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**TRANSFORMATIVE PREACHING
IN CHINESE CHURCHES**

By

THEODORE M. WONG

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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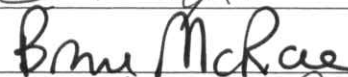
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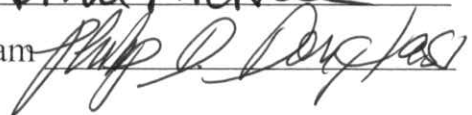
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Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to explore the process of how pastors prepare to preach so that they can encourage transformation in the lives of listeners within a Chinese church context. In addition to exploring aspects of preaching, this study will also focus on spiritual formation and the ethos of pastors; in particular, the role they play in encouraging transformation within the lives of listeners. Thus, four research questions guide this study: (1) how do pastors describe preaching that encourages transformation in the lives of the listeners? (2) How do pastors evaluate the degree to which preaching encourages transformation in the lives of the listeners? (3) How do pastors prepare to preach in order to encourage transformation in the lives of the listeners? (4) What is the role of spiritual formation in the lives of the pastors as they prepare to preach in order to encourage transformation in the lives of the listeners? This study is composed of a qualitative design. The study used a semi-structured approach to interviews with six experienced Chinese pastors. In total, these pastors have one hundred years of preaching experiences. Five of the pastors also teach homiletics in China. The data was analyzed using the constant comparative method. This study concluded that sound hermeneutics leads to sound homiletics. Spiritual formation consists of stringent spiritual disciplines and requires the development of godly character within preachers. The message delivered by pastors needs to be clear, understandable, and have the ability to connect to the Chinese culture in order to encourage transformation within the lives of listeners. Most of all, for the preaching to be transformative, the preachers need to love God and his people.

To my dear wife, Eing, whom God gave to cherish
whose love supports and gives strength.
To my beloved daughters Jenny and Tricia, and my Son-in-Law, Titus.

In Memory of my father and mother, Rev. & Mrs. Ding Ming Wong
and my oldest sister, Teck Kwong who loved God and others unselfishly.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Acknowledgements | viii |
| Chapter One: Introduction | 1 |
| Introduction and Problem Statement | 1 |
| Purpose Statement | 7 |
| Research Questions | 7 |
| Significance of the Study | 7 |
| Definition of Key Terms | 8 |
| Chapter Two: Literature Review | 10 |
| Preaching to Transform Lives | 10 |
| Assessing Spiritual Formation | 14 |
| Adult Transformative Learning | 22 |
| Preaching Christ to Culture | 26 |
| Biblical/Theological Literature | 32 |
| Ethos Impact on Preaching | 49 |
| Chapter Three: Methodology | 54 |
| Design of the Study | 54 |
| Participant Sample Selection | 55 |
| Data Collection | 56 |
| Data Analysis | 58 |
| Researcher Position | 59 |
| Study Limitation | 60 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Chapter Four: Findings | 61 |
| Research Participants | 61 |
| Preaching Event | 63 |
| Personal Preaching Experiences | 74 |
| Spiritual Formation | 84 |
| Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations | 95 |
| Summary of the Study | 96 |
| Preaching Event | 96 |
| Personal Preaching Experiences | 108 |
| Spiritual Formation | 112 |
| Key Ingredients for Transformative Preaching In Chinese Churches | 118 |
| Bibliography | 122 |

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Scripture taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION.

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Chapter One

Introduction and Problem Statement

Many books, articles, and seminary classes assess the purpose of preaching and its effectiveness. A focused question combining these two topics is, “How does preaching transform lives?” Because preachers must give an account of what they say as an authority from the pulpit, this topic’s importance is obvious. John MacArthur, Jr., Pastor-Teacher at Grace Community church in Sun Valley, California, says, “God will judge every preacher on the truthfulness and accuracy of his preaching. Any failure as spokesman for God brings not only shame (2 Timothy 2:15) but judgment. The Holy Spirit has written that all who pastor God’s flock must ‘give an account’ (Hebrew 13:17).”¹ William H. Wade, Jr., is serving at Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, and in his D. Min. dissertation, he used evaluation results to gauge the impact of *ethos* on preaching. He studied the pastor’s relationship to the congregation and its impact on the sermon preparation and delivery. He concludes that preachers need to “plan, conduct and evaluate” to understand the *ethos*.² Preachers need evaluation results and feedback loops to improve their sermons. The current study investigates the *ethos* of pastors as the root cause determining the impact of their preaching.

Bryan Chapell, President and Professor of Practical Theology at Covenant Theological Seminary (1994-2012), taught students his preaching process, using *Christ-*

¹ John MacArthur Jr., *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991), xiii.

² William H. Wade Jr., “Prepare, Deliver and Shepherd: Using Evaluation to Understand the Impact of *Ethos* in Preaching” (D. Min. diss., Covenant Theological Seminary, 2013), 133.

*Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon.*³ He exhorts preachers to pray as Paul prayed in Colossians 1:9-10, “We pray that God will also use our preaching to produce such a knowledge of God’s will that others will live to please him and will produce spiritual fruit, resulting in an ever growing knowledge of their God.”⁴ Chapell states, “What we require in the face of the limits of our personal effectiveness and in an age that increasingly questions the validity of preaching is a reminder of God’s design for spiritual transformation.” He is describing preaching that transforms lives. The greatest preacher is too weak and sin-tainted to be responsible for others’ eternal destiny. Therefore, God infuses his own spiritual power into the life and words of those he calls to preach. According to Chapell, it is “the efficacy of the truths in God’s message rather than any virtue in the messenger that transforms hearts.”⁵ Warren Wiersbe, a Distinguished Professor of Preaching at Grand Rapid Baptist Seminary and pastor, adds that the church is faithful to its calling in sharing God’s message in many ways. Preachers preach the gospel, and God is faithful to bless it.⁶ Wiersbe specifically mentions preaching as a God-ordained method for sharing the gospel. Chapell says it is “The Nobility of Preaching.” John R. Stott, an Anglican pastor and reputable author, in *Between Two Worlds*, talks about the glory of preaching.⁷ Preaching is central, and modern teachers agree with the ancients. John McArthur says that God dictates what

³ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

⁴ Ibid., 25.

⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁶ Warren D. Wiersbe, *The Dynamics of Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 14.

⁷ John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982).

pastors preach.⁸ Therefore, preaching is the high calling of shepherds who feed God's people with God's word in reverence, with total dependent on the Holy Spirit. It is a major part of Christian worship and living. It influences lives, and effective sermons transform lives.

Furthermore, many contemporary preachers agree that expository preaching is one of the best ways to transform lives. Expository preaching focuses on the text under consideration, along with its context. This preaching method normally concentrates on a single text of Scripture, but sometimes preachers use a thematic/theological message or historical/biographical discourse.⁹ Many Bible based seminaries teach expository preaching.

The Barna Group has published an analysis, "Six Mega Themes Emerge in 2010." One of these trends explains the degree to which the Christian church is becoming less theologically literate.¹⁰ In the postmodern era, the church needs greater gospel clarity to compensate for this decline in basic knowledge. Effective preaching can also foster growth and transformation in the individual, so important to post-moderns, which will sustain the gospel of Christ and continue the church's witness for Christ as a whole.

The need for effective expository preaching is keenly felt in the Chinese church especially. More Chinese pastors are using expository preaching than the past. Bible expositors in the Chinese churches in North America (USA) have increased for the last 30 years as younger pastors replace those from the older generations. The current study

⁸ MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*.

⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰ George Barna, "Six Megathemes Emerge from Barna Group Research in 2010," barna.org, 2010, accessed March 30, 2015, <http://www.barna.org/culture-article/462-six-megathemes-emerge-from>.

concentrates on the Chinese churches and Chinese pastors. In the United States, there are more than 1,000 Chinese churches, according to the Directory from the Chinese Congress on World Evangelization. Ambassadors for Christ links to more than 1,600 Chinese churches and organizations.¹¹ In recent years, inflow of Chinese from mainland China has been increasing, adding to the need to evaluate the effectiveness of these new preachers' preaching. Most of these churches emerged from Bible Study groups of graduate students predominantly from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. As their numbers grew, Chinese churches were founded in the United States. Globally, the number of overseas Chinese churches is estimated at about 10,000. In China, no one knows exactly the number of churches; estimates say around 20,000 churches. In China churches have to be small, usually ranging from thirty to fifty people. Now, the demographic of Chinese churches in the United States is changing because more churches are experiencing an explosion of Chinese from Mainland China. Most growing Chinese churches are becoming more than sixty to eighty percent overseas Chinese from Mainland China. There are no statistics available, only observations from Chinese churches locally. This influx further illustrates the need for relevant preaching ministry, made even more vital by the cultural, languages and educational differences.

Furthermore, spiritual formation in the lives of pastors may have a great impact on effective preaching. Dr. Mel Lawrenz, senior pastor at Elmbrook Church in Brookfield, Wisconsin, has a passion for the ministry of the word in writing for effective outreach. Lawrenz defines spiritual formation as "the patterning of a person's inner and

¹¹ Phuong Ly, "A Chinese American Awakening; Immigrants Help to Re-energize U.S. Christianity," *The Washington Post*, January 11, 2003; Timothy Tseng, *New Spiritual Homes: Religion and Asian Americans*, ed. David K. Yoo (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 49; Also see Ambassador for Christ's Chinese Church Directory; list of largest Chinese Churches in North America.

outer life to the image of Christ through intentional means of spiritual growth.”¹² Dallas Willard, former professor at the University of Southern California’s School of Philosophy and Southern Baptist Minister, agrees when he writes, “Obedience is an essential outcome of Christian spiritual formation.” Willard believes growth is seen through inner transformations in essential aspects of human personality such as thought, feeling, choice, body, social action, and soul, so as to increase one’s love for God and neighbor.¹³ The spiritual formation of pastors is evident during the preaching event both internally and externally. Chapell refers to the classical rhetoric terms pathos and ethos to describe the efficacy of preaching. Chapell states, “The Bible’s own emphases remind us that pastoral character remains the foundation of ministry.”¹⁴

Additionally, an understanding of the role of adult transformative learning can also be helpful in evaluating effective preaching from the listener’s point of view. Adults retain perspectives that best make sense of their world, according to Dr. Jack Mezirow, now Emeritus Professor of Adult and Continuing Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. His transformative learning theory did not attract widespread attention or gain a substantial following among educators until 1991, with Mezirow’s publication of *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*.¹⁵ Mezirow believes that individual learning is an interactive process between the individual and his or her social and physical environment. The result of this process is “perspective transformation,” a

¹² Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 15.

¹³ Ibid., 30-31.

¹⁴ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 34-35.

¹⁵ Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

permanent change in the way individuals perceive their world and construct meaning from their experiences, so that they themselves are transformed in their own values, commitments, and behavior.¹⁶ This maturing of thought leads to reflection and conversation with others that challenges uncritical assumptions and gives way to possible new understandings.

Aforementioned concepts are just glimpses into the benefits of preaching in transforming lives. Seen altogether, the ingredients and process that make preaching transformative warrant further evaluation. The role of a preacher's personal spiritual formation as well as adult transformative learning will be explored to find the answer to the importance of these areas relating to effective preaching. The study will strengthen future preaching and teaching efforts, especially teaching homiletics to Chinese pastors at seminaries in Taiwan and China.

Therefore, this study will explore the effective preaching process. The study also will focus on the role of spiritual formation, persuasive preaching, and the continued growth of pastors throughout the preaching event. Also, the study will examine the root cause of ethos and spiritual formation, which bring about the preaching that change the lives of listeners. In addition, this study will ask, how pastors gain the spiritual power in their message that brings about transformative changes in the lives of the listeners. This study will seek after how preachers develop ethos that enhances transformative preaching. Obviously, to complete the communication process, the listeners need to be analyzed as well. In this case, a minor part of the discovery process will use some

¹⁶ Jack Mezirow, "Learning to Think like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformation Theory," in *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*, ed. Jack Mezirow (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 3-33.

knowledge in the area of the adult transformative learning to analyze the audience data. The scope of the study focuses on the Chinese churches. The implications and applications of the study can help the Chinese churches in North America, Taiwan, and Mainland China to more effectively spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to discover how pastors prepare to preach in order to encourage transformation in the lives of the listeners.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the research:

1. How do pastors describe preaching that encourages transformation in the lives of the listeners?
2. How do pastors evaluate the degree to which preaching encourages transformation in the lives of the listeners?
3. How do pastors prepare to preach in order to encourage transformation in the lives of the listeners?
4. What is the role of spiritual formation in the lives of the pastors as they prepare to preach in order to encourage transformation in the lives of the listeners?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for educators who teach others to preach and those who desire to improve in preaching sermons that transform lives. The researcher hopes that after reading the conclusions of the study, preachers will know what is necessary to preach sermons that transform lives. The study can then be integrated into course materials to equip and strengthen pastors or teachers, especially in Taiwan and China. The results of this study will hopefully encourage pastors to understand their listeners and how personal spiritual formation increases their resolve to preach so that people lives are

transformed. In addition, in a small way, the researcher hopes that this study will encourage Christians in how to learn to be more effective in understand the practice of adult transformative learning., The researcher hopes that new insights can be gleaned relating to spiritual formation, preachers' ethos, and discipline for growth. It is the hope that the discoveries will also be applied to Christians in general to equip them in the areas of spiritual transformation and adult transformative learning, to grow in Christ.

Definition of Key Terms

Church – Church is referred to body of Christ. Unless noted otherwise, it is referring to a local assembly of Christians overseen by affirmed or ordained leadership (e.g., elders, maybe deacons) and that observes ordinances of baptism and Holy Communion.

Spiritual formation – The process of spiritual growth in the individual Christian whereby a “progressive patterning of a person’s inner and outer life” increases according to the image of Christ through intentional means of spiritual growth.¹⁷ It means “Christ is formed in you!”¹⁸

Transformative Learning Theory – An educational theory proposed by experts such as Jack Mezirow¹⁹ and Patricia Cranton²⁰ that defines learning as deep change.

Pathos – “the emotive features of a message, including the passion, fervor, and feeling that a speaker conveys and the listeners’ experience.”

¹⁷ Mel Lawrenz, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 15.

¹⁸ Galatians 4:19b.

¹⁹ Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*.

²⁰ Patricia Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide for Educators of Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

Ethos – “the perceived character of the speaker, determined most significantly by the concern expressed for the listeners’ welfare. Aristotle’s belief was that ethos is the most powerful component of persuasion.”²¹

Transformation of Lives – Christians’ lives are transformed during salvation and union with Christ.²² Progressive sanctification is by exercising our faith in conformity to Christ.²³ By faith we renew our mind with deep change as image bearers of Christ in thoughts, words and deeds. Spiritual transformation is the lives of redeemed people in a testimony to the power of the Gospel with the capacity to surrender all to Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit to discern and to do God’s will.

²¹ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 34.

²² Rom. 6:1-5; 12:13.

²³ Gal. 4:19.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Many books, articles, and seminary classes teach the purpose of preaching and its effectiveness. A focused question combining these two topics is, “How does preaching transform lives?” To discover how pastors prepare to preach so that spiritual transformation occurs, the current study’s literature review focuses on the purpose of preaching and the assessment of effective preaching. This study will review limited literature sources written specifically for transformative preaching. In addition, the literature pertaining to the character and spiritual formation of preachers will be reviewed to assess how pastors’ personal spiritual growth might impact transformative preaching. Additionally, this study will analyze how adult listeners learn by looking at literature on adult transformative learning.

Preaching to Transform Lives

The first area focus is on preaching that transforms lives. Stuart Briscoe, author and former senior pastor of Elmbrook Church, Brookfield, Wisconsin, in a recent article in *Preaching* says that as he has traveled the world, he recognized that people need the creator, the redeemer, and the lover of their souls. He has observed in his sixty-seven years in the ministry that listeners are biblically illiterate and have a consumer attitude. Nevertheless, he realizes that people are hungry for the word of God.²⁴ Bryan Chapell says that preaching is “God’s design for spiritual transformation.” He continues to say,

²⁴ Michael Miller, “Faithful Ministry,” *Preaching* 30, no. 5 (2015): 17-18.

“Ultimately, preaching accomplishes its spiritual purpose not because of the skills or the wisdom of a preacher but because of the power of Scripture proclaimed (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).”²⁵ Chapell points out that God’s word is not merely powerful, but it is without peer or dependence. Likewise, J.I. Packer in his book *Truth and Power* says that all authority is given to the Son of God. The Holy Scripture is not just a witness to Christ’s universal reign but is actually his instrument of authority, and the authority of the Holy Spirit opens and applies scripture to hearts so that Christians can discern Christ’s will and are enabled to do it.²⁶

All transformative preaching is centered on Christ through faith by grace, the theme of Chapell’s *Christ-Centered Preaching*. He stresses, “People cannot do or be what God requires without the past, present, and future work of Christ.”²⁷ As Paul says, “From him and through him and to him are all things.”²⁸ Edmund P. Clowney, seminary president and professor, also emphasizes preaching Christ from all scripture. Dennis E. Johnson (Editor), *Heralds of the King*, follows the Clowney interpretation of Christ-centered preaching.²⁹ They both caution that spiritualizing every page of scripture to speak of Christ requires caution. Nonetheless, Chapell advises that “Since Scripture as a whole is God’s revelation of his redeeming activity in Jesus Christ, a preacher needs only

²⁵ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 26.

²⁶ J. I. Packer, *Truth and Power, the Place of Scripture in the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Herold Shaw, 1996).

²⁷ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 294.

²⁸ Romans 11:36.

²⁹ Denise E. Johnson, *Heralds of the King* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009).

to demonstrate where and how a particular text functions in the overall redemptive plan in order to show its Christocentric focus.”³⁰

Edmund Clowney teaches the importance of narrative preaching in transforming lives. Calvin Miller, Research Professor at Samford University’s Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama, advises preachers to use both the narrative and expository methods.³¹ Michael Duduit, Director of Development and Church Relations, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama, put together a handbook of different styles from contemporary experts, *Contemporary Preaching*. The book includes various aspects of preaching, from biblical exposition to narrative preaching, from hermeneutics to practical impact of preaching.³²

Sound exegesis of a passage of scripture is also important in transformative preaching. Such exegesis is what Chapell defines as logos, i.e., “the verbal content of the message, including its craft and logic.”³³ Additionally, pathos is “the emotive features of a message, including the passion, fervor, and feeling that a speaker conveys and the listeners’ experience.”³⁴ Lastly, the ethos of the preacher is also essential. Ethos is “the perceived character of the speaker, determined most significantly by the concern expressed for the listeners’ welfare. Aristotle’s belief was that *ethos* is the most powerful

³⁰ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 302.

³¹ Calvin Miller, *Preaching, the Art of Narrative Exposition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006).

³² Michael Duduit, *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1992).

³³ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 34.

³⁴ Ibid.

component of persuasion.”³⁵ Character of preachers remains the foundation of ministry.³⁶ Certainly, character (ethos) is closely related to spiritual formation.

Actually, all three—logos, pathos, and ethos—are related to spiritual formation. Chapell states, “Our gospel came to you not simply with words [*logos*], but also with power, and with deep conviction [*pathos*]. You know how we believe [*ethos*] among you for your sake (I Thess. 1:5).”³⁷ Quite often, many seminaries emphasize the exegesis of scripture because it is essential to preach with the authority of God’s Word (logos). *Pathos* and *ethos* cannot be neglected however. Without pathos, the preaching message will be without deep conviction. Pastoral character (ethos) moves (or alienates, depending on his character) the hearts of listeners. Chapell emphasizes, “No truth calls louder for pastoral holiness than the link between a preacher’s character and a sermon reception.”³⁸ He also mentions that character oozes out of preaching.

Sinclair B. Ferguson speaks of similar concept. He was the Senior Minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, South Carolina, and is now a Professor of Systematic Theology at Redeemer Seminary in Dallas and part-time Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He writes, “What we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake (2 Corinthians 4:5). We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us (1

³⁵ Ibid., 35.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 38.

Thessalonians 2:8). In Jesus Christ, the church's one true preacher, message and messenger are one. He is the preacher, and also the message."³⁹

Other literature included in this study will examine sermons and the critique of sermons. Haddon W. Robinson, Distinguished Professor in Preaching and former interim President at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, in *Biblical Preaching*, pulled together several "ministers who use a specimen of the work they have done and thus let us glimpse how they work."⁴⁰ More detail and elaborate literature continues to be reviewed and assessed in the following sections.

Assessing Spiritual Formation

A second literature review topic addresses the spiritual formation in preachers. This review will help the researcher to better understand, identify, and categorize any dynamics of spiritual growth that undergird an effective preaching event. Bob Burns, senior associate pastor and head of staff at Central Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Tasha D. Chapman, dean of academic services at Covenant Theological Seminary, and Donald C. Guthrie have written *Resilient Ministry*, and in it, they identified four key practices for successfully pursuing maturing in their relationship with Christ: building rituals, maintaining accountability, growing through hardships, and practicing spiritual discipline.⁴¹

Another book, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation* by Mel Lawrenz, defines spiritual formation as "the patterning of a person's inner and outer life to the image of

³⁹ Sinclair B. Ferguson, "A Preacher's Decalogue," *Themelios* 36, no. 2 (2011), 268.

⁴⁰ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 9.

⁴¹ Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 40.

Christ through intentional means of spiritual growth.”⁴² This definition troubles some Protestants because “patterning” to the image of Christ implies personal effort.

