is only God's grace and the promise of eternal life spent with him that can fill the deepest part of my anxious heart.

My experience with PSA/CA and my attempts to cope with its worst symptoms parallel but do not mimic the experiences of the research subjects here surveyed and the literature here reviewed. This dissertation is my first attempt to help other nervous preachers, like myself, confront their own anxieties as I have confronted mine (Phase Eleven: Homiletical Coaching). More than anything, I want other nervous preachers to know that their nerves do not mean that they heard God wrong in their calling, or that God made a mistake in their election. Their nerves—like Moses' slow tongue, Jeremiah's youthful whine, Paul's trembling hands, the disciple's pre-sermon jitters, and even my own nervous stomach—are evidence that God knew exactly what he was doing. God chooses to speak through nervous preachers, freeing them from their own fears, so that preachers liberated from their anxieties may have the wisdom and experience to help free listeners from their own.

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Appendix 1a

Pulpit Anxiety Survey: Blank

Personal Information: This portion of the survey gathers basic information about you, your ministry, and experience as a preacher.

No.	Question	Answer
1	My name (to be kept confidential):	
2	My age:	
3	The estimated number of years I have been preaching:	
4	The estimated number of times I preach per year:	
5	My present denomination and/or church tradition:	

Previous Experience with Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures the extent of your prior experience of public-speaking anxiety. Please answer these questions about your past experience with anxiety when it was the most problematic.

6	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've been unable to sleep.	Never when I preached Rarely when I preached Sometimes when I preached Frequently when I preached Always when I preached
7	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've experienced headaches or other physical symptoms.	Never when I preached Rarely when I preached Sometimes when I preached Frequently when I preached Always when I preached
8	In the past, I've experienced any of the following symptoms either before or during a sermon: sweaty palms, trembling hands, racing heart, perspiration, and/or shallow breathing.	Never when I preached Rarely when I preached Sometimes when I preached Frequently when I preached Always when I preached
9	In the past, I've felt very tense and rigid while preaching.	Never when I preached Rarely when I preached Sometimes when I preached Frequently when I preached Always when I preached
10	In the past, after a sermon I've been unable to forget mistakes I made while preaching.	Never when I preached Rarely when I preached Sometimes when I preached Frequently when I preached Always when I preached

11	In the past, while preaching, I've become so nervous that I've forgotten what I was talking about.	Never when I preached Rarely when I preached Sometimes when I preached Frequently when I preached Always when I preached
12	In the past, when I've made a mistake while preaching, I've had a hard time concentrating on what follows.	Never when I preached Rarely when I preached Sometimes when I preached Frequently when I preached Always when I preached
13	In the past, while preaching, I've been so nervous that my thoughts have gotten confused and jumbled.	Never when I preached Rarely when I preached Sometimes when I preached Frequently when I preached Always when I preached
14	In the past, listeners have told me that I seemed nervous while preaching.	Never when I preached Rarely when I preached Sometimes when I preached Frequently when I preached Always when I preached
15	In the past, when I've gotten nervous during sermons, I could hear my voice quivering.	Never when I preached Rarely when I preached Sometimes when I preached Frequently when I preached Always when I preached
16	In the past, I've gotten so nervous while preaching that it's hard to communicate fluidly.	Never when I preached Rarely when I preached Sometimes when I preached Frequently when I preached Always when I preached

Influence of Pulpit Anxiety on Quality of Life: This portion of the survey measures how your pulpit anxiety affected your family life, relationships, and career satisfaction.

17	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I have considered another line of work.	Yes No Not Sure
18	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I've avoided some opportunities to preach.	Yes No Not sure
19	My anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my family life.	Yes No Not sure
20	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my physical health.	Yes No Not sure

21	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my emotional health.	Yes No Not sure
22	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my ministry in general.	Yes No Not sure

Improvement of Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures success in coping with pulpit anxiety and identifies some of the reasons for improvement.

