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Reflection and Growth Plan
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During this course I got to learn more in depth about preaching. I never really preached a whole sermon before but the class lectures, reading materials, and practicing sermon preaching has helped me grow in this area and prepare me to preach in the future. I will be talking about what I have learned and my growth plan in this paper.

THE PREACHER

The class lectures, reading materials, and feedback that I received from the Vision Cast assignment cover the area about the preacher, which is what I will discuss in this section.

First, in Dr. Reimer's lecture on preacher, he mentioned that the preacher must first wrestle with the word and apply God's word to own's life first, then preach it to others. Then in Robinson's book, he defined expository preaching as "the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers."¹ This concept of applying the scriptures to self first then to others resonates really well with me. If the preacher was not first transformed by God's word, what he or she preaches would only be head knowledge, doctrines, and biblical principles. God's word is supposed to be transformational, if the preacher did not have an encounter with God through his word first, the transformational power of the word is lacking in

¹Robinson, Haddon W., *Biblical Preaching - The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014. 12.

the preacher and his sermon, and therefore cannot reach to the listeners. Anderson in his book also shared his version of ‘transformational power’, he mentioned that “Your number-one mission as a speaker is to take something that matters deeply to you and to rebuild it inside the minds of your listeners.”² If an idea did not matter and had no impact in your life, how do we expect it to transform the lives of others?

Another quality that’s also important in a preacher is passion. Dr. Reimer taught that preaching should be conversational; with energy factors such as pitch, punch, pace, and pause; and with passion. Then in Robinson’s book, the author indicated that “preach means to cry out, herald, or exhort. Preachers should pour out the message with passion and fervor in order to stir souls.”³ He continues to say that when the preacher speaks as a herald, she should “cry out the word. Anything less cannot legitimately pass for Christian preaching.” This is a really powerful statement that provides the imagery of what passionate preaching should look like. I have also received feedback from Dr. Ream for the Vision Cast assignment that I should speak with more passion to make my message more compelling. I absolutely agree that this is what I should work on. Passionate speakers carry impactful authority in their preaching. I am reminded of my experiences as a worship leader, when I led with passion, people told me they felt authority.

Anderson gave some precise, good tips on public speaking⁴, for example, he cited traps we should avoid as a speaker: to not ramble; not to sound like a salesperson who makes things sound too good to be true; and not to boast about success of an organization that would bore the audience, etc.. On the other hand, he gave tips of how to be a good speaker: a good speaker should be able to inspire the audience to do better; show the right level of vulnerability in our

²Anderson, Chris, *TED TALKS - The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking*. New York, NY: Mariner Books, 2016. 12.

³ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 11.

⁴Anderson, *TED TALKS*.

talk that can connect us with the audience; whether scripting is the best method to use for every speaker; and rehearse your talk, etc.. Keeping these points in mind can help me plan my talk.

PREPARING A SERMON

In Dr. Reimer's lecture on preparing a sermon, he talked about preaching God's idea and not to use scriptures to fit our own message. Robinson asked this question in his book, "do you, as a preacher, endeavor to bend your thought to the Scriptures, or do you use the Scriptures to support your thought?"⁵ This is a very important reminder that preachers should not tweak the meaning of a specific text, take a text out of its context, or misuse or misinterpret the scriptures when we preach. It is easy to fall in the danger of ignoring the original intention that the biblical author had for the text, especially when we look for different passages for topical exposition, as suggested by Robinson in his book.

Robinson also mentioned that we should be aware of what's going on in our own times.⁶ That's an important factor when we prepare a sermon, thinking about what struggles people are facing today, what the current trends are, etc. If we pay attention to the realities and needs of our audiences, it will be easier for us to provide a relatable biblical worldview that people can apply to their situations.

In addition, Dr. Reimer taught about identifying the main idea, subject, and complement of the text. We went through this exercise for 12 passages and it was certainly helpful. I was able to prepare my 15-minute sermon using this structure and I was able to stay focused on the purpose of my sermon. Using sub-points as suggested by Robinson⁷ to expand on ideas; as well

⁵Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 13.

⁶Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 54.

⁷Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 100.

as deductive arrangement to present the idea in introduction, and then explain, prove, or apply the idea in the body also helps me to prepare my sermon. Additionally, writing out detailed manuscripts for my sermon as an assignment was certainly a good tip, I was able to think my sermon through more clearly, I was able to choose better words and ways to express my thoughts. However, my dilemma of writing out my sermon was that I was constantly staring at what I wrote to make sure I did not miss anything, I felt like I lost some connection with the audience and I was less impactful or conversational than I wished I was. However, rehearsing more would help me memorize the flow of my sermon and words would flow more naturally when I preach. And lastly, creating good transitions between ideas also helped me connect ideas throughout my sermon, I was able to focus on keeping it interesting so people do not drift away in the middle.

GROWTH AS A GODLY WOMAN

I am planning to practice these spiritual disciplines to help me grow as a godly woman: daily reading of God's word for 15 minutes, daily 15 minute prayer with my family, and being more sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. This daily routine helps me to build a loving union with God.

God speaks to us these days primarily through the bible, without reading the bible we do not know the truth, and submitting to God's word will let his transformative love and power change our lives in the most amazing way. Secondly, I also realize that in order to be an

accountable preacher, I need to be very familiar with the Bible. I followed the Bible reading plan at my church and finished reading the whole Bible within a year for a few years in a row, but then I stopped because I felt that it was too much to read each day and I did not thoroughly absorb what I read. For a while I did not follow any reading plan, and I just read the Bible whenever I felt like. I am now trying to get back to reading the Bible more regularly, but with an intent that I do not need to rush, but to really understand and let God's word sink in and transform me.

Additionally, praying to God with my family every night has become my habit for a few years and I will continue because it has strengthened the bond between us and with God, and during our prayer we would listen to God for what and how to pray. Praying with my husband together is a way for us to seek God's heart and guidance. Recently we are praying for the direction of serving God, we felt that God has called us to serve in a multi-cultural environment since the pandemic, we are currently serving at a Chinese church. However, God has opened up a door at this Chinese church for us to serve the people in our multi-cultural neighborhood by giving out supplies and talking to them. We will continue to seek God and be more sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit and not hold on to what I have planned. I believe God would show us the next steps, he would give us ideas or prompts for us to do or say something at different times, if I stick to my plans and not yield to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I would falter and not be able to follow God closely, I am learning to be more obedient as a child of God, I want more of God in my life and less of my flesh.