Theologians call this the imitation of Christ. John Calvin preferred the concept of union with Christ, and he was against using the concepts of imitation or patterning of Christ, which he characterized as contrary to grace, a work-righteousness, and requiring a reliance on self rather than on Christ and his Spirit in sanctification.⁴³ Instead, Calvin used terms that affirmed that Christ provides the source of sanctification, becoming like Christ in heart and behavior. Clarence DeWitt “Jimmy” Agan III was professor of New Testament and director of the homiletics program at Covenant Theological Seminary, and now is pastoring Intown Community Church in Atlanta, Georgia. He says that Calvin’s view on the imitation of Christ represents dependence on, rather than independence from Christ.⁴⁴

Wayne Grudem, Professor at Phoenix Seminary, formerly Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, defines union with Christ as several different relationships between believers and Christ, through which Christians receive every benefit of salvation.⁴⁵

Robert A. Peterson, Professor of Systematic Theology at Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO., defines union with Christ in three concepts: identification in Jesus as Immanuel and bridegroom, incorporation through Jesus as covenant mediator par

⁴² Lawrenz, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation*, 15.

⁴³ C. D. (Jimmy) Agan III, “Departing from and Recovering Tradition: John Calvin and the Imitation of Christ,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 4 (2013): 802.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 807.

⁴⁵ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 840.

excellence, and participation in the story of Jesus.⁴⁶ Peterson says that, by God's invincible grace through faith, Christians no longer are separated from Christ. They are spiritually connected to Christ's person and work, and thereby partake of him all his saving benefits.⁴⁷

In Agan's view, Protestant Reformed scholars, pastors, and teachers must integrate into ministries a robust, biblical emphasis on the imitation of Christ. He sees this integration as befitting Calvin's point of view as well.⁴⁸ Therefore, imitation of Christ certainly is an important aspect of transformative preaching. Agan elaborates more in his book on *The Imitation of Christ in the Gospel of Luke*.⁴⁹ A New Testament survey shows that many areas of Scripture discuss this principle. Perhaps the most familiar verse is in 1 Corinthians 11:1 where Paul urges the readers to be imitators of Paul because he imitates Christ. In Ephesian 5:25, Paul instructs husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the church. In Philippians 2:1-4, Paul exhorts Christians to humble themselves as Christ did. The clearest proof text is Luke 9:23 where Jesus calls his disciples to imitation, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."⁵⁰ According to Agan, denying oneself means "downward and outward." It means Christians' identity is in Christ, remembering Jesus as a servant and doing God's will. Agan specifically discusses what it means to be a servant. He says that Jesus

⁴⁶ Robert A. Peterson, *Salvation Applied by the Spirit: Union with Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 35.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 372.

⁴⁸ Agan, "Departing from-and Recovering-Tradition: John Calvin and the Imitation of Christ," 814.

⁴⁹ C. D. (Jimmy) Agan III, *The Imitation of Christ in the Gospel of Luke, Growing in Christlike Love for God and Neighbor* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2014).

⁵⁰ Ibid., 10-13.

never engages in self-exaltation, consistently gives up the privileges of an insider, and sets aside his own interests for the sake of others.⁵¹ John Stott notes that Christians are to take up their cross daily, and there is only one place to go: the place of crucifixion. It is a symbol of death to self. Stott points out that to deny one's self means giving up the right to go one's own way.⁵² Andrew Murray says that self-denial means that "Christ pleased not Himself" in order that he might glorify God and save man. His life is the Christian's rule and example.⁵³

The willingness of a self-denying heart is essential for "infectious" preaching. Preaching that transforms lives also displays obvious affection for Christ. Sam Storms says that preaching the Word is not just informing, and is "applied in a particularly lively way through preaching."⁵⁴

Mel Lawrenz further notes that of all the tools Christians have used to grow spiritually, the first and foremost instrument is teaching because it "grants us entry into people's lives at the core of their being – where decisions are made, values are shaped, ideas are borne, passions are ignited, wounds are soothed, hardness is broken."⁵⁵ Teaching includes preaching and instruction in the word during worship services.

Dallas Willard first defined a spiritual discipline as a way Christians enter the spiritual kingdom of God. He says "when the human organism is brought into a willing,

⁵¹ Ibid., 135-137.

⁵² John J.W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 278, 279.

⁵³ Andrew Murray, *Like Christ* (London: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895), 56.

⁵⁴ Sam Storms, *Signs of the Spirit: An Interpretation of Jonathan Edwards' Religious Affections* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 54.

⁵⁵ Lawrenz, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation*, 19.

personal relationship with the spiritual kingdom of God,” it becomes passively transformed.⁵⁶ Willard continues to that end when he writes, “Obedience is an essential outcome of Christian spiritual formation.”⁵⁷ People can see spiritual growth in inner transformations in essential aspects of human personality (thought, feeling, choice, body, social action, soul), with the end being an increasing love for God and neighbor.⁵⁸ Willard helps us to understand how God changes lives.⁵⁹

He details carefully how people grow spiritually and how God changes lives. He lists two main categories of disciplines for spiritual life. The discipline of abstinence consists of solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy and sacrifice. The discipline of engagement consists of study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, and submission.⁶⁰ Paul fasted and pray for three days, and he went to Arabian Desert for a lengthy time. Both Jesus and Paul practiced solitude, silence, fasting and prayer.⁶¹ Paul “practiced daily the things his Lord taught and practiced.”⁶²

Richard J. Foster, Christian theologian and author rooted in the Quaker tradition, in his book *Celebration of Discipline*, also gives specific guidance on the path to spiritual growth. When Foster was fresh out of seminary he realized quickly that he was spiritually

⁵⁶ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1999), 65.

⁵⁷ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*, 23.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 30-31.

⁵⁹ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 156.

⁶¹ Ibid., 101-102.

⁶² Ibid., 106.

bankrupt. People were starving for a word from God, but he had nothing to give them. In Foster's experience, he found that an important aspect of giving includes preaching. He says, "God has ordained the disciplines of the spiritual life as the means by which we place ourselves where he can bless us."⁶³ His book divides practical disciplines between inward disciplines and outward or corporate disciplines. Meditation, prayer, and fasting make up the inward disciplines. Christian meditation, simply stated, is the ability to hear God's voice and obey his word. He outlines the need to meditate on God's word in silence and build a deeper relationship with God. He says that prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform Christians and strongly believes God listens to their prayers. Foster also states that "Fasting must forever center on God."⁶⁴ He advises starting with two meals once a week. Benefits of fasting include dealing with sins, receiving direction from the Lord, and being transformed throughout one's personal life. In addition, "We can rejoice in this knowledge because we know that healing is available through the power of Christ."⁶⁵

In the previous section, Chapell was quoted, emphasizing, "No truth calls louder for pastoral holiness than the link between a preacher's character and a sermon reception."⁶⁶ John MacArthur, Jr., describes the character of preachers in one of the chapters of *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, "The Man of God and Expository Preaching." He says, "Godliness is the spirit of holiness, reverence, and piety that directs

⁶³ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline, the Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), xiii.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 54.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 55.

⁶⁶ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 38.

righteous behavior.”⁶⁷ Kevin DeYoung, Senior Pastor of University Reformed Church in East Lansing, Michigan, wrote *The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness*. He teaches Christians to become visible saints.⁶⁸ DeYoung says, “If you show disregard for Christ by giving yourself over to sin – impenitently and habitually – then heaven is not your home.”⁶⁹ In addition, DeYoung points out that “Distinctive holiness has been God’s plan for his people in both Testaments (Exodus 19:4-6a and 1 Peter 2:9).”⁷⁰ The gift of holiness is definitive sanctification through the Holy Spirit, and it is an ongoing process as well referred to as “progressive sanctification.”⁷¹ Therefore, true spirituality means “to be transformed by the Spirit through communion with the Father and the Son.”⁷² Christ models communion with the Father through love,⁷³ humility,⁷⁴ facing temptation,⁷⁵ and obedience to the Father.⁷⁶ According to DeYoung, “It is possible to please God by His grace.”⁷⁷ These acts

⁶⁷ MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 90.

⁶⁸ Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

⁶⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 25.

⁷¹ Ibid., 33.

⁷² Ibid., 35.

⁷³ John 13:34.

⁷⁴ Phil. 2:5-9.

⁷⁵ Heb. 4:5.

⁷⁶ DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness*, 47. John 6:38; 14:31.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 69.

include bearing fruit,⁷⁸ becoming a living sacrifice,⁷⁹ looking out for a weaker brother,⁸⁰ obeying parents,⁸¹ teaching the word in truth,⁸² and keeping God's law.⁸³ Yet, Christians have to be careful on this point. They cannot deify themselves. Their strength comes from abiding in Christ via exercising faith. No Christian is equal to Christ. Many supernatural attributes are "non-communicable." For example, Christians cannot be creator or dictate providence. DeYoung continued in Chapter 8, "And yet, when there is compromise with the world, we need conviction." Conviction (pathos) means that they follow through and believe strongly enough that their Christlikeness becomes visible. Finally, he writes, "Progress is not only what God expects from me, but what he allows from me."⁸⁴ According to Agan, DeYoung's book is worth reading because there is a misconception that holiness is optional. Evangelicals maintain a false dichotomy between gospel grace and holiness. Agan points out that holiness needs to be explained clearly with understanding of terms or words. Progress toward holiness is not hopeless or pointless. It not only can be applied personally, but interpersonally as well.

Christians need to understand that sanctification is a process. Christians are sanctified by the Holy Spirit at salvation. Therefore, it might be helpful think of they live

⁷⁸ Col. 1:10.

⁷⁹ Rom. 12:1.

⁸⁰ Rom. 14:18.

⁸¹ Col. 3:20.

⁸² 1 Thess. 2:4.

⁸³ 1 John 3:22.

⁸⁴ DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness*, 128.

in grace. Therefore imperative is always based on indicative. Ferguson gives a good explanation of the concept. Ferguson said:

The great gospel imperatives to holiness are ever rooted in indicatives of grace that are able to sustain the weight of those imperatives. The Apostles do not make the mistake that's often made in Christian ministry. [For the Apostles] the indicatives are more powerful than the imperatives in gospel preaching. So often in our preaching our indicatives are not strong enough, great enough, holy enough, or gracious enough to sustain the power of the imperatives. And so our teaching on holiness becomes a whip or a rod to beat our people's backs because we've looked at the New Testament and that's all we ourselves have seen.

Ferguson continues on the value of strong indicative that is necessary:

We've seen our own failure and we've seen the imperatives to holiness and we've lost sight of the great indicatives of the gospel that sustain those imperatives. Woven into the warp and woof of the New Testament's exposition of what it means for us to be holy is the great groundwork that the self-existent, thrice holy, triune God has — in Himself, by Himself and for Himself — committed Himself and all three Persons of His being to bringing about the holiness of His own people. This is the Father's purpose, the Son's purchase and the Spirit's ministry.⁸⁵

Therefore, from Foster, Willard, Agan, DeYoung, and others pastors can evaluate and analyze their process of spiritual formation, their ethos, and the effect of such discipline influences on transformative preaching.

Adult Transformative Learning

Review and analysis of adult transformative learning theory will help the researcher to better analyzing the data. In order to preach well, understanding what kind of learning process is occurring in the adult listeners is essential. Implicit to understanding any specific philosophy or theory of learning is a foundational orientation to adult education. Adult education was first introduced in the United States in the early

⁸⁵ Sinclair B. Ferguson, "Our Holiness: The Father's Purpose and the Son's Purchase" (lecture, Banner of Truth Conference, Grantham, PA, 2007).

1970s by Malcolm Knowles.⁸⁶ It stresses that adult learning processes are voluntary, self-directed, and experiential in nature.⁸⁷

Adults learn because they desire to address immediate issues or problems. Throughout the years, many philosophies have expanded the range of adult learning. These perspectives brought with them different definitions of what constituted learning outcomes: moral citizenry, knowledge of science and rationality, change in behavior from external stimuli, personal relationships through interpersonal relationships, or social change, respectively.⁸⁸ Knowles suggests two categories: behavioralist/connectionist or cognitive/gestalt.⁸⁹ Cranton articulates a similar summary but nuances the two perspectives as the individual-to-social continuum and different types of knowledge.⁹⁰

Originating with Jack Mezirow, currently Emeritus Professor of Adult and Continuing Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, for the transformative learning theory he proposes a way to evaluate learning. Mezirow explains, “Our understanding and beliefs are more dependable when they produce interpretations and opinions that are more justifiable or true than would be predicated upon other understandings or beliefs.”⁹¹ Adults retain perspectives that best make sense of their world. Transformative learning, then, refers to the transforming of a less sound or

⁸⁶ Malcom S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton, and Richard A. Swanson, *The Adult Learner*, 5th ed. (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1998), 1.

⁸⁷ Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide for Educators of Adults*, 3-4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 9-10

⁸⁹ Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, *The Adult Learner*, 22.

⁹⁰ Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide for Educators of Adults*, 10-14.

⁹¹ Mezirow, “Learning to Think like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformation Theory,” 4.

problematic frame of understanding things to a more dependable one or, as a more “open, permeable, and better justified” position. In conclusion, transformative learning theory can better assist the researcher in understanding the depth and degree of learning, if any, that has taken place within a preaching event.

The current study notes an additional concept, that is, the art of persuasion. Preaching can be transformative and also it can be persuasive. Ronald E. Sleeth, Professor at Garret Institute, Evanston says, “Persuasion is the process of influencing belief and behavior by the use of various appeals in order to win a desired response.”⁹² He adds, “For the preacher, the response he seeks is commitment to the claims of the gospel.”⁹³ Sleeth states that the more cogent, rational, and intellectual a sermon is, the more persuasive it is.⁹⁴ Emotions, through the use of human interest stories, also aid persuasion. Sleeth points out that emotions are at the center of volition and thus an important component to transformative preaching.⁹⁵ Craig A. Loscalzo, Associate Professor of Christian Preaching at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, says that “God’s revelation aims at changing persons – hearts, minds, spirits, behaviors; this is the premise of the Christian faith. The Bible persuades people to respond to the love of God revealed in and through Jesus Christ. Preaching as revelation and persuasion seeks to make the message of God real to people, encouraging them to respond with changes of attitudes and actions that model the good news of Jesus

⁹² Ronald E. Sleeth, *Persuasive Preaching* (New York: Harper, 1956), vii.

⁹³ Ibid..

⁹⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 60.

Christ.”⁹⁶ In the same vein, Raymond W. McLaughlin, Professor of Homiletics and Speech, Conservative Baptist Seminary, Denver, Colorado, views preaching as synonymous with persuasion.⁹⁷ McLaughlin is concerned about the ethics of persuasive preaching. Likewise, Paul reminded the Corinthians, “My speech and my message word were not in plausible (persuasive) word of wisdom, but in a demonstration of the spirit and power.”⁹⁸ In spite of Paul’s disclaimer, McLaughlin mentions that Paul’s beautiful passage in 1 Corinthians 13 and his sermons on Mars Hills⁹⁹ as examples of his rhetoric (persuasion).¹⁰⁰ Paul uses persuasive preaching in the fear of the Lord. McLaughlin believes that persuasion is proper when it makes edification a test of an ethical standard. He also mentions ethos as an important element of persuasion. Since Aristotle, rhetoricians have considered ethos as a major source of proof or persuasion.¹⁰¹ Thus, to preserve their ethos, speakers must not conceal the purpose, organization or institution they represent. Of course, the boundary is God’s word.¹⁰² McLaughlin concludes that preachers can use the tool of persuasion provided preachers love God (theological ends), and love neighbor (love self, social effects ends).¹⁰³

⁹⁶ Craig A. Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons That Connect* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 18.

⁹⁷ Raymond W. McLaughlin, “The Ethics of Persuasive Preaching,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1972).

⁹⁸ 1 Cor. 2:4.

⁹⁹ Acts 17:22-34.

¹⁰⁰ McLaughlin, “The Ethics of Persuasive Preaching,” 95.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 99.

¹⁰² Ibid., 101.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 106.

One final factor regarding persuasion is knowing the listeners. Millennials are a key group. They crave feedback and praise, lean toward overconfidence, and dislike ambiguity. Technology is a crucial part of their lives.¹⁰⁴

Preaching Christ to the Culture

Another part of the literature review includes the listeners' culture and upbringing, so as to apply the word of God to contemporary listeners with care. Culture is changing more than ever. Keller has asked how the church can communicate the Christian faith now, in this increasing "secular age," while honoring the truth of the Scripture.¹⁰⁵ Early Christians understood the culture, they reframed the culture's questions, reshaped its concerns, and redirected its hopes. They chose to confront the culture rather than adapt, and yet they also saw the need to communicate their message across cultural boundaries. The integration of culture relating to preaching is one of the aspects of what missiologists call contextualization.

God's mission started in the Old Testament. Christopher J. H. Wright, an Anglican clergyman and an Old Testament scholar, defines the priority of God's mission as "Fundamentally, our mission means our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation."¹⁰⁶ David Bosch, missiologist and theologian, in his book, *Believing in the Future*, spells out the mission as similar to restoring creation,

¹⁰⁴ Jackie Hartman, and Jim McBride, "Optimizing Millennials' Communication Styles," *Business Communication Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (2011): 22–24.

¹⁰⁵ Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 95.

¹⁰⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 23.

God's saving plan in which the church is called to participate The church's is alerting people to the reign of God.¹⁰⁷ Wright continues, "The Bible glories in diversity and celebrates multiple human cultures."¹⁰⁸ In addition, "It does the bulk of its work through the medium of stories."¹⁰⁹ Believers make up the body of Christ, a spiritual, living organism, a community of faith.¹¹⁰ Thus, this spiritual community lives amid its culture to bring the good news of Christ's redemption.¹¹¹ In Paul's Athens address, he contextualizes deliberately and constantly.¹¹² As Keller teaches, "It is built on this new understanding of *missio Dei* ("mission of the God") that has been previously developed by Lesslie Newbigin and David Bosch."¹¹³ The church still stands in contrast to its culture, using contextualization of Christ's message, for kingdom growth, including societal justice.¹¹⁴ In addition, as mentioned earlier, it also announces God's reign as both future and already present

Contextualization and applying the truth to the context are important to effective preaching. Dan Doriani, Vice President of Strategic Academic Projects and Professor of Theology at Covenant Theological Seminary, discusses putting truth to work. Knowing

¹⁰⁷ David Bosch, *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 33.

¹⁰⁸ Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 47.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 47.

¹¹⁰ 1 Cor. 12:13.

¹¹¹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 21.

¹¹² Acts 17:22-23, 24-28.

¹¹³ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 255.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 255-256.

God who redeems and conforms his peoples to himself makes Scripture relevant.¹¹⁵

Doriani pointed out that Christians are to conform to Christ. Jesus blesses traits, “God’s character,” that are attributed to him.

The traditional method of preaching is first exegesis and then application. First, one needs to know the author’s intention in its origin setting. Application rests upon exegesis, though exegesis and application overlap. Writing biblically sound applications for contemporary listeners is a difficult process. And yet, effective preaching must include applications to prove an accurate exegesis of the text.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, writing good application takes skill, intuition, and methods, so theoretical study is warranted as well as knowing the contemporary listeners. For example, if preaching to the elderly who recently came from China, preachers cannot assume they understand the evils of this age, such as “post modernism” or the outcome of Supreme Court approval of same-sex marriage. America to them is a nice place. Those from Taiwan or from Beijing or from Shanghai or Taiyuan or from the villages of China, from Malaysia and Hong Kong will also have different culture and filters, depending on how well they have travelled to the other places. In addition, Doriani writes of the need to know aspects of current language, verbal and non-verbal, to communicate good applications for contemporary listeners. Therefore, to preach effective sermons, preachers need to know the heart of the listeners as well as their felt needs.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 13.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 27.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 37.

Dorani lists several ingredients of general theology as well as Christology, as good sources for preaching applications. These include loving and responding to God, learning from narrative or historical accounts, imitating God's mercy and love and the life of Jesus. Learning the life of Jesus includes learning Christology, the theology of Jesus' work fulfilling the promises of the covenant. Good preaching applications can come from the combining of doctrine and conduct, as seen in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. With knowledge of sound doctrine, the church was applying it by correcting false teaching and choosing to take the right path.

Dorani also notes the importance of the character of those called to preach, especially the spiritual and moral dimensions, another reference to what Chapell calls *ethos*. Courage to speak the truth of the Scripture is key. Courage comes from being under the text, in submission to God. Some observe that preachers stand on the Bible rather than under it.¹¹⁸ Preachers are thus limited, in that it is only by God's grace that one can preach. Dorani says that authority depends on the care given not the power leaders wield. Holiness is possible only through Christ.

Furthermore, Dorani discusses applying narratives in sermons, as well as issues arising from the application of narratives. Many believe preaching narratives is one of the most effective ways to preach. If the sermon considered is too anthropocentric, however, rather than Christ-centered, the author advises starting with the acts of God.¹¹⁹

The problem with the application of doctrine is that it is not a genre, according the author. All Scripture is doctrinal. It is a fundamental belief system based on the divine.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 67.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 164.