23	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety PRIOR to preaching.	Yes No Not sure
24	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety WHILE preaching.	Yes No Not sure
25	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety AFTER preaching.	Yes No Not sure
26	Over the years, listeners have told me that I seemed less nervous and more confident as a preacher.	Yes No Not sure
27	Over the years, I've intentionally tried to cope with my preaching anxiety.	Yes No Not sure
28	Over the years, I've talked with a professional counselor or minister about my struggle with preaching anxiety.	Yes No Not sure
29	Over the years, I've tried medication to help calm my nerves about preaching.	Yes No Not sure

Appendix 1b

Pulpit Anxiety Survey: Paul

Personal Information: This portion of the survey gathers basic information about you, your ministry, and experience as a preacher.

No.	Question	Answer
1	My name (to be kept confidential):	Paul
2	My age:	65
3	The estimated number of years I have been preaching:	31
4	The estimated number of times I preach per year:	17
5	My present denomination and/or church tradition:	Bible

Previous Experience with Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures the extent of your prior experience of public-speaking anxiety. Please answer these questions about your past experience with anxiety when it was the most problematic.

6	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've been unable to sleep.	Sometimes
7	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've experienced headaches or other physical symptoms.	Rarely
8	In the past, I've experienced any of the following symptoms either before or during a sermon: sweaty palms, trembling hands, racing heart, perspiration, and/or shallow breathing.	Sometimes
9	In the past, I've felt very tense and rigid while preaching.	Sometimes
10	In the past, after a sermon I've been unable to forget mistakes I made while preaching.	Sometimes
11	In the past, while preaching, I've become so nervous that I've forgotten what I was talking about.	Rarely
12	In the past, when I've made a mistake while preaching, I've had a hard time concentrating on what follows.	Rarely
13	In the past, while preaching, I've been so nervous that my thoughts have gotten confused and jumbled.	Rarely
14	In the past, listeners have told me that I seemed nervous while preaching.	Rarely
15	In the past, when I've gotten nervous during sermons, I could hear my voice quivering.	Never
16	In the past, I've gotten so nervous while preaching that it's hard to communicate fluidly.	Rarely

Influence of Pulpit Anxiety on Quality of Life: This portion of the survey measures how your pulpit anxiety affected your family life, relationships, and career satisfaction.

17	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I have considered another line of work.	No
18	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I've avoided some opportunities to preach.	Yes
19	My anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my family life.	No
20	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my physical health.	No
21	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my emotional health.	Yes
22	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my ministry in general.	No

Improvement of Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures success in coping with pulpit anxiety and identifies some of the reasons for improvement.

23	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety PRIOR to preaching.	Yes
24	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety WHILE preaching.	Yes
25	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety AFTER preaching.	Yes
26	Over the years, listeners have told me that I seemed less nervous and more confident as a preacher.	Yes
27	Over the years, I've intentionally tried to cope with my preaching anxiety.	Yes
28	Over the years, I've talked with a professional counselor or minister about my struggle with preaching anxiety.	No
29	Over the years, I've tried medication to help calm my nerves about preaching.	No

Appendix 1c

Pulpit Anxiety Survey: Tim

Personal Information: This portion of the survey gathers basic information about you, your ministry, and experience as a preacher.

No.	Question	Answer
1	My name (to be kept confidential):	Tim
2	My age:	57
3	The estimated number of years I have been preaching:	32
4	The estimated number of times I preach per year:	90
5	My present denomination and/or church tradition:	EFCA

Previous Experience with Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures the extent of your prior experience of public speaking anxiety. Please answer these questions about your past experience with anxiety when it was the most problematic.

6	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've been unable to sleep.	Rarely
7	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've experienced headaches or other physical symptoms.	Sometimes
8	In the past, I've experienced any of the following symptoms either before or during a sermon: sweaty palms, trembling hands, racing heart, perspiration, and/or shallow breathing.	Rarely
9	In the past, I've felt very tense and rigid while preaching.	Never
10	In the past, after a sermon I've been unable to forget mistakes I made while preaching.	Frequently
11	In the past, while preaching, I've become so nervous that I've forgotten what I was talking about.	Rarely
12	In the past, when I've made a mistake while preaching, I've had a hard time concentrating on what follows.	Rarely
13	In the past, while preaching, I've been so nervous that my thoughts have gotten confused and jumbled.	Rarely
14	In the past, listeners have told me that I seemed nervous while preaching.	Never
15	In the past, when I've gotten nervous during sermons, I could hear my voice quivering.	Never

Influence of Pulpit Anxiety on Quality of Life: This portion of the survey measures how your pulpit anxiety affected your family life, relationships, and career satisfaction.

16	In the past, I've gotten so nervous while preaching that it's hard to communicate fluidly.	Rarely
17	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I have considered another line of work.	Yes
18	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I've avoided some opportunities to preach.	No
19	My anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my family life.	Yes
20	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my physical health.	Yes
21	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my emotional health.	Yes
22	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my ministry in general.	Yes

Improvement of Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures success in coping with pulpit anxiety and identifies some of the reasons for improvement.

23	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety PRIOR to preaching.	Yes
24	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety WHILE preaching.	Yes
25	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety AFTER preaching.	Yes
26	Over the years, listeners have told me that I seemed less nervous and more confident as a preacher.	Yes
27	Over the years, I've intentionally tried to cope with my preaching anxiety.	Yes
28	Over the years, I've talked with a professional counselor or minister about my struggle with preaching anxiety.	Yes
29	Over the years, I've tried medication to help calm my nerves about preaching.	Yes

Appendix 1d

Pulpit Anxiety Survey: Steve

Personal Information: This portion of the survey gathers basic information about you, your ministry, and experience as a preacher.

No.	Question	Answer
1	My name (to be kept confidential):	Steve
2	My age:	43
3	The estimated number of years I have been preaching:	15
4	The estimated number of times I preach per year:	75
5	My present denomination and/or church tradition:	PCA

Previous Experience with Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures the extent of your prior experience of public speaking anxiety. Please answer these questions about your past experience with anxiety when it was the most problematic.

6	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've been unable to sleep.	Sometimes
7	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've experienced headaches or other physical symptoms.	Frequently
8	In the past, I've experienced any of the following symptoms either before or during a sermon: sweaty palms, trembling hands, racing heart, perspiration, and/or shallow breathing.	Sometimes
9	In the past, I've felt very tense and rigid while preaching.	Sometimes
10	In the past, after a sermon I've been unable to forget mistakes I made while preaching.	Frequently
11	In the past, while preaching, I've become so nervous that I've forgotten what I was talking about.	Rarely
12	In the past, when I've made a mistake while preaching, I've had a hard time concentrating on what follows.	Sometimes
13	In the past, while preaching, I've been so nervous that my thoughts have gotten confused and jumbled.	Sometimes
14	In the past, listeners have told me that I seemed nervous while preaching.	Sometimes
15	In the past, when I've gotten nervous during sermons, I could hear my voice quivering.	Sometimes
16	In the past, I've gotten so nervous while preaching that it's hard to communicate fluidly.	Frequently

Influence of Pulpit Anxiety on Quality of Life: This portion of the survey measures how your pulpit anxiety affected your family life, relationships, and career satisfaction.

17	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I have considered another line of work.	No
18	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I've avoided some opportunities to preach.	Yes
19	My anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my family life.	No
20	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my physical health.	Yes
21	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my emotional health.	Yes
22	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my ministry in general.	Yes

Improvement of Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures success in coping with pulpit anxiety and identifies some of the reasons for improvement.

23	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety PRIOR to preaching.	Yes
24	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety WHILE preaching.	Yes
25	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety AFTER preaching.	Yes
26	Over the years, listeners have told me that I seemed less nervous and more confident as a preacher.	Yes
27	Over the years, I've intentionally tried to cope with my preaching anxiety.	Yes
28	Over the years, I've talked with a professional counselor or minister about my struggle with preaching anxiety.	No
29	Over the years, I've tried medication to help calm my nerves about preaching.	No

Appendix 1e

Pulpit Anxiety Survey: Mike

Personal Information: This portion of the survey gathers basic information about you, your ministry, and experience as a preacher.

No.	Question	Answer
1	My name (to be kept confidential):	Mike
2	My age:	52
3	The estimated number of years I have been preaching:	16
4	The estimated number of times I preach per year:	42
5	My present denomination and/or church tradition:	EPC

Previous Experience with Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures the extent of your prior experience of public speaking anxiety. Please answer these questions about your past experience with anxiety when it was the most problematic.