Developing doctrine from topicality is one approach. Doctrines are first order assertions about the person and work of God.¹²⁰ It is application of biblical law. A culturally relevant example would be challenged without compromise. Preaching must lead to the applications, illustrations, and clarify biblical principles. Jay E. Adams was a professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary and founder of the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation. He says about applying the truth:

In the Bible we face facts, but far more than facts: on the pages of Scripture we face God Himself! We see Him in action, hear Him address us in our sins and need and awe read, listen to His call, not merely to learn, but to repent, believe and love – as well as think. The Bible is a Book that encourages God’s child to love Him and to love his neighbor by trusting the gospel and following Jesus Christ. That – not mere information – is its purpose. In short, in the Bible you find truth applied.¹²¹

Keller advises that quoting some other thinker is not fundamentally different from using illustrations out of daily life to reinforce the Bible’s teaching. All preachers employ anecdotes, examples, stories, and other accounts to convince listeners and drive biblical truth home.¹²² Keller says that effective preaching is not just accurate and sound. It must capture the listeners’ interest and imagination; it must be compelling and penetrate to the heart. The Bible refers to heart as the seat of the mind, will, and emotion all together. Whatever captures the heart’s trust and love also controls the feelings and behavior.¹²³ That is why the Bible speaks of heart change, having the law “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they

¹²⁰ Ibid., 225-226.

¹²¹ Jay E. Adams, *Truth Applied: Application in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 35.

¹²² Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 107.

¹²³ Ibid., 159.

shall be my people.”¹²⁴ Therefore, preaching addressing the needs of the heart helps to connect with the listeners.

Understanding the culture and context of the listeners drives home biblical applications that transform listeners’ lives. Many books illustrate Chinese culture which is a significant focus of this study. Among them is Fenggang Yang, an author and sociologist, born in mainland China who converted to Christianity after coming to the United States. He says more than 1,000 Chinese churches in the United States, most of them Protestant evangelical congregations, reach diasporic Chinese from Taiwan, Hong Kong, mainland China, and Southeast Asian countries. Yang finds that despite the many tensions and conflicts that exist within these congregations, most individuals find creative ways to integrate their evangelical Christian beliefs with traditional Chinese, often Confucian values. The church becomes a place where they can selectively assimilate into American society while preserving Chinese values and culture. This is another example of contextualization. Yang brings to this study his unique experience as both participant and observer. He draws upon interviews with members of his congregation while making comparisons with other churches throughout the United States.

Many contemporary Neo-Confucian scholars praise the agnosticism in Confucianism. To Chinese Christians, however, its lack of religious dimension is a fatal deficiency. Although Confucius cared little about the spiritual world and death, these questions have to be answered. Precisely because Confucianism failed to provide consistent answers concerning God, death, and the spiritual world. These Chinese Christians argue, various false religions have filled China ever since the Han Dynasty

¹²⁴ Jer. 31:33.

(206-220), when Confucianism became orthodox. Religious Taoists developed a system of gods, spirits, and immortals. In contrast, Buddhism brought China the doctrine of “soul transmigration.” For Chinese Christians, only Christian beliefs provide the right answer to the questions that Confucianism failed to address.¹²⁵ Thus, this contrast must be considered for effective preaching to a Chinese Christian listeners. Another aspect of culture for consideration is language, as multiple languages are used in different parts of China or Taiwan. Chinese also live in many countries with various cultures, such as those in Singapore and Malaysia, which adds another layer of complexity to understanding listeners’ culture.

Biblical/Theological Literature

Before concluding this section on literature studied, the following study will examine biblical evidence of messages that encourage transformation in the lives of listeners. Such messages begin with Jesus Christ. As Paul writes:

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.¹²⁶

Jesus said, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.”¹²⁷ In the Gospel of John, he says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Fenggang Yang, *Chinese Christians in America: Conversion, Assimilation and Adhesive Identities* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 152.

¹²⁶ 1 Cor. 2:1-5.

¹²⁷ John 5:39.

¹²⁸ John 1:1.

Hebrews 1:1-2 says “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” After the resurrection on the road of Emmaus, Jesus said, “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”¹²⁹

Pastors also preach to equip the saints, using all of God’s word. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”¹³⁰ Also, it is true that the Holy Spirit enlightens the souls. John 16:13 says, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” Pastors must therefore totally depend on the Scripture and the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, Paul charges Timothy, “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and I exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”¹³¹ Also, Paul says to Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”¹³² To reiterate, Paul says, spiritual gifts are “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we

¹²⁹ Luke 24:26, 27.

¹³⁰ 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

¹³¹ 2 Tim. 4:1, 2.

¹³² 2 Tim. 2:15.

all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”¹³³

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Preaching

The role of the Holy Spirit is one of the most important ingredients for transformative preaching. As mentioned, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, “And my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” Keller continues that thought, saying, “the act of preaching in particular, there’s something even more central to persuasion: your listeners’ sense of the Holy Spirit working in and through you.”¹³⁴

Jesus Christ predicts the ministry of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16-17, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” Jesus identified the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth. “The Spirit of truth is sent by the Father at the request of the Son and indwells believers as a resident minister who guides us into all truth.” Jesus says, “If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Jesus indicates that the Holy Spirit’s ministry will be a continuation of his own ministry. The Spirit reveals and glorifies Christ by magnifying Christ’s teaching, Christ’s gospel, and Christ’s work as the grand fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan.¹³⁵

¹³³ Eph. 4:12, 13.

¹³⁴ Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 192.

¹³⁵ Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit’s Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 55.

Jeffrey Crotts in 1998 joined the pastoral staff of Little Rock, Arkansas, and explains this Bible verse, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 in his book *Illuminated Preaching*. A young couple was converted when Crotts taught on the topics of godliness. At the time, Crotts felt that his teaching did not come off well. The power that saved the couple was certainly not due to Crotts' teaching even though he did the best he could. Crotts concludes, "Paul knew that the power of God never comes through slick communication skills, but rather by the Spirit of God. God is the one who saves, and the Spirit of God did his work through the word of God."¹³⁶ Crotts realizes the significance of the Holy Spirit's illumination. He continues to say that the instrument that the Spirit uses is his Word, therefore, Crotts' goal is to remove any obstacles that muddy the clarity of the truth.¹³⁷ Crotts uses 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 as the basis for the biblical theology of the illumination of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁸

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Jeffrey Crotts, *Illuminated Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Vital Role in Unveiling Hid Word, the Bible* (Carlisle, PA: Day One Publications, 2010), 11.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 12.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 14-20.

¹³⁹ 2 Cor. 4:1-6.

In verses 1-2, Paul clearly gave all the credit to God. The first theme is condemnation of preaching without illumination as seen in verses 3-4. No spiritual awakening can occur without the illumination of God himself. The second theme is the communication for illumination. It is proclaiming the truth about the gospel and Jesus in order that the fog can be lifted as seen in verse 5. Crotts points out that the third theme is conversion by illumination. It is only God's light shining in the darkness that makes it possible as seen in verse 6a. Lastly, conviction comes by illumination of the Holy Spirit as seen in verse 6b. In addition, believers should also "grow in the *knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."¹⁴⁰ It is also the Holy Spirit that gives the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesian 1:17 says, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him."

Therefore, Crotts states:

The preacher must always have the goal of personal transformation in his mind as he studies the text. When God's word and his Spirit transform the preacher's heart and actions through study, prayer, and meditation, then and only then can the preacher authentically transforming work of illumination to this hearers the Word is preached.¹⁴¹

Those who preach must be as passionate about needing the Holy Spirit as King David was, literally pleading for God's anointing from the Holy Spirit.¹⁴² In addition, a preacher must approach the word as an encounter with God. Paul relies on the simple illuminated truth of the word:

¹⁴⁰ 2 Pet. 3:18.

¹⁴¹ Crotts, *Illuminated Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Vital Role in Unveiling Hid Word, the Bible*, 57.

¹⁴² Ibid, 51., Ps. 51:11.

The basis of his communication was that he was illuminated to believe in truth. Because of this, Paul's preaching method was simple and an example to be followed. Paul summarized this in 2 Corinthians 4:13, where he wrote, "I believed and so I spoke." Why did Paul preach? The Spirit of God had given him faith, and communication followed.¹⁴³

The Bible itself also claims to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, alive and powerful, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."¹⁴⁴ And again, scripture proclaims, "For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."¹⁴⁵ And finally, the author of Hebrews says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."¹⁴⁶

How freeing it is for a preacher to come to grips with the fact that the scripture, not the speaker, is the change agent.¹⁴⁷ John Owens writes:

There is not anything that is good in us, nothing good in us, nothing that is done well by us in the way of obedience, but the Scripture expressly and frequently assigns it unto the immediate operations of the Holy Spirit. It doth so in general as to all gracious actings whatever; and not content therewith, it proposeth every grace and every holy duty, distinctly affirming the Holy Ghost to the immediate author of them. And when it comes to mention of us, it positively, indeed, prescribes our duty to us, but as plainly lets us know that we have no power in or from ourselves to perform it.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Ibid., 55.

¹⁴⁴ 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

¹⁴⁵ 2 Pet. 1:21.

¹⁴⁶ Heb. 4:12.

¹⁴⁷ Crotts, *Illuminated Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Vital Role in Unveiling Hid Word, the Bible*, 62.

Spirit-led preaching also requires the Spirit's illumination of scripture. Heisler defined this as:

Illumination is the process whereby the Holy Spirit so impresses, convinces, and convicts the believer as to truthfulness and significance of the author's intended meaning in the text that a change in action, attitude, or belief occurs, resulting in a more transformed, Spirit-filled life.¹⁴⁹

Paul put the topic of spiritual illumination in the context of mortifying sin in Romans 8:13-16. Romans 8:13-16 says:

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Paul says that it is the conviction of emblazoned upon the heart that motivates believers to mortify sin in their lives.¹⁵⁰ For Paul being illuminated by the Holy Spirit is to have the "mind of Christ."¹⁵¹ Jonathan Edwards writes, "It is a kind of understanding, apprehending, or discerning of divine things, that natural men have nothing of..."¹⁵² Therefore, as aforementioned, Paul's prayer for the Ephesians was "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him."¹⁵³ Additionally, Paul wants the "eyes of your hearts

¹⁴⁸ John Owen, *A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*, William H. Goold Edition (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850), 3:536.

¹⁴⁹ Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery*, 43-44.

¹⁵⁰ Rom. 8:13.

¹⁵¹ Crotts, *Illuminated Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Vital Role in Unveiling Hid Word, the Bible*, 82; I Corinthians 2:16.

¹⁵² Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1746), 195-196.

¹⁵³ Eph. 1:17.

enlightened.”¹⁵⁴ Paul continues to say in Ephesians 3:16-19, “that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Here Paul says to “be filled with all the fullness of God” and later in Ephesians 5:18 he says, “be filled with the Spirit.” Note that in 1 John 2:20-21 says, “But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.” The anointing is connected with “knowledge” and that the believers “know it.” Crotts writes that the anointing of the Holy Spirit guides people to the truth. He says that “Once the heart is energized by the Holy Spirit and truth, the heart gives birth to an appetite, whereby a follower of Christ continues to grow, and hungry throughout life for illumined truth. For the health of the church, both the preachers and hearers need to examine themselves, asking, “When was the last time I sensed the burning conviction that the Scripture I heard or read is truth?”¹⁵⁵

According to Heisler, Jesus reveals the Spirit’s role in conviction when he says the Spirit “will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.”¹⁵⁶ The Greek word for conviction means to “bring to light, to expose, set forth, convince, punish, and discipline.” The biblical evidence clearly points to the Holy

¹⁵⁴ Eph. 1:18.

¹⁵⁵ Crotts, *Illuminated Preaching: The Holy Spirit’s Vital Role in Unveiling Hid Word, the Bible*, 94.

¹⁵⁶ John 16:8.

Spirit's ministry as the Spirit of truth, the revealer of Jesus Christ, and the source of all genuine conviction.¹⁵⁷ "The Spirit's internal witness to biblical truth causes us to give unwavering assent to its truthfulness and puts desire in our heart to suit to it."¹⁵⁸ John Calvin writes:

The prophets and apostles boast not their own acuteness or any qualities which win credit to speakers, nor do they dwell on reasons; but they appeal to the sacred name of God, in order that the whole world may be compelled to submission. The next thing to be considered is, how it appears not probable merely, but certain, that the name of God is neither rashly nor cunningly pretended. If, then, we would consult most effectually for our consciences, and save them from being driven about in a whirl of uncertainty, from wavering, and even stumbling at the smallest obstacle, our conviction to the truth of Scripture must be derived from a higher source than human conjectures, judgments, or reasons; namely, the secret testimony of **the Spirit**. . . . Let it therefore be held as fixed; that those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture; that Scripture, carrying its own evidence along with it, designs not to submit to proofs and arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of **the Spirit**.¹⁵⁹

Concerning preaching the Word, Calvin writes:

Hence there was good ground for the Apostle's declaration, that the faith of the Corinthians was found not on "the wisdom of men" but on "the power of God," (1 Corinthians 2:5), this speech and preaching among them having been "not with enticing words of man's wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of Power," (1 Corinthians 2:5). For the truth is vindicated in opposition to every doubt, when, unsupported by foreign aid, it has its sole sufficiency in itself.¹⁶⁰

As Spirit-filled preachers deliver their messages, the Holy Spirit bears witness to the incarnate word through the written word. It is the Lord who opens the heart of individuals as demonstrated in the case of Lydia at Philippi. The Bible says, "One who

¹⁵⁷ Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery*, 55.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 56.

¹⁵⁹ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1509), 54-55.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 57.

heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.”¹⁶¹ If the Spirit opens the heart, then people leave with their faith in God’s Word and God’s Spirit, “so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.”¹⁶² Spirit-led preaching calls preachers to align their preaching with the ministries of the Holy Spirit revealed in the scripture. The word and Spirit form the powerful catalyst that serves as the theological foundation for Spirit-led preaching.¹⁶³

Furthermore, similarly, Timothy Keller discusses the relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual formation of pastors or preachers. Keller writes:

Half of this book is dedicated to preaching from the heart. You probably understand by now that you cannot hope to do that unless you are consistently preaching from the heart. What you are calling people to experience you must be experiencing yourself. What the Holy Spirit is to do in the hearts of listeners he will normal do first in and through you.¹⁶⁴

According to Ferguson, “We view Pentecost as an aspect of the work of Christ.”¹⁶⁵ In addition, “Jesus promised his disciples that the coming of the Spirit would bring ‘power’ as a consequence of which they would be his witnesses throughout the earth (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8).”¹⁶⁶ Ferguson adds that to be filled with the Holy Spirit is one evidence that someone is under the lordship of the Spirit. To receive fullness of the Holy

¹⁶¹ Acts 16:14.

¹⁶² Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit’s Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery*, 55; 1 Cor. 2:5.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 62.

¹⁶⁴ Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 205.

¹⁶⁵ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 86.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 89.

Spirit is to receive power to be Christ's witnesses.¹⁶⁷ Keller agrees that based on Colossians 1:25-29, it is for pastors "preaching the whole Word of God and preaching to the heart."¹⁶⁸ Preaching is lifting Christ and "aligning themselves with the Spirit, and they can expect him to accompanying their message."¹⁶⁹ Keller continues, "Often it is said that great preachers are so because they have strong gifts of public speaking and preaching. That is true, but for the 'demonstration of the Spirit and of power' it is spiritual *fruit* – love, joy, patience, humility, and kindness – that is more important than talents and abilities. Gifts are things we *do*, but spiritual fruit or graces are things we *are*."¹⁷⁰ Ferguson says that "Grace Operations that produce godly character are primary because they can make up for certain shortcomings in gifts, and also because there is such enormous pressure in the Christian ministry toward hypocrisy."¹⁷¹ Jesus says to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Paul states, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."¹⁷² Therefore, this leads preachers to desperately depend on the Holy Spirit in preaching.

Heisler agrees with Keller and Ferguson and writes that "The Scripture is Christ-centered; the Spirit is Christ-centered; and the preacher is Christ-centered." The

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 89.

¹⁶⁸ Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 193.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 194.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 196.

¹⁷² 2 Cor. 12:9.

implications of the Spirit's biblically defined ministry, combined with the theological relationship between the Word and Spirit, demand Christ-centered preaching.¹⁷³

Scripture is Christ-Centered

According to Heisler, the Holy Spirit-empowered preacher preaches the Spirit-inspired Scripture, pointing at all times to the centrality of the person and work of Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁴ To reiterate the Scripture foundational passages:

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.¹⁷⁵

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.¹⁷⁶

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.¹⁷⁷

Keller looks at the inventory of Christ in all Scripture: Jesus is the true Adam. Jesus is the true and better Abel. Jesus is the true and better than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus is superior to Moses who stands in the gap between the people and the Lord, who mediates a new covenant. He is the better Job, the truly innocent sufferer, who then intercedes for and save his stupid friends.¹⁷⁸

Edmund P. Clowney writes, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament means that we preach, not synagogue sermons, but sermons that take account of the full drama

¹⁷³ Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery*, 62-63.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 62.

¹⁷⁵ John 5:39.

¹⁷⁶ Luke 24:27.

¹⁷⁷ John 20:30-31.

¹⁷⁸ Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 77-78.

of redemption, and its realization in Christ.” Clowney reminds preachers that the title “*Kurios*” refers to Christ (e.g. Hebrew 1:10; 1 Peter 3:15). It is used in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament to translate “Yahweh,” and became the short designation of the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁹ Clowney explains, “Moses strikes the Rock at God’s command (Exodus 17:1-7). There the Lord is present, standing on the rock, but the Rock itself becomes a symbol, associated with the name of God, and therefore with God the Rock in the Symbol (Deuteronomy 32:4). Symbolically, the Rock represented the incarnate Christ, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:4.”¹⁸⁰ Keller states that the Bible points toward Christ in its particular way including Exodus through Deuteronomy and Jesus is the rock of Moses.¹⁸¹ The unity of the Bible is often called “biblical theology.” Clowney, in *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, states, “The Holy Spirit who indwells those who have obeyed him is a witness to Christ. They who walk in the Spirit therefore must shine as lights in the world. The witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. The whole Bible testifies of him. We have been given that Word in order that we might make it known.”¹⁸² Clowney continues that most important of all, biblical theology serves to center preaching on its essential message: Jesus Christ. Clowney writes, “He who would preach the Word must preach Christ.” It is the redemptive historical approach of salvation in Jesus Christ.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 11.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁸¹ Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 71.

¹⁸² Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), 71.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 74.

Both Old and New Testament testify of Jesus Christ. Paul says, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”¹⁸⁴ Clowney uses Psalm 22:1 to describe “the cry of the God-forsaken Savior.” The Scripture of the Old and New Testaments is laced with the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 22:1 reads, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” and is quoted by Jesus on the cross in Matthew 27:46. Jesus’ death was prophesied in the songs of the servant in Isaiah 52:13, the servant “shall he be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.” Again, “Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.”¹⁸⁵ Clowney continues, “The last verse of Psalm 22 answers the first, ‘He has done it.’ God so love he world that he gave. There is the measure of the heart of God!”¹⁸⁶

The Spirit and the Preacher

Heisler writes that “The Scripture is Christ-centered; the Spirit is Christ-centered; and the preacher is Christ-centered.” Preachers need to be Christ-centered. In the spiritual formation review and ethos of preaching, the importance of pastors’ character was reviewed. “Deep godly character, or spiritual maturity, combines qualities that cannot be united in the natural man apart from the transformation power of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸⁷ Preachers of the Word of God are foremost sanctified in Christ. “Sanctification can be ours only by means of the resources of Christ, brought to us through the Holy Spirit as he takes what is Christ’s and reveals it to us, and thus conforms us more and more into his

¹⁸⁴ 1 Cor. 2:2.

¹⁸⁵ Is. 53:4-6.

¹⁸⁶ Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All Scripture*, 131-135.

¹⁸⁷ Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 197.

likeness from one degree of glory to another, as we gaze on the glory of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18).”¹⁸⁸ Titus 1:7-9 states:

For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it

Heisler states that preachers are called by God to be holy, pure, and above reproach and must have the character and integrity to “transport the holy Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God to the people of God....When the Spirit of God and Word of God are mixed together inside a preacher’s heart and are together proclaimed out of his mouth, powerful, Spirit-led preaching takes place...Therefore, Spirit-filled living is God’s prerequisite for Spirit-led preaching.”¹⁸⁹ Heisler believes that the Spirit’s power in preaching is grounded in the process of spiritual sanctification. Therefore, a preacher’s first calling is to keep growing spiritually while bearing spiritual fruit and then to approach preaching as an outgrowth of the vitality of the Spirit. Keller says that first, preachers are to lift Christ up, energized by Christ’s resurrected power. Keller mentions that for strong preachers, in that they have “demonstration of the Spirit and power,” it is their spiritual fruit – love, joy patience, humility, and kindness that is more important than talents and ability. Gifts are things they do, but attributes of spiritual fruit are things they are.¹⁹⁰ Keller points out that civilized society has put more emphasis on results, skills, and charisma rather than on character, reflection, and depth. Keller calls it grace

¹⁸⁸ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology*, 143-144.

¹⁸⁹ Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit’s Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery*, 68.