6	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've been unable to sleep.	Rarely
7	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've experienced headaches or other physical symptoms.	Never
8	In the past, I've experienced any of the following symptoms either before or during a sermon: sweaty palms, trembling hands, racing heart, perspiration, and/or shallow breathing.	Never
9	In the past, I've felt very tense and rigid while preaching.	Rarely
10	In the past, after a sermon I've been unable to forget mistakes I made while preaching.	Rarely
11	In the past, while preaching, I've become so nervous that I've forgotten what I was talking about.	Rarely
12	In the past, when I've made a mistake while preaching, I've had a hard time concentrating on what follows.	Rarely
13	In the past, while preaching, I've been so nervous that my thoughts have gotten confused and jumbled.	Rarely
14	In the past, listeners have told me that I seemed nervous while preaching.	Never
15	In the past, when I've gotten nervous during sermons, I could hear my voice quivering.	Never
16	In the past, I've gotten so nervous while preaching that it's hard to communicate fluidly.	Never

Influence of Pulpit Anxiety on Quality of Life: This portion of the survey measures how your pulpit anxiety affected your family life, relationships, and career satisfaction.

17	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I have considered another line of work.	No
18	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I've avoided some opportunities to preach.	No
19	My anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my family life.	No
20	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my physical health.	No
21	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my emotional health.	No
22	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my ministry in general.	No

Improvement of Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures success in coping with pulpit anxiety and identifies some of the reasons for improvement.

23	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety PRIOR to preaching.	Yes
24	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety WHILE preaching.	Yes
25	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety AFTER preaching.	Yes
26	Over the years, listeners have told me that I seemed less nervous and more confident as a preacher.	Yes
27	Over the years, I've intentionally tried to cope with my preaching anxiety.	No
28	Over the years, I've talked with a professional counselor or minister about my struggle with preaching anxiety.	No
29	Over the years, I've tried medication to help calm my nerves about preaching.	No

Appendix 1f

Pulpit Anxiety Survey: Dan

Personal Information: This portion of the survey gathers basic information about you, your ministry, and experience as a preacher.

No.	Question	Answer
1	Name (to be kept confidential):	Dan
2	My age:	50
3	The estimated number of years I have been preaching:	25
4	The estimated number of times I preach per year:	60
5	My present denomination and/or church tradition:	SBC

Previous Experience with Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures the extent of your prior experience of public speaking anxiety. Please answer these questions about your past experience with anxiety when it was the most problematic.

6	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've been unable to sleep.	Sometimes
7	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've experienced headaches or other physical symptoms.	Rarely
8	In the past, I've experienced any of the following symptoms either before or during a sermon: sweaty palms, trembling hands, racing heart, perspiration, and/or shallow breathing.	Sometimes
9	In the past, I've felt very tense and rigid while preaching.	Rarely
10	In the past, after a sermon I've been unable to forget mistakes I made while preaching.	Frequently
11	In the past, while preaching, I've become so nervous that I've forgotten what I was talking about.	Rarely
12	In the past, when I've made a mistake while preaching, I've had a hard time concentrating on what follows.	Rarely
13	In the past, while preaching, I've been so nervous that my thoughts have gotten confused and jumbled.	Rarely
14	In the past, listeners have told me that I seemed nervous while preaching.	Never
15	In the past, when I've gotten nervous during sermons, I could hear my voice quivering.	Rarely
16	In the past, I've gotten so nervous while preaching that it's hard to communicate fluidly.	Rarely

Influence of Pulpit Anxiety on Quality of Life: This portion of the survey measures how your pulpit anxiety affected your family life, relationships, and career satisfaction.

17	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I have considered another line of work.	Yes
18	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I've avoided some opportunities to preach.	Yes
19	My anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my family life.	Yes
20	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my physical health.	No
21	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my emotional health.	Yes
22	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my ministry in general.	Yes

Improvement of Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures success in coping with pulpit anxiety and identifies some of the reasons for improvement.