¹⁹⁰ Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 194.

operations at work in preachers' lives. To reiterate, Keller says that deep godly character, or spiritual maturity, combines qualities that cannot be united in the natural man apart from the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹¹ Their character is exhibited in Jesus Christ. This is the theme of Jonathan Edwards' discourse on "the excellency of Jesus Christ."¹⁹² Edwards writes that Christ is a person infinitely exalted in glory and dignity, based on Philippians 2:6. In Christ infinite majesty and transcendent meekness come together. Meekness is not an attribute mentioned but is shown in the earthly life of Jesus Christ. Edwards illustrates that Jesus Christ is the lamb as well as lion. In Hebrews 5:8, it says, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered." He is the lamb that was slain. And yet Jesus Christ is the lion that conquers and defeats Satan and the darkness. Keller agrees with Edwards and says that if a preacher is godly, his wisdom and love and courage will enable him to comfort and guide people.¹⁹³ John W. Sanderson, who has served at Covenant Theological Seminary, as well as others, says, "The Holy Spirit, by His dwelling within the Christian, provides the motivation, power, and direction the believer needs if he is to produce fruit and resist the antagonism of the flesh."¹⁹⁴

Jerry Bridges, a staff member with The Navigators Community Ministries Group, encourages pastors to be disciplined in the sanctification process. He says, "Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace. And your best days

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 197.

¹⁹² Jonathan Edwards, "The Excellency of Jesus Christ," in *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader*, eds. Kenneth P. Kimmach, Wilson H. Minkema, Douglas A. Sweeney (Cumberland, RI: Yale University Press, 1999).

¹⁹³ Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 196.

¹⁹⁴ John W. Sanderson, *The Fruit of the Spirit* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1976), 41.

are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace." The grace comes through Christ. "Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:2)."¹⁹⁵ Therefore, Bridges advises Christians to preach the gospel to themselves. He devotes chapter three to understanding the gospel based on Romans 3:19-26. The atonement of Jesus Christ, his mercy, grace, and love motivate Christians to live a life with holiness. Bridges calls it the discipline of grace. The first is the forgiveness of all sin and unconditional acceptance through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. The second is the deliverance from the dominion of sin and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit through union with Christ. The grace of God is unmerited faith as well as the divine assistance through the Holy Spirit. Christians responding to the Holy Spirit's work and cooperating with Him in His work is the pursuit of holiness.¹⁹⁶ A legalistic mode of thinking gives indwelling sin an advantage, because nothing cuts the nerve of the desire to pursue holiness as much as sense of guilt. Christians must remember they are forgiven, and sin has no dominion over them.¹⁹⁷ Doriani expresses same sentiment as Bridges. Doriani says, "The root of obedience is God's prior grace and fruit of obedience is conformity to his person and his plans."¹⁹⁸ Likewise, Chapell writes that "Faith in the love that paid the penalty for our sin also provided powerful motivation to flee temptation...its allures lose their power over me when I am resting in the arms of a Savior who makes me eternally secure in his

¹⁹⁵ Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace: God's Role and Our Role in the Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994), 18.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 97.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 108.

¹⁹⁸ Dan Doriani, *The New Man* (Phillisburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), 19.

love.”¹⁹⁹ Chapell says that grace protects us from both the errors by being in despair for merit of God’s love and in danger of thinking that God has not given us guidance. Paul’s prayer culminates in the petition for strength by the power of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 3:14-19. The Holy Spirit transforms as stated in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” Beholding the glory of the Lord is in the gospel which preachers preach to themselves. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 says, “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” Sometimes, God can use circumstances, hardship and discipleship group to sanctify.

Ethos Impact on Preaching

Spiritual formation is related to sanctification, character, reflection, and maturity in Christ. These elements work in combination with the ethos of preachers. Keller believes that without the Holy Spirit, preachers cannot be warm and forceful. Keller, therefore, advises that preachers look at three “texts.” This is the biblical text, the listeners’ context, and the subtext of the preachers’ own heart. Keller concludes by concentrating on what he called “a subtext of worship.” This is to glorify Christ. It is sensing Christ in the heart. Keller adds that what the Holy Spirit will do in the hearts of listeners, he will normally do first in and through the preacher. Keller then lists five ingredients for preaching from the heart. These are to preach powerfully with the power of the gospel; preach wondrously from understanding salvation; preach affectionately

¹⁹⁹ Bryan Chapell, *Holiness by Grace: Delighting in the Joy That Is Our Strength* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 108.

from the preachers' own broken heart; preach authentically bypassing all counterfeit mannerisms and emotional affections; and lastly, preach Christ-adoringly able to taste and see Christ.²⁰⁰ These traits of preachers come from the broken heart of preachers.

Furthermore, Heisler believes that preachers' thought lives are also important, remembering Philippians 4:8-9, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."²⁰¹

As aforementioned, many authors mention the character of preachers as an important ingredient to transform lives. Keller speaks of subtext; Bridges discusses grace and sanctification. Heisler writes:

Character and *ethos* are important because they directly influence the credibility of the messenger and the reception of the message. The Holy Spirit authenticates our message (*logos*) and our *ethos* (character) when we yield both to him, and our audience, with the Spirit's help, can discern our authenticity as preachers.²⁰²

Nothing is more urgent and pressing than intimacy with God to develop character during the weeks before sermons, fanning into flame the gift God has given. Paul advised Timothy, "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands."²⁰³ Paul also says that "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons,

²⁰⁰ Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 204-207.

²⁰¹ Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery*, 90.

²⁰² Ibid., 83.

²⁰³ 2 Tim. 1:6.

by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.”²⁰⁴

Prayer is key. Arturo G. Azurdia III, a minister of Christ Community Church in Northern California, writes, “The preacher must devote himself to a consistent pattern of fervent intercession,” which is set forth by Jesus.²⁰⁵ Jesus Christ says in John 15:16, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”

Besides prayer, the study of God’s word is also key to intimacy with God.²⁰⁶

God’s power is expressed through human weakness based on Scripture passages shown below:

And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.²⁰⁷

Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he is Christ’s, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ’s, so also are we. For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed. I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters. For they say, ‘His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.’²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ 1 Tim. 1:5-7.

²⁰⁵ Arturo G. Azudia III, *Spirit Empowered Preaching: Involving the Holy Spirit in Your Ministry* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1998), 135.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 141.

²⁰⁷ 1 Cor. 2:3-5.

²⁰⁸ 2 Cor. 12:7-10.

Preachers must thus be conscious of their weakness and preach in God's almighty power.²⁰⁹

Calvin Miller's thought on the Holy Spirit can be summarized in saying that preachers need to understand that the Holy Spirit is a teacher. The Word with authority is a sign of the Spirit's presence in the sermon. Preachers are commanded to be filled with the Spirit like the early Christians in Acts 2:4; 4:31 and Ephesians 5:18, to walk with the Spirit from Galatians 5:16, to mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit from Romans 8:13, and never to grieve or quench the Spirit from Ephesians 4:30 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19. Above all preachers are to be led by the Spirit. The Spirit also is a Counselor who comforts the heavy-hearted. The Holy Spirit is power. His power channels through preachers according to the Spirit's terms and control. God's power through the Holy Spirit comes only with total surrender and spiritual submission.²¹⁰

To preach transformative sermons, pastors must address their own spiritual formation. Without question, the Holy Spirit is the key agent in transforming lives of preachers and listeners alike. This project rests on the goal of following Christ so as to proclaim the gospel of Christ and thus transform lives. The ingredients to be discovered or confirmed are to equip pastors to improve their preaching, as well as those who teach seminary students, and pastors especially in Chinese churches in America, Taiwan and China.

Finally, one of the key avenues for teaching Christians to grow in Christ is through the God's word via preaching. Thus preaching is indispensable in moving toward

²⁰⁹ Azudia, *Spirit Empowered Preaching*, 146.

²¹⁰ Calvin Miller, *Spirit, Word, and Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 41-70.

doctrinal soundness²¹¹ and to have an authentic Christian living that pleases God.

Another way to state it is to love Jesus. Jesus says that the greatest commandment is “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”²¹² Transformative preaching instills in Christians’ hearts the love of Jesus Christ and people so that actions or fruit can be seen by many as Christians witness Jesus Christ.

²¹¹ Titus 2:1, “But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.” 1 Timothy 6:3, “If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness.”

²¹² Matt. 22:37-39.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to discover how pastors prepare to preach in order to encourage transformation in the lives of the listeners. Therefore, a qualitative study was proposed to learn how pastors prepare sermons that transform lives. This study's methodology included interviewing experienced pastors on the aspects of preaching critical to transforming lives. A qualitative study explored the experiences of pastors who have many years of experience in preaching and teaching others to preach. There are many reasons to use qualitative approach for this project.

Design of the Study

Qualitative research has several characteristics that facilitate understanding how pastors determine aspects of the preaching events that transform lives. Sharan Merriam in her book, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* writes, "The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience."²¹³ In this project it is important to understand the phenomenon of interests from the pastors' perspectives, not the researcher's. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.²¹⁴ The research questions and specific interview questions

²¹³ Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 14.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 15.

facilitating the collection of data and analysis were focused on the participants rather than the researcher. The researcher, therefore, captured observations, recorded the participants' reactions, and reflected on how to analyze the data as objectively as possible.

This study were pursued a general qualitative research design. This study seeks to understand what pastors do to preach sermons that bring about transformation in the lives of listeners. It also probed into pastors' personal and spiritual formation that may affect their preaching. The limited variable, focusing on pastors within a specific class of Chinese Churches, provided more depth in understanding of preaching's critical aspects, as stated by Merriam.²¹⁵ The goal was to lead the researcher to insights, discoveries, and interpretations of the key elements of preaching rather than the testing of a hypothesis. Thus, this study resulted in a deeper understanding of transformative preaching event in Chinese churches.

Participant Sample Selection

The participant sample selection composed of interviews with a minimum of six pastors who have greater than ten years of preaching experience in evangelical churches in China. Three pastors have also been teaching preaching or teaching in China and Taiwan to seminary students and pastors. These criteria provided participants who have substantial authority on the topic, while minimizing variables of theological and preaching style differences.

The participants were also selected based on the effectiveness of their preaching ministries, providing data towards best practices. To find qualified participants, the

²¹⁵ Ibid., 42.

researcher asked area church leaders and congregants for their recommendations of those whose preaching has been transformative. The researcher also listened to some of the sermons preached.

Data Collection

The data of this study were collected using interviews based on the general qualitative method. As mention earlier, data concerning the character and spiritual formation of the pastors interviewed were collected. Therefore, the researcher contacted the interviewees asking them to prepare for the interview by taking time to reflect upon presuppositions, beliefs, biblical doctrines, and incidents in the preaching event. The pastors were asked to identify the aspects of preparing for the preaching event. In particular, they were asked how they account for the listener and the cultural environment of listeners, as well as the spiritual formation of their personal walk with Christ while they are preparing to preach. The interviews were done in person or due time restraints, some geographically distant interviews used computer video-conferencing via internet connection, and they were digitally recorded. The recordings were transcribed for analysis by the researcher. The interviews were mainly in Mandarin Chinese. It is translated as accurately and precisely as possible to retain the integrity of the discussions.

This study used a semi-structured interview protocol as defined by Merriam. It was the middle ground between highly structured or standardized interviews, where the wording and order of questions was predetermined, and the unstructured or informal interview, where questions were open-ended, often a sign that the researcher did not know enough about phenomenon to ask relevant questions.²¹⁶ The semi-structured

²¹⁶ Ibid., 89.

interviews were created consistency through general pre-defined questions framing and ultimately guiding the subject. This structure helped the interviewees to answer spontaneously, in a manner that was natural to them. It also facilitated an open atmosphere between interviewer and interviewees, giving a greater sense of freedom and clarity. Since pastors generally regarded themselves as experts in this area, the researcher prompting stayed to a minimum. The interviews were ninety minutes.

The Interview Protocol questions for interviews were currently structured as followed. Different questions might be formulated as interviews proceed from one participant to another to obtain greater clarity and ample data to understand the issue and key elements:

Research Question 1: How do pastors describe preaching that encourages transformation in the lives of the listeners?

1. What are the major aspects of the preaching event that transforms the lives of the listeners?
2. Can you think of any instances when you felt the preaching move the listeners?
3. Describe some of your best sermons that resulted in transforming lives.
4. If you could, could you offer a list of key ingredients for great preaching that transforms lives?

Research Question 2: How do pastors evaluate the degree to which preaching encourages transformation in the lives of the listeners?

1. What are some ways of evaluating the effectiveness of the preaching events that transform the lives in the listeners?
2. Tell me about a time when preaching events transformed the lives in the listeners.

3. Was there a specific instance when the preaching event caused people to change?
4. How do you receive feedback from the congregation? What responses have you implemented due to the feedback?

Research Question 3: How do pastors prepare to preach in order to encourage transformation in the lives of the listeners?

1. How do you prepare sermons that will bring transformation in Christians?
2. Does transformative learning or the analysis of listeners play a vital part in effective preaching?
3. What is unique to preaching in Chinese churches that needs to be understood in order to preach sermons that are transformative?
4. What is the role of explanations of Scripture, illustrations, and applications on transforming the lives of the listeners?

Research Question 4: What is the role of spiritual formation as pastors prepare to preach in order to encourage transformation in the lives of the listeners?

1. What are the aspects of personal spiritual growth that have an impact on preaching that transforms lives?
2. What personal disciplines regarding fasting, praying, solitude, and studying the scripture increase the power to preach messages that transform lives?
3. What is the role of *ethos* in preaching that transforms lives?
4. How do you teach other seminary students or pastors to preach so that their sermons will transform lives?

Data Analysis

The data analysis consisted of comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences, per Merriam. The data were categorized, and grouped together due to similarity. The categories were given names, called codes. The analysis identified patterns and themes or concepts of the data collected. These expressed

patterns, themes or concepts were arranged based on how they relate to each other to a build plausible theory.²¹⁷ This inherently inductive and comparative process allowed the study to determine most clearly the key factors involved. The units of data of the interview were collected and assessed. Data were coded then categorized for further study. Key ingredients were captured for transformative preaching and other related concepts important to preachers that were useful for Chinese pastors, as Chinese churches grow in numbers and frequency of their use of expository preaching.

Researcher Position

Merriam notes, “Qualitative case studies are limited, too, by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis.”²¹⁸ The researcher must be aware of the bias contributed by the background, culture, conviction of the researcher. The research was based on the collected data to determine the outcome and not on any individual filter or bias. The researcher had a Christian worldview and preaching informed by scripture; therefore, if faced with a choice in interpretation or in constructing meaning from the data, he chose the course that affirmed by his understanding of what the Bible teaches. If, as he believes, the Bible reveals truth and describes reality, then his worldview may contribute to an analysis of data that is more perceptive and helpful than if he were indifferent to scripture. As I reflection on more than twenty years of learning to preach and preaching in many churches in Missouri, Illinois, Arkansas and Taiwan, as well as listening to thousands of sermons, they bring some bias regarding effective preaching. Subjective judgment,

²¹⁷ Ibid., 30-31.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 52.

however, were tempered with biblical truth. Nonetheless, the researcher were looking for answers to strengthen solid data already supporting preaching theory or principles. The researcher's goal is to form practical steps needed to arrive at transformative preaching.

Study Limitations

Six pastors were interviewed from Chinese churches. They were all evangelical preachers who serve the Chinese Churches or seminary. Since the research will be homogenous, its analysis may not be universally applied to different preachers in different cultural contexts. This study did not attempt to be exhaustive in literature review or in cultural contexts where different expertise was required for an in-depth review of literature available to the researcher. The researcher went into as much depth as possible considering the capacity, ability, time, and energy available. In addition, the immediate applicability of the results were limited to the ministerial context of pastors who preach. It may be limited culturally, but were in general applicable to all preaching. The extent to which the data may be generalized to ministers in other regional and social contexts is the responsibility of the reader. Thus, the need for spiritual formation and the impact in preaching and living may have implication to all Christians.

Chapter Four

Findings

The purpose of this study was to discover how pastors prepare to preach in order to encourage transformation in the lives of their listeners. This study included interviews of experienced pastors on aspects of preaching critical to transforming lives. This study also explored the experiences of pastors who have many years of experience in preaching and in teaching others to preach. Therefore, a qualitative study was proposed to learn how pastors preach sermons that transform lives. The research consisted of interviews with six pastors in four areas. First, the study explored the pastors' perspective on preaching that transforms lives. Secondly, it researched their evaluation of their preaching. Thirdly, the research delved into the pastors' preparation for preaching. Fourth, the study examined the relationship between the pastor's spiritual formation and transformation that takes place in the lives of their listeners. The following sections summarize the data from these interviews and identifies insights that answer the stated goals of the study.

Research Participants

The research participants' names have been kept anonymous in order to protect their identities; however, a brief introduction to their preaching context may assist in the analysis of their reflections. Six Chinese pastors participated in this research study. They all preach regularly in an evangelical Chinese church. Two pastors earned their Ph.D.'s in science and engineering before they were called to ministry. One of these two pastors earned two Ph. D.'s and a Th.M. degree. He has pastored Chinese churches more than thirteen years before he became a missionary and also a professor for more than ten years

in a seminary. He is currently teaching homiletics. He also teaches in mainland China where the seminary students are required to have a Bachelor's degree before they come to a seminary for a M.Div. degree.

Another pastor, with a Ph.D. in science, was called to ministry after time in the workforce.. This pastor has served for thirty years and is currently a senior pastor at one of the largest churches. He has been teaching in seminaries in China for many years and mainly teaches homiletics.

The third pastor has a M.Div. and D. Min. degree and pastored a Chinese church for more than three years before he became a missionary in China for the last fifteen years. In the beginning, he taught many subjects in China, but most recently he has been teaching homiletics. Even though he does not preach with a consistent congregation at this time, he has been invited to preach in various Chinese churches worldwide. He preached in various Chinese churches located in China (house churches and Three-Self Churches), Taiwan, Malaysia, and in North America.

The fourth pastor has been pastoring churches in a large city in China for more than ten years. He was trained by a missionary from America who graduated from Westminster Theological Seminary in hermeneutics. Also, the Chinese pastor later received his Th.M. degree in homiletics. Along with pastoring, he is teaching homiletics in seminaries in China.

The fifth pastor also has been serving churches in a large Chinese city for more than ten years. He is mainly a church planter but teaches occasionally.

Finally, the sixth pastor has been a pastor for more than fifteen years. He started off as a youth pastor at a large Chinese church but is now currently a lead pastor at a

Chinese church composed of many Asian Americans. He was interviewed to gain different insights based on his unusual background.

These pastors have extensive preaching and teaching experiences. Most have been preaching every Sunday from ten to thirty years. Also, to reiterate, five of the six pastors teach homiletics in seminaries in mainland China.

The language used for the interviews is predominantly Mandarin Chinese. The data was collected, and quotes were translated into English as accurately and precisely as possible. The alternate names used for the participants are Pastors Chang, Fung, Gu, He, Ho, and Ko.

Preaching Event

The researcher interviewed the six pastors through four areas. First, the pastors were asked to describe a preaching event that transformed the lives of their listeners.

Exegesis of Scripture

When all six pastors were asked to describe the major aspects of preaching that transform lives of the listeners, they all unequivocally said that it must be biblically based. Pastor He said:

For preaching that is truly able to transform lives, first, it must be biblical. It must be based on the Bible. The Bible is the revelation of God through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Holy Spirit can change our lives. It transforms the lives of preachers as well as the listeners. Both are changed by the work of the Holy Spirit. The preacher must preach the truth of the Scripture. Second, for preaching to transform lives, the preachers themselves need to be qualified. The preachers are important as they need to know the original meaning of the authors and how in turn to speak so that it fits today's listeners. Preachers are a mediator of the Bible to today's listeners.

Pastor Gu said similarly, "For preaching to transform lives, number one, it must be biblical, based on God's word. It does not mean you cannot use quotes from others or

have a good testimony, but it must be biblically based; otherwise, it is just inspirational. Only by the power of God's word can it truly change peoples' lives."

Pastor Ko gave a word of caution about not giving a biblically based sermon. In China sometime "life preaching" is emphasized. Pastor Ko said:

I started pastoring churches in China in 1998. I found that the most important thing is accurate Scripture exegesis. It is foundational in the preparation of sermons. For many years in China, what we called 'life preaching' was what was being taught. It is based on life experiences instead of exposition of the Bible. In China, preaching is complicated. It is mainly topical. In many ways, I see that it may not need very much preparation. Life preaching was just achieved through prayer and meditation on Scripture. I am not saying devotions, prayers and meditation on God's word are not important. The problem is that as time goes on preachers leave the Bible behind. Preachers deviate from the Bible and it becomes a 'long distance memory' from the Bible. I think if preachers focus on the Bible and the biblical message of the gospel that will be the key to bringing people closer to Christ and truly transform the lives of listeners.

Clear and Understandable

All six pastors highlighted that preaching must be biblically based, but they also said that preaching ought to be clearly communicated and understandable to the listeners. Pastor Ho said, "Preachers need to clearly explain the Bible and make it clear to listeners. People need to be able to understand the Bible message when the preachers explain it." Pastor Fung said that when he was trained at Covenant Theological Seminary, the basis of Christ-centered preaching was via "explanation, illustration, and application." Therefore, the explanation of the Bible is the priority in preaching. Secondly, it needs to be clear and understandable.

Similarly, Pastor He said that, "Preachers need to speak in a way that the listeners can understand clearly and be able to obey. Preachers have to understand the truth of the Bible and understand the need of today's listeners. They must preach the original truth using the language of today in a way that is understandable."

Likewise, Pastor Gu shared some thoughts on clarity and simplicity:

Along the way the message needs to be clear and understandable. It needs to be simple in order to be clear. For keeping it simple, my challenge has always been in having too many points. All my points are good points, but if it is too much and takes away from the clarity of the message, I need to take it out. The remaining points should then be spoken clearly, which tries to help people understand; otherwise the communication is ineffective.

Relevant – Connect with the Listeners

Furthermore, preaching needs to have a strong application to listeners' daily lives in order to be able to transform lives. This is where "the rubber meets the road." Pastor Fung said, "The tradition that Dr. Robert G. Rayburn (Founder and President of Covenant Theological Seminary) and Dr. Bryan Chapell taught was to preach using explanations, illustrations, and strong application of the word. Explanation is biblically based. The use of illustrations can be a very powerful tool as well." Then, Pastor Fung emphasized the importance of knowing the main point of the message. He stated:

Transformation of lives occurs through well-defined specific application. I taught my students in China that 'presentation' of the word is easy, but explaining it, utilizing good illustrations, and a strong application will require a great deal of effort and work. When listeners hear the message they usually are expecting to meet with the challenge of what they need to do. In this vein, Dr. Rayburn has always reminded us, 'What do I need to do from the message?' In homiletics, how does the Bible passage convey God's burden? Covenant tradition is to find the "Fallen Condition Focus" (FCF). In this way, a preacher is forced to pinpoint the important point of the Bible passage. To develop the Bible passage for the FCF, one needs to know the listeners. The preacher must be a student of the Bible and a student of the people in order to be able to connect with the listeners.

Furthermore, Pastor Gu emphasized that the message needs to be relevant to the listeners, which means that one must have a good application. "If I talk about the Jews, it has to have some connection to us otherwise it is just a history lesson." He then said that he expects that things can happen on its own. A teacher must be courageous when challenging the listeners for change. Pastor Gu said, "I have to tell listeners that I am not

responsible for their spiritual growth. They are. They have the Holy Spirit and God's word. Too many of us depend on the pastors. I think about social media too much and should not worry about what people think." He continued, "People actually say to me that they like me being blunt. They told me that I had too many disclaimers and that I just need to be forthright and say it. When others tell me this, it encourages me to be courageous in my sermon preaching." Thus, Pastor Gu concludes that preaching definitely has to be biblical, as well as clear, relevant, and courageous.

It is interesting that Pastor Chang defined application as godly living. He said, "From my own learning, experience, growth, and from seeing people and pastors with problems, I believe preaching can convey Christian living. Our lives are important. Godly living breeds godly people. It is incarnate living." Pastor Chang continued to emphasize concerning godly living, "My father-in-law who is a preacher who has preached for many years advised me that preaching is not just conveying knowledge but conveying how to exercise godly living. He always reminded me that while you teach at a seminary, you are not teaching academic knowledge but rather teaching with example."

Both Pastor He and Chang are saying the same thing. They believe that a Christian should be living the truth. Both say that one must not only speak about truth to listeners but be like Jesus Christ who lived among His people (John 10:10). They note that our lives need to be mature and lived out differently. In addition, Pastor Chang said, "We are like children sometimes. Children show growth when they start to understand others' need and begin to serve others. They start to care not only just for themselves, but they begin to care about others. Therefore, the maturity of the Christian life is very important, and God wants us to grow. The most important thing is to love the Lord with

all your heart, might, and strength.” Pastor Chang gave an example looking at Jesus’ teaching method, “It is not just preaching a message but the life itself needs to grow. Paul also said that he runs with that goal. God wants to recover our original glory. He desires for our salvation, a new birth, a new life, and for us to continue to grow and mature. Romans 8 says to be like Jesus’ image. Therefore, preaching is transferring one’s life example.”

Exegesis of the Listeners

It is important to be excellent in exegesis of Scripture. The message must be clear and relevant. At the same time, preachers must also understand the conditions of the listeners. This requires the “exegesis of the listeners.” Pastor He said, “Speakers need to understand the Bible as well as the spiritual life of the listeners. Pastors need to know the contemporary culture, knowledge of life, social, family, work, and general conditions of the surrounding lives.” Pastor Fung said much the same concerning the Fallen Condition Focus. The Fallen Condition Focus defines the conditions of the listeners as it relates to the Bible passage and their specific environment. Pastor He states, “The Chinese churches in China, especially the house churches, are very spiritual. The pastors/preachers have good spiritual discipline but lack the experience of knowing the culture and ‘living in the world.’ As a result, they lack a balance in the message they preach.” Pastor He continued to share the same theme:

I have observed that pastors in China need to have a good knowledge of the issues that face people today. Many preachers serving in the house churches in China do not generally have a high level of education and therefore do not have the experience of working in the workforce in society or really understanding the daily lives of others. These pastors pour everything into their ministry, and they are very loyal, strong, and dedicated to their spiritual lives. As a result of not wanting to relate to the experiences of the common people, it is then hard to connect the Bible to the daily lives of others, and it becomes unbalanced. Thus,

preachers need to strive to be holistic. They should strive to be like Jesus Christ who had the work experience, family experience, and people experience. Therefore, preaching composes of body and blood (physical body).

Most Chinese Christians consider their daily work and daily living within society as belonging to the secular cravings of this world. The spiritual and secular are separated. Therefore, these brothers and sisters cannot have an impact on this world. Bible passages are hard to apply in daily living, and biblical truths are considered good truths but are empty words. They learn as if it were in an academic setting; therefore, they do not apply the teachings to their lives. Pastor He cautions, “Listeners need to be humble, teachable, and willing to heed and apply. The Chinese Christians are lacking in these areas which, if they do apply the principle, it can be very practical for their daily lives.”

Pastor Chang said, “Jesus Christ gives us a good approach about reaching to different people. Jesus looked at individuals, the needs of the crowd, the disciples, and the religious leaders. The truth, even if it is needed, may not satisfy everyone. Therefore, listeners are customers who like different things such as how you package it. Preachers are like tailors where the messages need to fit the listeners.” Looking at Paul, he said, “In Colossians 1:28, Paul advises that we all use wisdom to be able to transform lives. The culture needs to be understood by preachers.” He also had learned that language varies in different parts of China and in different part of Taiwan. Words may be the same, but have different meanings. Different idioms are used in different regions of China as well. Therefore, knowing what to say and how to say it are both important.

Pastor Ko added some of his insight regarding the knowledge of contemporary culture and the needs of listeners. He pointed out that knowing the listeners and having a good relationship with the listeners are very important. “Pastors can integrate the

different aspects of their listeners' struggles into the sermon. The church likes to influence the culture at different levels according to a Christian view. We preach in such a way that we can influence society as well as edify each other. Therefore, there is usually conflict when discussing political views, cultural issues, and financial stewardship." Pastor Ko gave some examples of his sermons:

For example, Christians are taught how to use money wisely, the importance of offering. Therefore, when I am preaching, I keep in mind many struggles listeners have. It is because expenses in Beijing are really high. Therefore, there is a lot of pressure for the living in a large city. Another topic of interest is family. They have a lot of concern about education. Many want to send their children to America. They view their children as 'idols.' As a result of the one child policy in China, six adults (parents plus four grandparents) all are trying to take care of one child, and they certainly expect the best for that child. Family and marriage is also a prime issue in China. There are marriages that fail and divorces. In China, when a husband and wife fight, everyone knows about it, and much time is spent in trying to help them resolve it. There is infidelity in marriage, and therefore the pastors need to make sure there is evidence of infidelity in order to deal with it according to the Bible. We preach about marriage. Our church has developed good programs for believers. Besides pulpit ministry, we have a new believer's program consisting of a new believer's class, cell groups and others. Afterwards, we offer discipleship training for three years. I believe we have a good adult Sunday school program.

In understanding the listeners, Pastor Ko continued to point out other challenges. "A lot of people like the charismatic movement in China. In preaching we deal with this as well. It is a quick experience for many. Mysticism and cults (Korean cults) are usually seen in villages. A lot of Christians blindly follow cults – so we address these topics in our preaching."

Pastor Ho added other perspectives of Chinese culture. He believes that Chinese culture likes to emphasize blessings. Everyone wants to strive to have blessings or benefit from religion, and therefore, pastors need to address how real blessings come from the gospel. In addition, everyone wants to be prosperous. Therefore, pastors need to discuss

why the gospel makes Christians the most prosperous. They need to help people understand that the real prosperity is in Jesus Christ. In the past, most people viewed communism as suppression via bondage. The prosperity gospel (as we define it in America) is becoming more and more popular, and perhaps it is because it appears to be more like freedom than suppression.

According to Pastor Ho:

The Chinese culture currently does not have a well-defined moral standard, and it is all relative. Perhaps it is due to the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, people feel that coming to the U.S. is a good thing. In addition, Chinese people do not want to give. In general, Chinese like to receive from others but do not want to give. Chinese call ourselves 'king outside' (I am #1) and our 'inner-selves are holy' (inside, I am better than you). This saying, 'Outside I want be king, inside I am holy' might be a residual effect from Confucius thinking. Therefore, it is hard for the Chinese people to be united. These cultural underpinning influences how we preach. We need to be relevant. How does this relate to preaching? How do we influence change in listeners?

Our thinking, our emotions, our behavior need to be reformed by the truth of God. This type of change is comparable to the 'outside king and inside holy' thought. We need to be changed inside by the gospel first. For example in Acts 3:19, it advises Chinese Christians to turn again and repent. We need to be transformed as stated in Romans 12:1. Second Timothy 3:16-17 says "correction" is needed for one's emotions, as well as a change in our behavior. Also, most Chinese people use deductive reasoning. We make a conclusion first and then expand from it. If we are wrong, we will then go the wrong way. Therefore, in preaching we need to know the culture, pinpoint the problem, and know how to deal with the problem.

Other related ideas came from Pastor Gu, "For Chinese, personal egos get involved, as we call this then 'losing face.'" He gave an example, saying that when he started out, the people all thought that he was too young. He remembered, "When I got married, I was then able to gain more respect. When I had more children, I received even more respect. That is the Chinese way. Experience, age, and ego are all things we have to deal with. I counsel young pastors to be courageous in their preaching. I am fortunate that I have been in churches where everyone has been very supportive."

Pastor Gu continued, “If you speak about Chinese churches in America, the challenges may be similar to those in China. Education is a barrier to Chinese people growing in Christ. In America, many of the Chinese who come to the U.S. have their Ph.D.’s, and many of their kids do not go to church, even though the parents are Christians.”

According to Pastor Gu:

The parents would rather send their children to Chinese school to learn Chinese instead of going to church to learn God’s word. Many Chinese parents will drive a long way for their kids to attend music lessons but refuse to drive fifteen minutes to attend Sunday worship or Sunday school. The Chinese people feel they do not need God as they have money, a good job, and a home. Thus, church and God are secondary. They are not committed. There is not a need to live for God. They are not evangelistic. Quite a few pastors have mentioned that education is still an idol for Chinese people even here in America. The Chinese family in America has plenty of challenges as they deal with materialism. They desire having enough money in order to be comfortable and secure. The Bible calls us not to be comfortable. In persecution, we are called to take up our cross daily, which is very difficult.

Sermon Preparation

In this section the pastors were asked about the process of sermon preparation..

Pastor He said, “As I spoke earlier, the Holy Spirit at work is a must. Preachers need to prepare their messages as well as themselves. The preachers’ life needs to be holistic. It is important to devote time to prayer and Bible reading. In preaching, we need to know how we can express ourselves best. It is not just rebuking the listeners, but there is good dialogue happening. Preachers need to have passion and speak lively.” Pastor He continued, “During preparation, hermeneutics and explaining the selected text will be more or less mechanical. Preaching is an art. Skills can be learned, but art cannot be learned. Preachers need to have the gift as well as having the art. Art is related to experience. A message needs to have meat as it is not just academics.” He recalled, “About 20 years ago, my sermons were accurate, but it did not have too much meat or

substance. I remember Charles Spurgeon said that it took him forty years of experiences to prepare the sermons. Furthermore, preachers themselves need to be moved first by the message. It takes practice and discipline.” Pastor He shared:

If we are slow, it is okay. At first we may just follow a certain format and outline to learn how to preach. Then, we can learn how to do it faster, but of course it will vary with each individual. I learned from others, exercised good personal discipline, spent time practicing my sermons, and observed other preachers. Part of sermon preparation is to see the power of observation which I developed slowly within me. I started to observe the world and scriptures better and then preach based on my observations in a way that my listeners could relate to. We need to know that in this generation, the connection between the truth and today’s conditions are vital in preaching a message that is able to transform the lives of listeners.

Pastor Fung emphasized more about knowing the text he preached. Pastor Fung said, “I need to protect my time for sermon preparation. First, I determine the message of the passage. As a result of my weakness in using deductive instead of inductive reasoning, I have to use other resources in order to understand the key points of the passage well.” He emphasized, “I am very dependent on other resources as I need them in order to have the confidence to preach. What kinds of resources do I utilize? For example, I like to collect electronic commentaries. For example, I collected fourteen electronic commentaries of 1 Corinthians before I started to prepare preaching on the topics from 1 Corinthians.” He continued, “I am not like Dr. Dan Doriani at Covenant Theological Seminary who can read the Scripture in Greek, and immediately, the passages became very clear to him. He can easily outline the passages. For me, I have to use various tools in order to understand the scriptures well in order to preach well.”

Pastor Ko on the other hand emphasized the relationship he has with the congregation as helping him craft his sermons. Pastor Ko said that as soon as he finishes his Sunday preaching, he will start praying for the next Sunday sermon or for other

upcoming sermons. Pastor Ko said, “Sometimes, I will spend time with congregants and ask about their needs. Our views are often different sometimes, but I am usually able to determine why there are differences and then find a way to preach in a way that can foster growth for each listener best.” Pastor Ko is disciplined; he said, “In addition, I meditate and study the Bible with different Bible translations in order to prepare well for the next sermons.”

Pastor Ho viewed preparation from a different angle. He stressed that a preacher first needs to apply the sermons to himself before he preaches them. To teach biblically means to experience God and to live a life pleasing to him. In addition, pastors live with the people and live for the truth. In this way the messages that pastors preach have balance with truth and living it out. Genuine faith expresses itself into godly living based on faith. Therefore, pastors’ lives come through their sermons as they prepare for the messages. The message that is lived out will create a thirst for God’s word.

Echoing what other pastors have said, Pastor Gu said that he lets the passage speak to him first before he preaches. Pastor Gu said, “Ideally, when we go through a book, we shouldn’t have to decide what passage to use. We ought to let the word of God speak out and not focus too much on just the passage of the day.” He mentioned his main struggle. “The passage can have too much in it and it can be hard to pick and choose what to leave out. Sometimes, we can leave quite a significant part out. We need to first let his message marinate into our minds.” He cited John Piper who just preached from one verse of the Bible. John Piper wrote a book on Romans. When he went to Bethel, it was for his own benefit:

I visited his church, and at his conference he had just preached on Romans 1:1 for the whole message. That’s John Piper for you. God’s word is so rich. For me

preparation of message takes significant time. Some have said that thirty minutes of preaching is thirty hours of preparation. For the last three years, I have served as the role of the coordinating pastor at the Chinese church. There is much to do as I help lead the staff meeting and have been at this church the longest and there is also a need for a children's pastor. It can take a lot of time. I sacrifice time spent with family and my own sleep. At certain points you have to go to bed and sleep. I do not always have a lot of time to prepare, but I know that God always is able to help me. Sometimes, I finish my sermons on a Saturday, the eve of Sunday. The Evil One keeps us from being able to prepare well for sermons sometimes.

Pastor Ho summed it all up, saying that preaching also includes a good delivery, having good technique in the art of speaking. It needs to be “authentic – real and true. You must speak truth with passion, have good exegesis of Scripture, and clearly explain the Scriptures well.”

The pastors were then asked specific questions concerning the role of explanations of Scriptures utilizing illustrations and application. Pastor Ho said that utilizing illustration is by far the most difficult task. “It is not just a simple example, but it needs to open up the main point.”

Personal Preaching Experiences

The pastors were asked to recall certain preaching events or sermons where they were able to see lives transformed. Most of the pastors being interviewed had a hard time thinking of instances that had a great impact on the listeners. Pastor He said that in his ten years of preaching, every message he preached was all important to him. In many ways, the listeners can learn from the Sunday worship. Few individuals also attend Sunday school. Therefore, preaching is an important aspect of worship for most. Pastor He teaches pastors that preaching is not just talking, but it is also interaction. Pastor He said, “You must interact in a way that can affect others. It is through the Holy Spirit's help that we can influence others more specifically. In my messages, I usually relate myself into

the story of the Bible I am telling. We permeate ourselves into the message. Therefore, the message needs to be part of our beings.” Pastor He shared his experiences in China as he preached at various places. He emphasized how he challenges the listeners to action:

The experiences I have gone through can influence the message I preach. For a message to have impact, I need to challenge the listeners. I sometimes have an altar call for Christians and non-Christians. I will challenge the Christian listeners to practice the truth. After the message, we will pray, and then I ask all the listeners to make a commitment based on the message. If they stand up, I can then pray for them to follow through. The listeners are usually always passive. Therefore, pastors’ responsibility is to challenge. The altar call for the non-Christians is for those who need to come to Christ. That is usually what I teach the Chinese pastors. I occasionally just preach an evangelistic message but it’s only during an evangelistic meeting. It is not preached on every Sunday. All of the listeners usually have different reaction to the message.

Recently, in Taiwan, when I preached to seminary students, I also called them to recommit themselves to the Lord. In this way, the heart can then be changed. There is a movement. The Holy Spirit can work, and so the people can respond. In one of the instances after I preached, there were thirteen pastors that came forward. They knelt down to pray and recommitted their service to the Lord.

Sometimes, for these village pastors it is hard see the value of the challenge presented or the purpose of the altar call. For instance in a village located in China that I taught and preached in, the pastor there in charge did not think that I should make an altar call. I preached on Luke 17 about the ten healed of leprosy that day instead. Nonetheless, at the end of my sermon, I did ask them to go home and not just respond by simply just hearing the message but by actually expressing themselves right away through giving thanks and praise to God. It is a simple task to do. At the time, there were forty people that came out. In addition, there were eighty people who came to the Lord that day as well. There were totally about 3,000 listening to the message. It is a Three-Self Church that invited me to preach. I did it, and the response was very surprising. Therefore, we need to give listeners the message and also give listeners a chance to respond to the message.

Pastor Ho related his experience as well:

One of the experiences I gave was a sermon preaching John 1:32-42. It concerns following Jesus Christ as the disciples did.. The Holy Spirit was indeed working that day. First, I asked them, “What do you want?” Their answers provide clue to their motivations. Then I ask, “What do you want do with it?”

We know that God changed Peter’s name, and so we also are capable of being transformed and can make a change to our lives as well. We need to live out our

belief. A good relationship with God translates to living out our faith. If we change we need to live it out.

The result of the message is that the listeners felt compelled to repent. In response to the message, the brothers and sisters incorporated the material from my sermon that I preached into their prayer meeting of their Bible study over the course of three months. They studied the sermon and actualized the message into living it out. The message that was preached that day was able to transform lives.

The reason that the message had such an impact was because I was able to be vulnerable and share about how I needed to change and also let others see that I have changed. God helped me to change, and God can help them to change.

In the same way, Pastor Ko said that the message needs to move within himself first. Pastor Ko related a story. “My experience is that the message needs to first pierce my own heart. The word can have power and influence. So the Bible first must speak to me, and then it can then help to resonate with the listeners.” He related his most recent experience when he came to visit the United States not too long ago and preached at a Chinese church in Virginia. There were about 500 people that day. He said, “From my observation, I saw many of them came from mainland China and did not live with clear goals. Many of them cried that day when I shared a message about bringing each other back to the goal that Jesus Christ calls us to. I could relate to them and felt tremendous love for them and because of that they were able to respond to the message.”

Pastor Fung tried to think of an instance that he could share. He said that one of the sisters came to share with him once. “I have listened to your sermons for many years. Week after week your messages influence me deeply. I believe your sermons have become a part of me.” Pastor Fung said, “Actually, my messages customarily just go through the books of the Bible. When I was asked recently to preach at a special missions meeting, I found it hard to prepare. I had to search the topics for relevant topics to talk about. Yet, every week, the messages spoken can enter the hearts of listeners.” He

believed that “Not just one or two messages. I cannot think of any specific sermon that has had the greatest impact on others. It is a cumulative effect.” However, he did recall one sermon. “Like many, I was also influenced by Francis Schaffer, who had an experience like what Paul experienced on the road to Damascus. Dr. Schaffer said, ‘All of us need to have two bows.’ First, one must believe the existence of God, and second, that he is the Lord of our lives.”

Pastor Gu added that he did not remember any sermon that stood out. Chinese churches do not give feedback to pastors. They believe that pastors should know best. Therefore, a pastor needs to be constantly asking others for feedback in order to know how they are doing. What could be done better? He said:

I have to pick people that will tell me the truth. I have had people come up and say that the message really helped them. It is convicting, but whether it changes their lives or not, I am uncertain. I do remember a sermon that I recently preached on loving your neighbors. I talked about how God places people in our lives, at work, and amongst neighbors. God is sovereign. I heard people were so convicted from the message that they went and reached out to their neighbors. This is a direct effect. I also have preached about finances. I do not know who responds by offertory gifts or if my preaching has any correlation to an increase of monetary giving. Yet, in counseling, I see people have responded to my message which is an encouragement.

Pastor Chang was convinced that “life affects other lives. In 2 Timothy 2:21, it says, ‘Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house and ready for every good work.’ Thus, we need to be a vessel which can influence others. Pastors need to be people who ‘desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).’” Pastor Chang said, “So we need to please God. We need to seek for our lives to be constantly changed. Jesus says we need to be disciplined, but we also need to disciple others as well. We need to an example as stated in 1 Peter 5. Paul advised

Timothy to be an example.” He continued, “Jesus of course is the incarnate, and he himself is the living word, and that is why he has authority. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1 says we need to first imitate Christ.”