23	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety PRIOR to preaching.	Not sure
24	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety WHILE preaching.	Yes
25	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety AFTER preaching.	Yes
26	Over the years, listeners have told me that I seemed less nervous and more confident as a preacher.	Yes
27	Over the years, I've intentionally tried to cope with my preaching anxiety.	Yes
28	Over the years, I've talked with a professional counselor or minister about my struggle with preaching anxiety.	Yes
29	Over the years, I've tried medication to help calm my nerves about preaching.	No

Appendix 1g

Pulpit Anxiety Survey: Adam

Personal Information: This portion of the survey gathers basic information about you, your ministry, and experience as a preacher.

No.	Question	Answer
1	My name (to be kept confidential):	Adam
2	My age:	27
3	The estimated number of years I have been preaching:	11
4	The estimated number of times I preach per year:	5
5	My present denomination and/or church tradition:	EMC

Previous Experience with Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures the extent of your prior experience of public speaking anxiety. Please answer these questions about your past experience with anxiety when it was the most problematic.

6	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've been unable to sleep.	Frequently
7	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've experienced headaches or other physical symptoms.	Frequently
8	In the past, I've experienced any of the following symptoms either before or during a sermon: sweaty palms, trembling hands, racing heart, perspiration, and/or shallow breathing.	Sometimes
9	In the past, I've felt very tense and rigid while preaching.	Sometimes
10	In the past, after a sermon I've been unable to forget mistakes I made while preaching.	Sometimes
11	In the past, while preaching, I've become so nervous that I've forgotten what I was talking about.	Rarely
12	In the past, when I've made a mistake while preaching, I've had a hard time concentrating on what follows.	Rarely
13	In the past, while preaching, I've been so nervous that my thoughts have gotten confused and jumbled.	Rarely
14	In the past, listeners have told me that I seemed nervous while preaching.	Sometimes
15	In the past, when I've gotten nervous during sermons, I could hear my voice quivering.	Never
16	In the past, I've gotten so nervous while preaching that it's hard to communicate fluidly.	Sometimes

Influence of Pulpit Anxiety on Quality of Life: This portion of the survey measures how your pulpit anxiety affected your family life, relationships, and career satisfaction.

17	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I have considered another line of work.	Yes
18	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I've avoided some opportunities to preach.	Yes
19	My anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my family life.	Yes
20	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my physical health.	Yes
21	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my emotional health.	Yes
22	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my ministry in general.	Yes

Improvement of Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures success in coping with pulpit anxiety and identifies some of the reasons for improvement.

23	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety PRIOR to preaching.	Not sure
24	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety WHILE preaching.	Yes
25	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety AFTER preaching.	Not sure
26	Over the years, listeners have told me that I seemed less nervous and more confident as a preacher.	Yes
27	Over the years, I've intentionally tried to cope with my preaching anxiety.	Yes
28	Over the years, I've talked with a professional counselor or minister about my struggle with preaching anxiety.	Yes
29	Over the years, I've tried medication to help calm my nerves about preaching.	No

Appendix 1h

Pulpit Anxiety Survey: Bob

Personal Information: This portion of the survey gathers basic information about you, your ministry, and experience as a preacher.

No.	Question	Answer
1	My name (to be kept confidential):	Bob
2	My age:	46
3	The estimated number of years I have been preaching:	12
4	The estimated number of times I preach per year:	50
5	My present denomination and/or church tradition:	PCUSA

Previous Experience with Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures the extent of your prior experience of public speaking anxiety. Please answer these questions about your past experience with anxiety when it was the most problematic.