Pastor Ko shared briefly about authority of preaching. He believes there are those who are gifted in preaching. He said, “It is important to know the Bible and understand the Bible well. That is key. I have to evaluate the sermons that fit the culture of today and relate it with my own experiences. I have felt that power and authority in preaching after I was ordained. Power is authority that came down from heaven.”

Feedback and Evaluation

The pastors were asked about the evaluation of their preaching events and whether the sermons were effective and able to transform the lives of their listeners. Almost all the participants did not have a consistent means of obtaining feedback from the listeners. Some of them have ways or checkpoints to evaluate the effectiveness of their pulpit ministry. For example, Pastor Fung said, “In early years, I needed people’s feedback. My wife was providing most of the important feedback without holding back.” However, Pastor Fung does it differently nowadays. Pastor Fung pointed out:

Now, I have a full manuscript. After thirty years, I self-evaluate as I am in the process of preparing for my sermons. I have checkpoints as I look through the full manuscript. These days feedback for every sermon is far in between. Within the church, sometimes I have co-workers to help. These co-workers are mature enough to be able to offer some form of evaluation. These five or six people now know how to evaluate a sermon. They listen to the proposition of the sermons – checks and balances. For propositional preaching, sometimes it is hard to formulate ‘because and we must.’ I do not preach narrative very often. I do not have a good handle on it to preach it well. In China, many pastors preach narratives on the Gospels, and it is hard to preach it well.

Pastor Ho mentioned that he always listens to critics. He often asks them for feedback right after the sermons. Some listeners are more critical, and he usually asks

them specifically for feedback. Many times, he proactively has to ask people for feedback. Some pastors have told him that if he thinks the sermon was good, then he did not need to ask others for feedback. Pastor Ho thinks that it is good idea to ask regardless, as he thinks it is always good to have feedback. For example, he knows he usually speaks too fast. Therefore, as a result of this consistent feedback, he was able to adjust and slow down. Pastor Ho said, “I usually ask people one-on-one for feedback, and it is usually done right away. Other times I let people simmer before I ask them for feedback.”

Teaching and Transformative Learning

Five out of the six pastors interviewed are currently teaching homiletics in China and Taiwan. Pastor Chang is teaching homiletics in a theological seminary full time. He was asked about his teaching experiences. Pastor Chang said, “Preaching is a skill. It is not just principles. It is like swimming. How do we learn how to swim? We can talk all we want about it, and yet if we do not get in the water and practice, then we do not know how to swim. It is like preaching. We need to practice in order to be skillful.” He believes, “We can talk about the basic skills such as, ‘How does one breathe during swimming?’ Yet, we need to go to the pool to practice breathing so that one can start learning how to swim. In preaching, one must use the principles learned in order to preach and practice it.” He continued:

We may not be successful the first time, but as we practice applying principles we get better at it. In this way we need practice. Listening is good, seeing is better, but when you do it, then it is the best. One can become much better at preaching with practice. Therefore, in teaching, we use a so called ‘preaching laboratory’ Graduates are required to preach before they graduate. It is just a beginning for new pastors. We grow as we practice.

In addition, Pastor Chang was asked for insight on how preachers change and improve. Pastor Chang feels, “Preachers must be humble, and continue to learn. I am still

in the process of learning and growing. My father-in-law was preaching for 60 years, and now he has gone to be with the Lord. He told me that after many years of preaching, he still required improvement.” Pastor Chang said “If I use my old sermons that I had preached, it is very easy, but I am usually preparing new ones every time. I still have room to improve. My wife has helped me a lot. As I have said, she is my ‘dry run’ listener. She will bluntly give me feedback. I am still continuing to grow.” He said the way he learned included listening to skilled preachers. To him preaching is never easy. He feels that preachers need to prepare every sermon well.

Pastor Fung has been teaching homiletics for many years in China. Most of the time, it is a one- or two-week intensive course for pastors or seminary students. Pastor Fung said:

In China, students or pastors usually do not know how to do an inductive Bible study for themselves. They like to spiritualize or personalize Scripture. As I read their preaching manuscripts, I feel like I am reading from the same teacher who taught them before, because they use the same exact material. It is readily apparent that the students have not studied the Bible for themselves. Therefore, I challenge the students to start with a blank sheet of paper and start to study the text without being biased. The problem with the pastors or students is that they do not have good tools or good solid commentaries to use when preparing for sermons. Of course, those who know Greek and Hebrew are few. They need to know the Bible and what the text says first. I believe this is their bottleneck. I really have a burden to bring with me next time study Bibles to distribute to them. The Chinese version of the NIV study Bible costs about US\$70. Most pastors in China cannot afford them. I am going to raise some funds to purchase a basic Study Bible for my students in homiletics.

Pastor Fung continued to discuss the need for students to know themselves. He said, “I also found that the pastors who came to my class did not know themselves very well. Many of them are under the care of senior pastors who are very authoritative. Some of them have pastors caring for them that are downright harsh to the students and have a lot of hostility toward the students and the congregation in general.” He concluded, “The

need of pastors in China has to be holistic. They may need to take tests to know their personality and traits. When I teach my homiletics class, I try to challenge others by teaching them regarding ‘spiritual formation.’”

On the topic of teaching, Pastor He first reiterated that he has been a missionary to China for the last fifteen years and his roots are from the house churches in China. He taught pastors and co-workers systematic theology and the books of the Bible. Pastor He said, “Many pastors began serving the Lord when they were young, after graduating from elementary or high school. Even though they were not highly educated, they loved the Lord and totally dedicated themselves to the Lord. They were just moved by the Holy Spirit and went out to be a pastor and started churches.” He said, “The pastors, who are in their fifties, sixties, and even some in their seventies, now have the opportunity to come to my training classes. They have a great deal of pastoral experiences. They are also very skeptical about knowledge or education.” He added:

The house churches located in villages of China look like this: they all have a great hunger for God’s word, are highly motivated to learn, wake up early, and spend hours on their knees praying. Today, the demographic has changed. Most young people who are called to be pastors are now usually high school graduates, and some have college degrees. In recent years, I have been teaching homiletics. I used to teach a smaller group, but now I teach a much larger group located within the city. Besides teaching, I have been asked to preach at more places as well.

Pastor Ko said that when he was teaching homiletics he challenged the students to know their environment. The students first need to know what the people in China are thinking. He gave examples. “For example, concerning Beijing politics, culture, and money, there are issues that face ordinary people. In politics, religious worship and freedom are important to churches. Culturally, we are changing, and the society is

changing, which impacts how we teach. I teach students in homiletics not only about preaching but also the needs of the modern men.”

Preaching and Transformative Learning

All the pastors interviewed did not know exactly what transformative learning was about, so they shared their views the educational system in China. Besides the culture of China, Pastor He discussed the educational and spiritual conditions and the issues one needs to pay attention to in regards to learning. Pastor He said that the learning process is different in China. He has observed that it contains “two closed systems” which contradict each other. As a result of their educational upbringings, Chinese pastors are not able to see things as a whole. Things are compartmentalized. They know a lot about the tree, but do not see the forest. For example, if they do not see eye-to-eye on an issue, such as a thought on eternal security, the church will split instead of resolving the issue. Pastor He continued that when he teaches courses in China, especially homiletics courses, he gives them a broad introduction and then goes into specifics. The students were usually very stubborn. It was hard for them to learn. Their education was to separate things, and it was not organized, and it was usually taught as a one-piece meal. They need to be more holistic. So how do we transform them? He suggested:

They ought to let the Holy Spirit give them a broad balancing message as they learn. The world was created, and God said that it was good. We are in harmony. Like our body organs we need to be in order and well-balanced. We do not need to go to the extreme. Spiritual formation is about balance and not about going the extreme. There is no balance in China. They totally reject the world. It becomes very narrow. I do not mean syncretism. Our normal Christian life needs to be balanced. How do you know how to face living today? How can you be like Jesus who was able to handle the spiritual matters along with the world and material things?

He challenged his students:

We can still be godly and not live according to this world. For example, we were in a village going out to lunch. A few brothers who took me to lunch went into a restaurant but came out again. I asked them, 'What is the issue?' They told me that they saw statues of idols and so they did not want to be a part of the place. I asked them, 'Do you know where the clothes on your body came from? Who made it? It could have been made by an idol worshipper.'

His view is that:

The society is changing in China, but the church is not changing to meet the challenges facing us. Faith and culture are all different. How do we deal with these matters? We are in the world, but not of the world. Chinese churches in China think that church and society do not mix, and we need to be separated in order to maintain our spirituality. The truth is, they both influence each other. In the West, churches affect society, but the world also affects the church. China's sense of theology is that it is separate. Chinese churches do not accept each other very well. They need to have good theology. Their mindset carries with them even wherever they go.

Transformative learning changes the listeners' beliefs. This is the hardest thing to do. Pastor Fung thinks that learning might be related to giftedness. At times, Christians cannot learn or are not able to learn well. For example, Pastor Fung said that he does not have the gift of being visionary. The church usually looks for a pastor who is strong in leadership and vision. Learning affects one's pulpit ministry. Pastors need depth. Depth comes from knowing and learning the message from the Bible and then being able to preach the message from the text. Character development and spiritual formation becomes an important aspect of preaching as the pastors are learning how to be transformed by the Lord.

In order for the listeners to be transformed and changed, the listeners must be receptive. Pastor Gu said, "Listeners need to be a lot more active. In the membership class, we ought to teach Christians how to be good listeners. We also ought to teach the congregants to listen to expository preaching. Some say that we do not know the Bible

passage well.” He continued, “Perhaps the passage which will be preached needs to be shared the week before. It should be like small group where the leader first gives others the passage and then we can study the scriptures well. We have to be intentional listeners.” Also, he said that he needs to be a good listener as well. “If the pastors said something inappropriate, the listeners are encouraged to tell the pastors. The next week when I preach, I clarify or correct the points made before. Sometimes I misspoke. In this area I have to be humble. Nobody knows the pastor best besides the pastor himself.”

Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation of pastors is a vital area that has a great impact on preaching that transforms the lives of listeners. All pastors interviewed agreed on the importance of spiritual discipline in their ministries. Pastor Chang stated that all relationships need to be qualitative and quantitative. The Bible says, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” Pastors ought to be like Mary who sat at Jesus’ feet and drew close to him. They need to spend time in devotion and in quiet time with the Lord. Pastors must have a plan, and personal devotions are essential for spiritual growth. Pastor Chang said, “When I was younger, my brother set a very good example for me. I used to see him having devotions in the morning. Also, during that time, I used to listen to what others have digested about the Scriptures and found the insights so delightful like one having a dessert! That is the journey of my spiritual formation.” Pastor Chang continued:

As I now grow, I realize that I need to read the Bible and gain insights for myself. Thus, I have been reading the Bible for many years. I read three chapters of the Old Testament and one chapter of the New Testament daily. The Bible has 1189 chapters. Therefore, I am able to read through the Bible once a year. Subsequently, my father-in-law, who is a retired pastor, challenged me to read ten chapters a day! Therefore, from then on, I have been reading ten chapters a day. Now when I read through the Bible, I can read it about three times a year versus

just reading through the Bible once a year. As this has become my routine, I have started to understand the Scriptures more.

Pastor Chang continued that the goal is to build a relationship with God by reading the Bible and listening to his word. He said:

As I respond to God's word and listen to it, I am then able to practice and live out his word. My relationship with God is getting stronger each day. In this way, I grow in this life with God. In addition, I read and meditate on God's word. Jesus says that if you abide in me, you will bear fruit. In order to be a good tree and bear fruit, it means you must abide in Jesus through His word. A pastor's time of devotion, prayer, and God's word is essential in order to abide in Jesus. We have a duty to not only understand His word but also to apply His word into our lives. That is what it means to live it out. It is a sacrifice.

Pastor Chang gave a testimony of how God changed him:

In addition, I need to learn to be obedient to God's word. In my own experience for instance, I was not able to forgive others. I had a lot of bitterness, became depressed, and had a lot of other health issues because of this bitterness. I used to have migraine headaches. I think it is due to my unforgiving heart. Jesus taught us to pray, 'Forgive us as we forgive others.' It is the same story about the debt collector. The boss forgives the debtor. Nonetheless, I cannot forgive others without first asking God to help me. I am able to release my unforgiving heart to God and let God deal with it. Then, I can forgive others to be obedient to God. As I was able to forgive others, my migraine suddenly was gone! We are the ones who benefit as we obey His word. I was able to gain freedom, like one who gets out of prison. I had a breakthrough on this. I realized, as I obey God, it will affect me as stated in the Lord's Prayer. It affects me.

When I went back to my home church not long ago, I shared my experience with the folks there. It is all a part of loving God and loving our neighbor. It is the greatest commandment. I was lacking love. As we grow, we obey God, and the end product is being able to love God. This is relational. It is God's word. Therefore, in Ezra 7:10 we are encouraged to have three things in our lives. One, we need to understand God's word. Two, we need to obey, and then teach God's word. Thus, we need to understand, obey, and then teach God's word.

Pastor Chang continued in the area of spiritual formation. "In addition, I used to fast and pray and designate time to fast. The Holy Spirit will help us. Again, if we have a good relationship with God, then we can have nine expressions of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). The fruit of the Spirit is what we need to strive for."

Pastor He comes from a different angle as far as spiritual formation is concerned.

He did not have a lot of experience in fasting or a very structured devotional life. He said:

The most important thing is living a life pleasing to God. Also, one of the most important areas is consistently being aware of the movement of the Holy Spirit. You need to have the sensitivity of the Holy Spirit leading you in this day and age. It takes practice and in being more aware one can learn from it and grow in our devotions and in our everyday life journey. The key is applying biblical truths into our lives.

Pastor He told pastors in China that they do not have to allegorize or spiritualize every Scripture. God's truth is the light of the world. It is so rich. Pastor He said, "I honestly love explaining the truth. If I can explain the truth, I can apply it into life. Take meekness for example. We need discipline in order to tame ourselves like taming a wild horse. Truth needs to be applied into our daily lives." He gave an example. "It can be as simple as the act of pulling out a chair for people to sit in. There is a saying in Chinese that when you open the door of a house, there are important food ingredients for living. These essential food ingredients are, 'coal, rice, oil, salt, sauce, vinegar, and tea.'" He stressed that Christians need the essential ingredients -- Scripture reading, prayer, and meditation, just to name a few, and they need to practice them daily.

Pastor Ho agreed that spiritual formation is essential for a pastor to be able to preach well and transform the lives of listeners. Pastor Ho said, "Our relationship is 'up,' (God) 'in,' (ourselves), and then 'out' (towards others). Fasting is a personal discipline ('in'). This helps in preaching. Spiritual life is like playing the piano. When you first start out and practice, it does not sound good. As you continue to practice, you may not sense improvement. However, even if it may not be good, as we display our skills, it can be displayed as being quite good." Likewise, he said, "This often times is like our spiritual life. We may practice it and though we do not have a sense of accomplishment we are

still improving and doing things well. This means that as we practice and live out the truth, it can produce good results. Spiritual formation means growing in the grace and knowledge of God.” In this way pastors will have the message that can be preached readily. If they do not have the message, they cannot preach it. He gave an interesting illustration. “Let me illustrate: for a pregnant woman, childbearing can be somewhat easy. However, if you are not pregnant with a child, it is impossible to have labor and give birth to a child. It is the same with spiritual formation.” He believed that it is vital to have messages from the Lord to be able to preach. One has to grow and practice to receive a message.

Pastor Gu is one of the younger pastors, and he is very honest. He said that as far as personal discipline goes in regards to fasting, praying, solitude, and studying, he still needs a lot of practice. These disciplines certainly increase the power to preach messages that transform lives. Pastor Gu said, “Fasting, praying, solitude, and studying are not my strengths. I need to grow in them. Prayer can be more intentional for me. I do get up early, but not for the purpose of praying.” Then, he said, “I have not done that for a long time. When I do make the time, my preaching sermon actually flows much better. God also uses circumstances to help me.” To help him grow, Pastor Gu attend seminars. He said, “Sometimes I attend conferences to clear my mind. For example, I have gone to a Desiring God seminar through John Piper and the Right Now Conference for church leaders. I do this as a discipline every year. If we discuss personal devotionals, it is also important too.” He thinks definitely:

Personal quiet time is important, but timing has to be scheduled correctly. When I personally do my quiet time and I’m in tune with God, I can know what to cut and what to include in my preaching. It correlates with my personal walk with God. Sabbath is important to me. I rest fully on Mondays. Also, for me to grow, I often

listen to good preachers such as Ravi Zacharias. I have to keep growing. I have to work harder. I have to listen and read and go to conferences. I think I have the attitude and conviction to grow and to have a good attitude about it.

Also, Pastor Gu pointed out that discipleship is another form of spiritual formation. He said that “We need to be discipled and disciple others. Making disciples should be in our DNA, and every Christian should be doing it. Christ forms us in this way. You will not be like him until we see him. If you think you have achieved it, then you have a problem. Discipleship is not a program. Pray about it and let people’s names ‘come and get registered in your heart’ and God will confirm it.”

Among the pastors, it is Pastor Ko that has the most regimented spiritual disciplines. Pastor Ko thinks that most important of the spiritual disciplines, fostered by the Spirit is self-control. To Pastor Ko, self-control is a spiritual discipline or management of lives. Pastor Ko shared:

All of us are very busy all the time. Spiritual disciplines such as devotional time, prayer time, and Bible reading should be the champion in our lives. For me, I go to sleep at 11 PM. In the mornings, 5-7 AM is my devotional time. I read and meditate on a book of the Bible. At 7 AM I run and then eat my breakfast. This is the rhythm or routine of my life. I maintain this even as I go out to teach pastors on church ministry and preaching. Besides ministering in China, occasionally I will come to the United States to minister. I find that the Chinese churches in the U.S. are more consumers mainly. Through my study of discipline, I minister to them as part of my ministry. Their beliefs are very mixed. Even though I reside in China, I was fortunate to be educated in theology and hermeneutics and homiletics. I practice and teach others to live a godly life and to be a disciple. I constantly challenge pastors to go back to the Bible, the gospel of Christ.

Likewise, Pastor Fung has been teaching homiletics in China. Recently, he was challenged to teach a course in spiritual formation. He has been a solo pastor, an associate pastor, and a senior pastor for a total of more than thirty years. He is keenly aware of Dallas Willard and Richard Foster’s books, especially *Celebration of Discipline*. He found these spiritual disciplines to be normal and should be a part of anyone’s life.

Pastor Fung emphasized that reading Richard Foster and Dallas Willard regarding spiritual discipline should be a part of pastors' lives. As a normal Christian, pastors should pray, fast, meditate, worship, and practice. For him, due to diabetes, he can no longer fast. He thinks Christians should regain these disciplines. Pastor Fung stressed:

It is not for the sake of preaching effectiveness, but it is for building my personal relationship with God. As pastors we are under a lot of pressure from work and life, and it includes preaching. We are pressed with time, and it is easy to neglect these areas of spiritual discipline. When I was ordained, Dr. Rayburn told me that I was going to be a preacher of the word. So, I am very grateful that our congregation protects my time for study and for the preparation of sermons.

Today, young pastors have various work and tasks to do, and preaching is just one of them. Therefore, they may not have ample time to prepare for sermons. Actually, I found the book by Jerry Bridge, *The Discipline of Grace*, written in 1994, to be the most helpful. Good books help us to organize our thoughts. It helps us to be introspective, and for pastors, their relationships with God and with family are foundational. These areas are what we look at. You need to make an effort to develop your disciplines, and a part of that is learning how to prioritize. As I said before, my co-workers, they help me to protect my time spent on preparing for sermons. Therefore, I need to clear out my other tasks of ministry. I have observed in China that the pastors all want to be good preachers, but if you look at their schedule, it is just impossible.

The Ethos of Preachers

Ethos is defined as the perceived character of the speaker, especially the concern expressed for the listeners' welfare. Aristotle's belief was that ethos is the most powerful component of persuasion. Therefore, a pastor's ethos ought to be conveyed in order to transform the lives of listeners. Pastor Chang expressed, "We learn from Jesus Christ that lives affect other lives. There is trust that we build between preachers and listeners. A church where I preach in Taiwan took a long time before we developed trust. Over time, the listeners began to listen better. This particular church also discusses the sermons after worship. I can see that trust between myself and the congregation has an effect on the transformation of lives." Pastor Chang has found that building relationships with the

congregation is important. A pastor's appearance is also important. Dress and behavior are all a part of ethos. Actually, in Taiwan he preaches in three churches. He has learned that as they get to know each other, the listeners accept what he says better. Pastors also need to be authentic and speak earnestly. It is of utmost importance that pastors' lives correspond with their actions. He said, "The inner self and external behavior are correlated. I noticed that when Billy Graham goes to new places to hold evangelistic meetings, he sends teams beforehand to understand the needs of the listeners."

On the other hand, Pastor He said, "Truth we can accept, as we know the Bible. The character of preachers is sometimes a bit more abstract. Our demeanors sometimes convey our character." He said, "Perhaps the behavior of a pastor is different as he spends more time with Jesus Christ. The Bible says that we do not look at people on the outside, but our hearts should be in line with our actions. When I was training pastors in China, I emphasized to them that they need to be clean and dress up." He told his students that a pastor needs to be presentable. A pastor's appearance is very important. Appearance comes from character. It is displayed in living a life of holiness, and it exhibits itself in a pastor's words, deeds, and appearance. Listeners see his ethos. It is an expression of a pastor's life. It catches people's attention. Pastors express that the spiritual life should be more in the likeness of Jesus Christ. Pastor He believed, "This cannot be learned but lived out. We cannot learn from other people, but it is through the godly living of following Jesus Christ. It might be a slow process, but it is a holistic one that can change one's whole life. If the ethos comes through clearly, it is certainly from the fruit of the Holy Spirit." He thought that pastors have to be approachable. They express their ethos during their pulpit ministry, and their expressions while preaching can

be felt. Their interaction with others becomes a part of their ethos. Personal contact, communication, and dealing with others becomes a part of their ethos, and it is exhibited in their pulpit ministry.

Pastor Ko said that for him, everyday living is getting ready for the Sunday preaching ministry, because preaching is from the heart. People sense the passion and compassion from a preachers' heart. This is the ethos of a pastor.

Pastor Fung pointed out:

A pastor's persona means that pastors cultivate the fruit of the Holy Spirit. For the last five years now, I have learned to be like Jesus Christ. Some may say, it is too 'abstract.' Actually, it is not abstract. For example, Jesus said, 'I am meek and humble.' This can be a part of our life. I can be like him in meekness and humbly deal with people with a good attitude. It can become a part of our lives. Yesterday, I was a guest preacher who preached at a church where they were looking for a more permanent pastor. I believe they found a person with a temperament of being patience. A pastor that is easily angered may not be fit to be a pastor. Indeed, ethos and integrity are so important.

We do not have a good Chinese term to translate the word 'integrity.' It is a 'must' character trait for a pastor. If a pastor does not have integrity, then it becomes a problem. It means that he is not trustworthy, and he will not do what he says. We need pastors with gifts, but a character such as integrity is even more important. Ethos is being displayed like Jesus in meekness and humility. I can think of two individuals within the Chinese churches that exhibit godly character: Philip Teng and Hay Chun Maak. These two individuals gave me the impression that they are so humble and meek. I wrote something for Pastor Teng at a memorial service when he passed away. I said that he is a man that I admired so much because he was humble and meek. He was well-known to Chinese churches worldwide. We will miss him as a person with meekness. In Chinese churches, we want someone to demonstrate the ability that is needed but ethos is important.

I have preached as a guest speaker in a church for about six months. I like the listeners to get to know me. Nobody really approaches me though. It is just about now that people here are beginning to talk to me after six months of preaching there. Perhaps it is my own problem of not being too sociable. Therefore, I have to question, 'Do they see me as the same person on the pulpit as I am in everyday life? It is a challenge for all of us.'

In addition, in Pastor Ho's view, in general Chinese do not want to be too emotional. "Chinese can be cerebral and humorous. Language or descriptions about an incidence can show a person's ethos. For example, I once knew a preacher who tried to be humorous by saying that roses have thorns and so you cannot pick it. Wild flowers can be a blessing and so you can pick it. Yet, those are two kinds of flowers that we cannot pick." He continued, "There's a Chinese saying that people who 'pick wild flowers' are unfaithful to their spouses. If that pastor does not know the cultural context of the words he is saying, it can have a detrimental effect." Pastor Ho implied that the heart or ethos are conveyed in words. Therefore, pastors who preach must be careful in their usage of certain words and language. A pastor needs to learn to grow. Pastor Ho said, "He learned to read the Bible in just one sitting. It took him 33 hours. He then read through it very carefully which took him through the Bible in three years. It is very beneficial to meditate on God's word. This is how we can grow personally and develop character."

Lastly, Pastor Gu thinks ethos means the heart of a pastor. For him, he is more gifted in shepherding and building relationships with his congregation. As a result of his care for God's people, people know him. Though he is not a visionary leader, his listeners know who he is, and these relationships improve the effectiveness of his message.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

Pastors have a great need to be aware of the person and the work of the Holy Spirit in preaching. All pastors think that it is the Holy Spirit who transforms the lives of listeners. Pastor Chang said, "In preaching, the Holy Spirit's anointing is the main reason that moves people. I cannot affect change or move people. It is God's work. The bottleneck is the need to depend on God's Spirit. One must rely on the Holy Spirit

through preaching, preparation, delivery, and most of all, in prayer.” Pastor Chang cautioned that if one does not rely on the Spirit, there will not be any change in people’s hearts. He said, “When you speak, you have freedom and with poise you can see people change. Listeners also have joy as they are transformed. The key is the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and it is not the work from myself.” Pastor Chang said that when he started his ministry he found out that he could not change people in his own strength. It was God’s work. As he served, he was able to help others. As he prayed, he asked God for help. Preaching was not a reliance on his own preparation or on his own gifts. Though these elements are important, effective preaching requires prayer and letting the Holy Spirit work..It is hard to understand, but he knows that his message has freedom. The listeners can also feel the presence of God. The Holy Spirit is able to anoint.

Pastor Ho reiterated that all preachers must pray. There needs to be a balance on Bible teaching and understanding the Bible. Preachers are building a bridge to help others get into the word and of course we must rely on the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Gu elaborated about how the Holy Spirit works in his preaching ministry:

I think in the culture today, there are a lot of ‘itchy ears.’ God’s word is not the first book they pick up. My job is to proclaim God’s word. The Holy Spirit takes the word and cultivates it. It might be years later before we see fruit in people’s lives. Sometimes it will just click, and people are convicted and repent. People are emotionally moved at times. I learned a long time ago that I cannot preach for the praise of men. The Holy Spirit takes the same message to different people of different ages and different situations. Naturally, the Holy Spirit takes God’s word and applies it to the listeners’ lives and makes it effective. The freewill of men can be disobedient, but if the soil of the heart is humble, the spirit can listen to God. Fundamentally, the gospel needs to be presented. The message is always about the gospel: the sinfulness of men, the love of God, and justification. When music plays at our church, we pray through the Holy Spirit that the songs can be applied. We cannot worship without the Spirit’s help. It is very humbling to preach. At our church, we have a cry room. After preaching, sometimes I feel like I need to go to the cry room, cry and say to the Lord that I should have done a better job.

Key Ingredients for Transformative Preaching

The pastors were asked to reiterate some of the key aspects of preaching that transform the lives of listeners. Pastor Ko said, “At most seminaries, the method of teaching homiletics contains three main parts, explanation, illustration, and application. I feel in the process, we need to live in the midst of the people in order for pastors to know the congregation or listeners well.” He personally leads discipleship so that he can listen to the people and their struggles. Pastor Ko said, “I think about their struggles and relate it to the sermons I preach on. Therefore, I am able to help them. I also emphasize speaking about the cross of Jesus, Jesus who is incarnate among the people.”

Furthermore, Pastor Fung said, “I have been pondering these days on the main ingredients of effective preaching. When I was teaching in China, I believed it was the pastors’ integrity that was very important. A brother said that he could not accept the message of one of the pastors who preached at his church because he did not live it out. He does not have integrity.” He reiterated, “It is not the message, but who you are that is important. If I cannot do it or do not want to practice what I preach, I should not preach about it. Therefore, I am the first listener of the sermons that I preach. A preacher is the first listener of the message he is going to preach. The message needs to first affect me before it can affect others.”

As the researcher looks through the data collected, he will put together a list of key ingredients for preaching that transforms the lives of listeners. The researcher will share the conclusion in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study is to discover how Chinese pastors prepare to preach in order to encourage transformation in the lives of the listeners. In addition, this study investigates the spiritual formation and ethos of the Chinese pastors. The transformation of lives is demonstrated through the adapting of the life-changing characteristics of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the renewal of our minds, often by hearing the word preached well, Christians are conformed into the image of Christ in our thought pattern, our words and deeds. Given that shared goal of all pastors, the current study was guided by the following four research questions:

1. How do pastors describe preaching that encourages transformation in the lives of the listeners?
2. How do pastors evaluate the degree to which preaching encourages transformation in the lives of the listeners?
3. How do pastors prepare to preach in order to encourage transformation in the lives of the listeners?
4. What is the role of spiritual formation in the lives of the pastors as they prepare to preach in order to encourage transformation in the lives of the listeners?

The methodology of this qualitative study was to interview six experienced Chinese pastors on the aspects of preaching critical to transforming the lives of listeners. The preaching experience of these pastors totaled more than a hundred years. The interview data was collected, categorized, and the findings were described in chapter

four. In this chapter the key ingredients of transformative preaching will be discussed, and recommendations will be formulated.

Summary of the Study

The research focus was to discover the ingredients in preaching that encourages transformation in the lives of the listeners in Chinese churches. In chapter two, the study reviewed the literature that details the preaching process in relation to the key themes discussed. Chapter three described the methodology used in this qualitative study in which six practicing Chinese pastors were interviewed according to the research questions listed above. Chapter four reviews the findings from these interviews, including how the pastors prepare for their preaching events, how they evaluate feedback, their personal spiritual formation in relation to ethos, and the role of the Holy Spirit. Since five out of six pastors are teaching homiletics in China, they were also asked to analyze how they develop young preachers. This chapter synthesizes data collected from chapter four. The synthesized data identifies the themes and insights answering the stated purpose of the study. The themes include the process of obtaining feedback and evaluation, spiritual formation and ethos, the role of the Holy Spirit, and opportunities for growth in the practice of transformative preaching in Chinese churches.

Preaching Event

Six experienced Chinese pastors were asked to describe specific preaching events and aspects that were able to transform the lives of their listeners.

Exegesis of Scripture

When all six pastors were asked to describe the major aspects of preaching that transform the lives of the listeners, they all unequivocally said that sermons must be

biblically based. One of them stated, “For preaching that is truly able to transform lives, first, it must be biblical. The Bible is the revelation of God through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Holy Spirit can change our lives.” I agree with him that preachers are mediators of the Bible to today’s listeners.

Furthermore, another pastor said, “In 1998, I started pastoring churches in China. I found that the most important thing is accurate Scripture exegesis. It is foundational in the preparation of sermons.” All these pastors agree that sound hermeneutics generates sound homiletics. Through my personal teaching experiences in China, I have observed that hermeneutics and sound interpretation of Scripture are highly needed. Some of the students interpret the Scripture out of context. Therefore, I strongly believe that sound hermeneutics that includes context helps us to recognize and understand the historical character of the Scriptural text. Different individuals addressing particular situations wrote the Bible. Therefore, the Bible uses different forms, languages, and idioms that are meaningful to the first readers. I believe that it requires hard work to know the original language and message using a developed hermeneutical method and skill. Although it requires hard work, such exegesis can help others know the text and the meaning God truly intends.

Almost all the pastors interviewed were not experts in Hebrew or Greek. Nonetheless, all the pastors interviewed were trained in basic hermeneutical methods. They all have been through a seminary education. They all have various tools that they use for their pulpit ministry. Similarly, for me, I am not strong in the original languages either. Therefore, it is encouraging to know that one of the Chinese pastors who has preached for more than thirty years was not ashamed to admit that he relies on tools and

commentaries. He is the one who has graduated from Covenant Theological Seminary. At Covenant, the students have a slogan, “No commentaries,” which means they use the Bible first. Nonetheless, “context is king,” and using good commentaries can be a good second step. This particular pastor was collecting more than fourteen electronic commentaries before he preached on 1 Corinthians. He also said that books or commentaries are helpful in synthesizing thoughts. I have been reluctant to use commentaries in the past but now have learned that it is fine to use good commentaries which can help decipher the text. In my own preaching, I usually read the whole book ten to thirty more times before I preach from one the passage selected from the book. Chinese pastors must learn basic hermeneutic methods or develop the skill of interpretation of Scripture. In this way, the original message God intended can be accurately preached. It is my hope that God will raise up more young Chinese teachers and pastors to learn the original languages and facilitate learning for the pastors in China.

The pastors also reported that students at times personalized or spiritualized rather than verbally giving an accurate exegesis of the passage. One said that for many years preaching in China was called “life preaching.” It was achieved through prayer and meditation on the Scriptures, but it can leave the Bible behind and become subjective. This pastor from China has warned the other pastors in China to be true to the text. This life preaching needs to be reversed by teaching and leading pastors in China towards sound exegesis of the Old and New Testaments. This type of preaching will be the key to bringing people closer to Christ and then transforming the lives of listeners.

Clear and Understandable

Besides being accurate, all six pastors highlighted that the message ought to be clearly communicated and understandable. The pastor that was trained at Covenant Theological Seminary used the basic format of Christ-centered preaching via “explanation, illustration, and application.” Another pastor said that we preach the original truth by using the language of today in a way that is understandable. According to one pastor, the main reason that preachers need to speak in a way that the listeners can understand is so that they would then be able to obey. Likewise, another pastor believes that “clarity” also means “simplicity.” Pastors thus need to be aware to not use too many points or ideas or thoughts but focus on essential points. It has been a challenge to the pastors and myself in knowing what to omit in a sermon. For me tremendous detail and attention are needed in order to communicate so that the listeners can understand clearly. Oftentimes, the explanations need to be to the point rather than involved word studies. Word studies often can begin to lose the listeners’ attention.

One can also be clearer when illustrations are used. Chapell’s *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power*²¹⁹ is a useful tool to read and emulate. I have found that we often confuse examples and illustrations. Illustrations make the explanations clear, but, in general, Chinese preachers are not too keen on using illustrations. One pastor states that using illustrations is by far the most difficult task and a skill that all pastors can improve. In the next section the study will address the use of applications in sermons so that the message can be relevant to the listeners.

²¹⁹ Bryan Chapell, *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001).

Relevant – Connect with the Listeners

Furthermore, the message needs to be relevant and able to connect with the listeners using strong applications. They have to be coherent and connect to the message of the text. The transformation of lives occurs through well-defined, specific applications. One pastor noted that the Covenant Theological Seminary tradition is to find the ‘Fallen Condition Focus’ (FCF). In this way, a preacher can pinpoint what the passage shows as lacking in our lives. One of the pastors reminded me that one needs to know the Scripture as well as the listeners in order to develop the Bible passage for the FCF. The preacher must be a student of the Bible and a student of the people in order to connect with the listeners. I am encouraged to know one of the pastors has been using the Christ-Centered preaching, propositional truth method for more than thirty years. He is a senior pastor of a large Chinese church. His preaching experience shows that this method can service the Chinese churches well. It is also noteworthy that *Christ-Centered Preaching* has been translated into Chinese.

Additionally, the important point of application is highlighted in books by Dan Doriani. I have learned from him how to use his method to craft sermon applications. His method includes knowing the aspects of current language, verbal and non-verbal communication, and knowing how to communicate applications for contemporary listeners. Therefore, in order to preach effective sermons, preachers need to know the heart of the listeners as well as their felt needs.²²⁰ Preachers always need to be aware of the person and the work of Christ. Doriani listed several ingredients included Christology, loving and responding to God, learning from narrative or historical accounts, and

²²⁰Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application*, 37.

imitating God's mercy and love through the life of Jesus Christ. Good applications can come from a combination of doctrine and conduct. Thus, systematic theology is an important part of accurately formulating applications.

Furthermore, Christian maturity and growth is important in applying Scripture to our lives. One of the pastors said that with knowledge of sound doctrine, the church can then apply it. The church can correct false teaching and also learn how to take the right path which comes from godly living. This pastor said, "From my own learning, experience, growth, and from seeing people and pastors resolve problems, I believe preaching can convey Christian living. Godly living breeds godly people." From my own teaching experience in Chinese fellowships, the difficult part is to relate the importance of applying Scriptural truth to living it out. More applications formulated from Bible study is one way to increase the sensitivity of applying the Scripture into our lives. However,, it is also important to make clear the indicative truths before preaching the imperative commands. Without clearly communicating the indicatives, preaching can, as Chapell taught, become deadly "Bees."

Another pastor said that he expects things to happen on their own. Good application ought to challenge the listeners to change and must also be courageous. He said, "People actually say to me that they like me being blunt." Thus, preaching has to be biblical, clear, relevant, and courageous. Being blunt and courageous are important; however, preachers must also blend those qualities with humility. It is very easy for a pastor to have a "holier than thou" attitude or become patronizing. Preachers must avoid this type of attitude in order to center their preaching on Christ.

Exegesis of the Listeners

Miller says, “The exegesis that precedes in importance of even analyzing the text is the work of analyzing the audience.”²²¹ While it is important to have excellent exegesis of Scripture, the preacher must also understand the condition of the listeners in order to connect and be relevant in preaching. One of the pastors is correct when he says, “Speakers need to understand the Bible as well as the spiritual life of the listeners. Pastors need to know the contemporary culture, have a knowledge of life, social, family, work and general conditions of the surrounding people.” This idea is similar to the pastor whose concern in preaching was to have a good Fallen Condition Focus, which requires that preachers think about how the passage relates to the message and the listener..

From the interviews, several characteristics of Chinese contemporary culture can be gleaned. First, Chinese Christians (especially those from the house churches) believe that everything that relates to the world is non-spiritual. I sensed that this might be the result of the persecution they have endured and which is still occasionally experienced today. On the positive side, persecution helps to purify the church. Christians have suffered greatly in China. I have heard that in the earlier days, the only comfort they had was from the Holy Spirit, prayer, and God’s word while they were being put into prison due to their faith. These Chinese Christians are skeptical about politics and about situations happening outside the church. They believe that their daily work and daily lives within society are not related to the spiritual realm. My sense is that most believers are afraid of having secular cravings of this world. They would feel like they belong to this world. The secular things are viewed as something that belongs to Satan. Therefore,

²²¹ Miller, *Preaching, the Art of Narrative Exposition*, 41-42.

brothers and sisters in China or Chinese Christians in America cannot have an impact on this world as long as the spiritual and secular world are kept separate. Bible passages are then hard to apply to their daily lives.

One pastor also noted that the integration of the spiritual life with daily living is required. He concluded that this lack of integration stops the church from influencing or witnessing to the world surrounding it. He and I strongly believe that this belief needs to be corrected and balanced because a sermon's main focus is always pertaining to daily living. Pastors cannot be too critical if they remember the persecution that many have suffered. Christians in China are quite disciplined in reading the Bible. One pastor in China said he "destroys" a Bible once a year as a result of reading and flipping through the pages. Most of the students we taught in China have read the Bible at least five or more times already.

Another pastor described additional aspects of the Chinese culture that relates to listeners. He believes that the Chinese culture as a whole likes to emphasize blessings and prosperity. Everyone strives to have blessings or prosperity in life in order to flourish. Yet, in China most try to discover how they can benefit from "religion." Therefore, pastors must address how blessings come from the gospel alone. In addition, pastors need to teach why the gospel makes Christians the most blessed. Pastors need to help people understand that besides good food and material benefits, real prosperity is found in Jesus Christ. Contrary to wellness, health, and prosperity, pastors need to preach that afflictions are common among Christians as well. It is not a punishment from God. Christians tend to believe that faith should insulate from suffering due to health issues, financial

setbacks, sins against us, and other mishaps. This belief is not biblical, and Jesus Christ never promised that Christians would not go through afflictions in this life.

Another pastor thinks that the practical needs of the congregation need to be addressed on the pulpit. For example, in big cities the standard of living is very high. As a result, money has become an issue that Christians need to deal with as well. In the Chinese culture, it is difficult for people to give generously. In general, Chinese like to receive rather than give perhaps because many have experienced poverty. Another pastor randomly spoke about this to listeners in China. Along this line, I recently taught a course in China about Christian ethics. I integrated how we manage our money and material things into my teachings. This topic leads to others ethical issues. A Chinese pastor in China warned me that in teaching about Christian ethics we should not talk about abortion. Because of the one child policy, many families want to have a boy. Therefore, sometimes they will want to abort the baby if it is a baby girl. If they have already a child, they do not want to have another child because of financial penalty. This mentality is slowly changing.

One pastor elaborated some other aspects of Chinese culture when he said:

The Chinese culture currently does not have a well-defined moral standard. Everything is all relative which could be related to stemming from the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, people feel that coming to the U.S. is a good thing. Chinese regard themselves outwardly as 'kings' (their status being #1) and their inner-selves as 'holy' (inside, I am better than you). This saying, "Outside I am a king and inside I am holy" may be a residual effect from Confucius thinking.

The implications of these thoughts noted above are new to me. Such thinking would make it hard for the Chinese to be united as conflicts may arise in the church.

When addressing different crowds and different audiences, a pastor must speak the truth in different ways to help address the needs of different people. Therefore, his

message needs to resonate with the listeners. Another aspect that pastors need to be conscious of is that language is different in different parts of China and in different parts of Taiwan. The words may be the same, but they carry different usages and meanings. Different idioms are used in different regions of China. Therefore knowing what to say and how to say it are both important. It is also important to use words that are easily understandable and to make sure the delivery of the message is lively as well.

One pastor noted that having a good relationship with the congregation is crucial to Sunday preaching. In his experience, it is through interactions with the congregation that he has found to be the best way to understand listeners' struggles. From time spent interacting with his congregants, he learns and understands more about their views of politics, culture, and money. Therefore, when he preaches, he keeps in mind many struggles his listeners have. The key here is connections. In order to be effective, constantly visiting fellowships and listening to people as they share their view will give a good sense of the needs of the people all around.