6	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've been unable to sleep.	Sometimes
7	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've experienced headaches or other physical symptoms.	Every time
8	In the past, I've experienced any of the following symptoms either before or during a sermon: sweaty palms, trembling hands, racing heart, perspiration, and/or shallow breathing.	Frequently
9	In the past, I've felt very tense and rigid while preaching.	Rarely
10	In the past, after a sermon I've been unable to forget mistakes I made while preaching.	Sometimes
11	In the past, while preaching, I've become so nervous that I've forgotten what I was talking about.	Rarely
12	In the past, when I've made a mistake while preaching, I've had a hard time concentrating on what follows.	Sometimes
13	In the past, while preaching, I've been so nervous that my thoughts have gotten confused and jumbled.	Rarely
14	In the past, listeners have told me that I seemed nervous while preaching.	Sometimes
15	In the past, when I've gotten nervous during sermons, I could hear my voice quivering.	Rarely
16	In the past, I've gotten so nervous while preaching that it's hard to communicate fluidly.	Rarely

Influence of Pulpit Anxiety on Quality of Life: This portion of the survey measures how your pulpit anxiety affected your family life, relationships, and career satisfaction.

17	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I have considered another line of work.	Yes
18	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I've avoided some opportunities to preach.	Yes
19	My anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my family life.	Yes
20	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my physical health.	Yes
21	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my emotional health.	Yes
22	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my ministry in general.	Yes

Improvement of Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures success in coping with pulpit anxiety and identifies some of the reasons for improvement.

23	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety PRIOR to preaching.	Yes
24	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety WHILE preaching.	Yes
25	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety AFTER preaching.	Yes
26	Over the years, listeners have told me that I seemed less nervous and more confident as a preacher.	Yes
27	Over the years, I've intentionally tried to cope with my preaching anxiety.	Yes
28	Over the years, I've talked with a professional counselor or minister about my struggle with preaching anxiety.	No
29	Over the years, I've tried medication to help calm my nerves about preaching.	No

Appendix 1i

Pulpit Anxiety Survey: Joe

Personal Information: This portion of the survey gathers basic information about you, your ministry, and experience as a preacher.

No.	Question	Answer
1	My name (to be kept confidential):	Joe
2	My age:	51
3	The estimated number of years I have been preaching:	20
4	The estimated number of times I preach per year:	10 to 50
5	My present denomination and/or church tradition:	PCA

Previous Experience with Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures the extent of your prior experience of public speaking anxiety. Please answer these questions about your past experience with anxiety when it was the most problematic.

6	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've been unable to sleep.	Rarely
7	In the past, I've been so nervous about preaching that I've experienced headaches or other physical symptoms.	Rarely
8	In the past, I've experienced any of the following symptoms either before or during a sermon: sweaty palms, trembling hands, racing heart, perspiration, and/or shallow breathing.	Sometimes
9	In the past, I've felt very tense and rigid while preaching.	Frequently
10	In the past, after a sermon I've been unable to forget mistakes I made while preaching.	Sometimes
11	In the past, while preaching, I've become so nervous that I've forgotten what I was talking about.	Never
12	In the past, when I've made a mistake while preaching, I've had a hard time concentrating on what follows.	Sometimes
13	In the past, while preaching, I've been so nervous that my thoughts have gotten confused and jumbled.	Rarely
14	In the past, listeners have told me that I seemed nervous while preaching.	Rarely
15	In the past, when I've gotten nervous during sermons, I could hear my voice quivering.	Sometimes

16	In the past, I've gotten so nervous while preaching that it's hard to communicate fluidly.	Frequently

Influence of Pulpit Anxiety on Quality of Life: This portion of the survey measures how your pulpit anxiety affected your family life, relationships, and career satisfaction.

17	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I have considered another line of work.	No
18	In the past, I've been so anxious about preaching that I've avoided some opportunities to preach.	No
19	My anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my family life.	No
20	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my physical health.	No
21	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my emotional health.	Yes
22	In the past, my anxiety about preaching has negatively affected my ministry in general.	No

Improvement of Pulpit Anxiety: This portion of the survey measures success in coping with pulpit anxiety and identifies some of the reasons for improvement.

23	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety PRIOR to preaching.	Yes
24	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety WHILE preaching.	Not sure
25	Over the years, I've experienced less anxiety AFTER preaching.	Not sure
26	Over the years, listeners have told me that I seemed less nervous and more confident as a preacher.	No
27	Over the years, I've intentionally tried to cope with my preaching anxiety.	Not sure
28	Over the years, I've talked with a professional counselor or minister about my struggle with preaching anxiety.	No
29	Over the years, I've tried medication to help calm my nerves about preaching.	No