One of the huge areas for any pastor to address is the topic of education. This cultural value is probably more prevalent in China and with the Chinese community worldwide than anywhere else. In China, many struggle with the educational needs for their children. The general population, including Christians, want to send their children to America. As a result of the one child policy in China, six adults (parents plus four grandparents) are all focused on taking care of one child. Therefore, the families can view their child as idols, and they want what is best for their child, and they certainly expect the best. In China some areas of the country do not even have a high school. It costs money to send children to a high school far away from home. As I have travelled to

various parts of China, I realized that Chinese pastors themselves are also faced with the same dilemma. They are compensated less than \$100 USD per month. Therefore, they have to seek out ways to pay for their child's education while they serve the Lord and pastor the churches. In contrast, in America, many Chinese families would like to and some very aggressively will do all they can to help their children go to Ivy League schools. One of the Chinese pastors who has served in America thinks that education is another barrier that Chinese people need to let go of and grow in Christ. Quite a few pastors interviewed have mentioned that education is still the idol for the average Chinese person in China and in America as well. A pastor said that in some areas trying to help the congregants within a Chinese church can be like turning around the *Titanic*. It will take time to turn.

One of the pastors voiced concern about the challenges facing the Chinese churches today in China. He said, "A lot of people like the charismatic movement in China. In preaching we deal with this as well. It is a quick experience for many. Mysticism and cults (Korean cults) are usually seen in villages. A lot of Christians blindly follow cults – so we need to address these topics in our preaching." Cults in China can spring up internally or from external sources, and so pastors must protect the congregants and preach to inform. I need to read more about this area and be able to help this contemporary issue facing us all.

Also, Chinese personal egos can get involved, and pastors need to be aware of their pride in ministries. This "personal ego" can also be described as "losing face." Experiences, age, and ego are all things that have to be dealt with in Chinese churches

and society. Therefore, pastors need to be courageous in their preaching. Sometimes in order to deal with this, pastors need to be blunt as mentioned before.

Sermon Preparation

All the pastors realized that in preparing for sermons, the passage itself must first speak to them. A pastor said, “As I spoke earlier, the Holy Spirit at work is a must.” He continued, “It is important to devote time to prayer and Bible reading.” Another pastor stressed that a preacher must first apply the sermon to himself before he preaches to others. Echoing what other pastors have said, one pastor emphasized that “He lets the passage speak to him first before he preaches.”

Sometimes, I read the passage for the listeners rather than letting the text speak to me first. Preachers need to be humble and rely on the Holy Spirit to work on their hearts so they don’t become patronizing. Keller refers to this preparation step as the third subtext. Keller advises that preachers look at three “texts.” First, preachers must look at the biblical text. Second, the preacher must look at the listeners’ context. Lastly, a preacher must examine the subtext of the preachers’ own heart. Keller concludes by concentrating on what he calls, “the test of the subtext.” He speaks of the “subtext of worship,” sensing Christ in the heart and glorifying Christ above all.²²²

The interviews explored further the homiletics processes and methods used. One pastor said that preachers need to have a gift of preaching. Also, he thinks that preaching is an art. Art to him is related to experience and observation. I find that observation of Scripture and learning to observe the surroundings is an important part in developing

²²² Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 200-205.

good sermons. Keeping an observation journal can help pastors use the power of observation to bring clarity to their sermons.

One pastor emphasized the need to protect the time used for preparing sermons. For him, he has to use various tools in order to understand the Scriptures well. One pastor strictly allocates time to prepare for sermons and starts as soon as he finishes his preaching on Sunday. Another pastor pointed out that godly living, experiencing God, and living out the Bible's commands are a good ways to prepare for a sermon. The message, when it is lived out, will create a thirst for God in preachers and in listeners.

One of the pastors concluded by saying that effective preaching needs to include good delivery. It needs to be "authentic – real and true." A preacher must speak the truth with passion.

Personal Preaching Experiences

Most of the pastors interviewed had a hard time thinking of specific instances that had a great impact on the listeners. One of the pastors said that he often gives an altar call at the end of each of his sermons, which gives him a sense of the effectiveness of his sermons. I learned that listeners need to be challenged because they are usually passive, and therefore the effectiveness of the messages must come from clear challenges that the pastors give to the listeners. It is good to know from an experienced pastor that listeners are waiting for the preachers to give instructions as to what to do with the messages. Sometimes, preaching has a cumulative effect that influences the lives of listeners rather than just one specific sermon that was preached.

One other pastor said how pastors live out their lives that can influence the lives of other Christians. He noted that this can be a clear indicator that the listeners are being

impacted. Therefore, seeing the lives of pastors being lived out motivates the transformation of the lives of listeners and spreads to the lives of others.

Feedback and Evaluation

Almost all the participants did not have a consistent means of obtaining feedback from their listeners. Culturally, the Chinese people do not usually want to say anything to the pastors concerning their preaching. In general, many feel that a pastor knows what is best. One of the pastors often asked those who were more critical to give him feedback. Occasionally, some pastors actively form a small group to provide feedback. Two pastors always ask their spouses for feedback. One of the pastors develops checkpoints to evaluate the full manuscript he writes. He put it this way, “In early years, I needed people’s feedback. My wife was providing most of the important feedback without holding back. I believe that self-evaluation is a good way to do it. I usually write out the full manuscript. Developing check points is a good idea. The key questions can include, ‘Is there a proposition of the sermons? How well are the explanations done? Are there good illustrations that are clear and is the application specific and applicable and faithful to the text? Is it clear and applicable to the listeners?’” For me, I think developing checkpoints to evaluate a full manuscript is a good method for all pastors. I assume that often a pastor knows what needs to be improved. Therefore, rewriting and editing the sermons will improve the quality of the sermons. Pastors need to build in time for studying, editing, rewriting, and praying for the sermons they preach.

Teaching and Transformative Learning

Five out of the six pastors interviewed are currently teaching homiletics in China and Taiwan. Transformative learning means that changes occur to the listeners in their

beliefs and is a topic not well-known among these Chinese pastors. How people change their beliefs and learn is an area that needs to be strengthened for the Chinese churches. Transformative learning can also have an impact on Christian education, which is lacking among the churches in China, as well as in the Chinese churches in America.

There is a sense that this is the hardest thing to do, changing people's beliefs, since beliefs are deeply ingrained. In order for the listeners to be change their beliefs,, the listeners must listen well. I have noticed that most people do not listen well. The lack of note-taking may be a good indicator that people are not strongly engaged. A pastor suggested that in the membership class of a church, leaders ought to teach Christians how to be good listeners to Sunday expository preaching.

Subsequently, the research explored more ways on how the interviewed pastors teach pastors or students to preach messages that are able to transform the lives of listeners. Practice was considered key to learn how to preach well. Therefore, one professor provides a preaching laboratory giving students and pastors an ample opportunity to practice preaching.

Another pastor who has been teaching homiletics in China for many years found that the pastors being trained needed to learn to study the Bible for themselves. I have observed this as well. While in China to teach inductive Bible study methods, I found that students there do not put a lot of effort in learning the skill. They say it is too difficult, so the students spiritualize the passage.

Additional resources will help increase the competency of pastors and those who will teach the next generation of pastors. In recent years many good commentaries have been translated into Chinese. More and more resources and Internet materials are

available to pastors in China. However, personal contact in a classroom setting and formal education in theological training are still an important part of learning. Since the house churches are usually small and numerous, there is a great need for shepherds within the churches. We have been to a city where a pastor coordinated eighty Chinese churches. Therefore, it is a real challenge to have structured, quality training.

Nevertheless, I have seen many structured curricula are being developed to train pastors or those already pastoring in China. The challenge is now to convince the leaders in China to find a more coordinated method to train pastors and to bring up and train good pastor-teachers for the tasks. The challenge is how to encourage those who are already highly trained to increase their competency so that they can train other pastors.

Other needs face the Chinese pastors today. One of the pastors discussed the great need for pastors or students in seminary to know themselves better. He says that many of them are under the care of senior pastors who are very authoritarian. They are downright harsh to the students and have lots of hostility towards the students and the congregation in general. Understanding what Dr. Philip Douglass, professor of practical theology and Director of D. Min. program at Covenant Theological Seminary, calls the “Divine Design” of individuals can be critical to those Chinese pastors. In addition, it might be useful for pastors in China to learn what Douglass calls a “Church’s Personality.”²²³ When teaching homiletics in China, we have to challenge others by teaching them methods that address spiritual formation.

Another pastor emphasized that the Christian worldview must be holistic. He believes that pastors in China need to be more open to the challenges facing people daily.

²²³ Philip D. Douglass, *What Is Your Church’s Personality? Discovering and Developing the Ministry Style of Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008).

Many become pastors when they were moved and led by the Holy Spirit. They then went out to plant and pastor churches. Now, they are in their fifties and sixties, and even some in their seventies, and they are just now having the opportunity to come to training classes. The house churches located in the villages of China look like this: they all have a great hunger for God's word and are highly motivated to learn. They all wake up early and spend hours on their knees praying. Two pastors think that when they teach homiletics, they will challenge the students to learn other worldviews along with the Christian world view.

Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation has a great impact on preaching that transforms the lives of listeners. Spiritual formation can be defined as the ongoing process, after turning to trust in Christ, by which Christ is formed in us (Galatians 4:19). All pastors interviewed agreed on the importance of spiritual discipline in their ministry. One pastor stated that spiritual disciplines such as fasting, prayer, devotion, meditation on the Bible are all normal essential parts of a Christian's life. All of the pastors interviewed practice some form of spiritual formation and spiritual discipline. The key is surrendering it all to Jesus Christ in order to receive power from the Holy Spirit for service.

Likewise, Christians can learn from one another how spiritual discipline requires self-control. One of the pastors has a regimented structure of spiritual discipline. He gets up at about 5 AM. He spends two hours reading and studying a book of the Bible. Then, he exercises and eats a well-balanced meal before he starts the ministry for the day. He encourages Christians to be more structured in spiritual discipline and practice to create these habits. The practice of reading a book of the Bible at one sitting is always

beneficial. In addition, effective meditation on the Bible over time is critical. One of the pastors confirmed that his discipline of Bible meditation, practiced for three years, was the best thing he did for his spiritual formation.

One pastor was recently challenged to teach a course in spiritual formation. He was keenly aware of the work by Dallas Willard and Richard Foster (e.g., *Celebration of Discipline*). He found these spiritual disciplines are normal and should be a part of anyone's life. He also found that "the discipline of grace" and the imitation of Christ's character are very important habits in his life.

Some other pastors do not have a structured way of spiritual discipline. One pastor stated that it takes practice, and he is becoming more aware of practicing the truth and growing in devotion.

Spiritual formation is a vital part of being a preacher. For example, Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie write in *Resilient Ministry* that four key practices help pastors pursue maturity in their relationship with Christ. One is building rituals. Secondly, they maintain accountability. Thirdly, they seek to grow through hardships. Lastly, they practice good spiritual discipline.²²⁴ Another book, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation* by Mel Lawrenz, defines spiritual formation as "the pattern of a person's inner and outer life in accordance to the image of Christ through intentional means of spiritual growth."²²⁵ Calvin prefers the phrase, "union with Christ." He was against using the concepts of imitating or patterning Christ, which he characterized as contrary to grace, with a focus on works righteousness and would require reliance on the self rather than on

²²⁴ Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*.

²²⁵ Lawrenz, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation*, 15.

Christ and his Spirit in sanctification.²²⁶ Agan proposes an integration of the two ideas as befitting Calvin's point of view.²²⁷ DeYoung said that the gift of holiness is through union with Christ, and it is through a process called "progressive sanctification."²²⁸ Willard encourages Christians, "Obedience is an essential outcome of Christian spiritual formation."²²⁹ All preachers can learn from Willard's list of disciplines: solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy, and sacrifice, all of which he categorizes as discipline of abstinence. The discipline of engagement consists of study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, and submission.²³⁰ In the interviews, this study confirms that a regimented structured of Scripture reading and meditation is vital to preachers. Also, I recommend the continuous practice of "the discipline of grace." All spiritual disciplines listed will help pastors preach sermons that can transform the lives of listeners.

The Ethos of Preachers

Spiritual formation is related to sanctification, character, reflection, and maturity in Christ. These elements work in combination with the ethos of preachers. One of the pastors said that trust is a vital aspect of building a pastor's ethos. The trust of congregants is developed over time, and the demeanor of a pastor, including his appearance, words, and deeds, growing in Christ-likeness, all help create a credible pulpit

²²⁶ Agan, "Departing from and Recovering Tradition: John Calvin and the Imitation of Christ," 802.

²²⁷ Ibid., 814.

²²⁸ DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness*, 33.

²²⁹ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*, 23.

²³⁰ Ibid., 156.

ministry. If the ethos comes through clearly, it is certainly from the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Pastors will become approachable as their caring expression and preaching is felt throughout the congregation. Personal contact, communication, and daily interaction combine to create ethos.

This thought is confirmed by Heisler who writes:

Character and ethos are important because they directly influence the credibility of the messenger and the reception of the message. The Holy Spirit authenticates our message (logos) and our ethos (character) when we yield both to him, and our audience, with the Spirit's help, can discern our authenticity as preachers.²³¹

I agree that "Preaching comes from the heart.", People sense the passion and compassion from a preacher's heart. One who has been pastoring for many years said that he wants to follow Jesus Christ, who is meek and humble. Therefore, he has learned to develop meekness and humility.

Integrity also supports a pastor's ethos. There is not a good Chinese term to translate the word "integrity, but it is a "must character trait for a pastor. It means trustworthiness, dependability, ethical behavior, and honesty. In Chinese churches, Christians may want someone to demonstrate preaching ability, but ethos is more important.

In general, the Chinese people do not like being too emotional but rather can be quite cerebral and humorous. Language or descriptors about an incidence can show a person's ethos. The pastors agreed that the heart or ethos is conveyed in our words. Therefore, a pastor who preaches should be careful in their usage of certain words and language. People then get to know him well as a result of his care for God's people.

²³¹ Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery*, 83.

Therefore, we can safely say ethos is the result of building good relationships with God and with others of the community of faith.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

Pastors need to have an awareness of the person and the work of the Holy Spirit in ministry as well as in preaching. It is the Holy Spirit that transforms the lives of listeners. All the pastors interviewed mentioned in the interview about some aspects of the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching and in transforming lives of listeners. A pastor reflects:

In preaching, the Holy Spirit's anointing is the main reason that moves people. I cannot affect change or move people. It is only through God's handiwork. The bottleneck is the need to be dependent on God's Spirit. One must rely on the Holy Spirit through preaching, preparation, delivery, and most of all, through prayer.

Preachers can only build a bridge to help others get into the word, and thus relying on the Holy Spirit is a must. Often lives are transformed by a single message, but other times it takes some time before lives change. Thus, another pastor said that the Holy Spirit takes the word and cultivates it. It might be years later before we see fruit in people's lives. The Holy Spirit takes the same message to different people of different ages and different situations.

There will not be any change in hearts devoid of the Holy Spirit. Chinese pastors cannot rely on their own strength or on their own preparation and gifts. They must rely totally on the strength of the Holy Spirit. This reliance on the Holy Spirit is done through humility in our hearts before God in prayer and in letting the Holy Spirit lead so that there is the fruit of Spirit is at work. It is hard to understand, but we know that our message can bring freedom. The listeners can feel the presence of God. The Holy Spirit has the ability to anoint the preachers. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, "My speech and my message is not in plausible words of wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit

and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” Keller agreed, “The act of preaching has something even more central than persuasion. It is your listeners’ sense of the Holy Spirit working in and through you.”²³²

John Owens comments that it can be freeing for a preacher to come to grips with the fact that the Scripture, not the speaker, is the change agent.²³³ Heisler defined illumination as:

the process whereby the Holy Spirit so impresses, convinces, and convicts the believer as to truthfulness and significance of the author’s intended meaning in the text that a change in action, attitude, or belief occurs, resulting in a more transformed, Spirit-filled life.²³⁴

Therefore, the whole process of preaching from hermeneutics to homiletics is totally the work of the Holy Spirit. Our heart and lives are transformed, and our living exhibits the fruit of the Spirit. The message preached results from the spiritual formation and spiritual discipline expressed in the ethos of a pastor.

The pastors did not mention a lot about the doctrine, the person, and the work of the Holy Spirit in preaching to transform lives. They did speak of the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit but without a great deal of specificity. From the interviews, it appears that evangelicals pay more attention to the importance of the Bible in transforming the lives of the listeners. Even though the word is God’s breath (Holy Spirit inspired; 2 Timothy 3:16), the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching must be strengthened not only in preachers but in all believers by especially raising greater sensitivity to the role of the Holy Spirit. According to Ferguson, “We view the Pentecost as an aspect of

²³² Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 192.

²³³ Crotts, *Illuminated Preaching: The Holy Spirit’s Vital Role in Unveiling Hid Word, the Bible*, 62.

²³⁴ Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit’s Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery*, 43-44.

the work of Christ.”²³⁵ In addition, “Jesus promises his disciples that the coming of the Spirit will bring ‘power,’ and as a consequence, they would be his witnesses throughout the earth (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8).”²³⁶ Ferguson adds that to be filled with the Holy Spirit is evidence that someone is under the lordship of the Spirit. He continues to receive fullness of the Holy Spirit to receive power to be Christ’s witnesses.²³⁷ Miller’s thought on the Holy Spirit can be summarized in saying that preachers need to understand that the Holy Spirit is the teacher. The Spirit also is a counselor who comforts the heavy-hearted. The Holy Spirit has power. His power channels through preachers according to the Spirit’s terms and control. God’s power through the Holy Spirit comes only with total surrender and spiritual submission.²³⁸ The Holy Spirit is sent to glorify Jesus Christ. Therefore, preachers can glorify Christ by submitting to His leading and surrendering totally to God through his Holy Spirit.

Key Ingredients for Transformative Preaching in Chinese Churches

From the data collected and findings, I have compiled a list of key ingredients for preaching that is able to transform the lives of the listeners.

From hermeneutics to homiletics, the study demonstrated: Preaching needs to have accurate exegesis of the Bible text. Preaching needs to be clear and understandable. The message needs to be relevant and be able to connect to the listeners using strong, authentic applications. It must be Christ-centered with emphasis on speaking about the cross of Jesus Christ. In general, the students/pastors in China are strong in prayer and

²³⁵ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology*, 86.

²³⁶ Ibid., 89.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Miller, *Spirit, Word and Story*.

meditate on God's word but are weak in hermeneutics. Thus, hermeneutics needs to be strengthened in order to preach messages that are able to build good foundations and transform the lives of listeners.

Evaluation and feedback are valuable for improvement: Some pastors use a more structured evaluation and feedback process. A recommended way is to develop check points to evaluate the full sermon manuscripts.

Spiritual formation of pastors is a must: This type of preparation requires the consistent use of spiritual disciplines. The interviews covered non-structured disciplines toward the regimented self-disciplines such as scheduling time for prayer, reading, and meditating on God's word, and having time for solitude and reflection. For pastors or pastors teaching homiletics, spiritual formation needs to be included in their classes. I would recommend a more structured discipline, which may include the "discipline of grace" and the imitation of Christ and godly living. Such disciplines build a strong relationship with the Lord and can help transform our own lives and the lives of others. It is not just for preaching per se. Pastors in China are quite strong in prayer and in listening to God's word. It is quite obvious that pastors in China need guidance in knowing their gifts and personalities in order to help improve their resolve and preaching.

The ethos of preachers includes godly character and living: It is recommended that pastors build strong relationships with their listeners. If the listeners trust the pastor, his ethos can have an impact on the degree of transformation in the listener. A pastors' integrity was highlighted also playing a key role.. A pastor's words and deeds ought to be consistent with the heart. Also, preachers should be the first listeners to God's message.

Teaching homiletics means more practice and life transformation: In China, the opportunities and challenges to teach current and future pastors will grow for many years to come. Politics and demographics are shifting. More Chinese pastors in leadership need to be well trained in order to teach other pastors and future pastors in China.

The Holy Spirit's work is essential: The role of the Holy Spirit throughout the preaching process is to transform the lives of preachers as well as the lives of the listeners. Recognizing the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching appears to be weak in application with evangelical pastors and the pastors I interviewed. Humility, prayer, reliance on God, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit are key to transforming the lives of listeners. The role of the Holy Spirit must be one of the major parts of the curriculum of a course in homiletics.

Propositional, Christ-Centered preaching is a good model: Propositional preaching is powerful and has staying power for edification for the congregation. The key to impacting the listeners is to identify the "Fallen Condition Focus" and subsequently explain the text through powerful illustrations and strong specific applications. The listeners are waiting to be challenged. This recommendation is an area that all preachers including myself need to improve through personal study and focus.

Exegesis of people and culture is needed. More in-depth understanding of the Chinese culture can help enormously to connect the listeners to the message being preached. Daily awareness and building relationships with the listeners of the congregation will pay dividends.

Pastors are the first listeners: All pastors recognize that preachers are the first listeners to their own messages from God. During the selection process through the delivery, preachers continuously need to listen to God and be in prayer. They need to be guided by the Holy Spirit in order to have “red hot” messages that can please the Lord.

Life-long training and loving God: Writing messages that transform the lives of listeners requires life-long training. Preachers are preparing for sermons daily and a part of the preparation is communicated through godly living. I am convinced that effective preaching, for preachers in China or elsewhere, demands loving God wholeheartedly with passion and loving God’s people with the heart of compassion.

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