

## **Reflection and Growth Plan**

Isaac Lee

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Dr. Scott Ream

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Leadership, excellent preaching, and bold teaching are qualities often sought after greatly in the church today. We all want to be excellent communicators and effective leaders who have learned to steward our giftings well, declaring the truth of God in grace and love in a manner that meets our congregants and greater culture where we are at. In my current role, I serve as a worship leader at Rescue Church in West New York, NJ. Being that I am usually leading worship, I do not receive many opportunities to preach and teach, although I am no stranger to it. Taking this class was enriching in challenging me to grow as a communicator, preacher, leader, and lover of God. In reflecting on this past semester and envisioning a plan for growth, I am reminded of what Dr. Reimer said regarding true leadership; “the spiritual leader is always the most magnanimous person in the room. If you forgo magnanimity, you forfeit spiritual authority”. No matter the fruit of my growth, I pray it be anchored in magnanimity, for that is the character of my leader, Jesus, who we all seek to be like.

There were several teachings that challenged my growth as a man of God. The first is the concept of anointed preaching. There is a difference between preaching simple truth and preaching anointed truth. Truth has some anointing; lived into truth has multiplied anointing. Information does not lead to transformation; anointed preaching creates an environment for true change. Learning about this made me desire to understand and flow in “lived into truth”. Lived into truth requires a vital union with Jesus, living a life worthy of respect, being self-aware of my soul health, and challenging myself to continually learn and grow all my life. To sustain vital union with Jesus, I have been practicing disciplines of stillness and vulnerability before the Lord. Vital union to me requires complete openness and access. No matter how I’m feeling or what I’m thinking, I consistently acknowledge the presence of the Lord in my life and the Holy Spirit in me, and ask Him to lead me moment by moment. I tune in to His direction and get sensitive to

His leading. I speak to my soul and remember His faithfulness, and even if I don't "feel" anything, I am learning to trust Him and His leadership; this is what it means to me to be in vital union with Jesus. Living a life worthy of respect speaks to integrity and living with a fear of the Lord whether people are around or not. To monitor my soul health, I've gone in to counseling sessions and am working on communicating transparently with my counselor and my closest friends. I am also being sensitive to when I am tired or need to rest. Continually learning is done through deeper textual study of the Word of God and through reading books that increase my desire for God.

The second teaching that challenged me to grow was in understanding the four steps to achieve vision. I loved the breakdown of the four steps being defining reality, vision, strategy, and follow through. Respectively, these four terms define where we are, where we're going, how to get there, and what it takes to manage the dream. Learning this concept made me realize the expansiveness of achieving vision and how vision always goes beyond the abilities of one person. Dr. Reimer taught that often most people are only good at one of the four steps and okay at another. We all have blind spots and need others to achieve Kingdom vision. For me, I was realizing that to truly achieve vision, I needed to look beyond myself. I have a tendency to think of myself as the main character in life and this semester has been extremely humbling in reminding me how much I am not! Jesus is the main character; whatever His vision is, is what we as a body should pursue to participate in. To fulfill His vision, we need each other because it's bigger than one individual.

The third teaching that challenged me to grow was the detailed teaching in preparing a sermon. I was mentally stretched to truly isolate the main idea of a passage and the purpose of the teaching. Many elements that go in to preparing a sermon were considered, such as being

sure to answer functional questions of explaining the sermon idea, proving it's relevance, and applying the lesson today. These considerations grew me in helping me consider the right questions to ask myself in my preparation of sermons and teachings. These are methods and ideas that I plan to leverage in all my future sermon preparation.

Beyond sermon preparation, delivering a sermon was a life-changing learning experience. In communicating, a few things I did well were communicating transparently, speaking relaxed and conversationally, and helping people tune in to and discern the Holy Spirit's voice. I realized that when I spoke transparently in my sermon, and flowed from the lessons that the Lord had walked me through, I was able to ad-lib very freely and preach off-script fluidly. My group members confirmed similarly that communicating from transparency was a strength that I exhibited and it immediately grabbed their attention. I also did well in communicating in a relaxed, conversational tone while still holding firmness behind my words. I believe that my tone will be effective in bridging a connection between myself and the audience as the "first job as a speaker is to find a way to disarm those weapons and build a trusting human bond with the audience so that they're willing – delighted, even – to offer you full access to their minds for a few minutes"<sup>1</sup>. The sermon that I preached was a heavier topic on trusting in the Lord during hardship. I decided to speak in a more serious manner throughout this message but I do look forward to preaching on more upbeat and "victorious" topics in the future to also examine the tonality of my voice then. I also did well in leading people in to times of stillness and prayer at the beginning and end of my sermon. I asked questions that engaged people's minds and by the

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, Chris. *Ted Talks: The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking*. New York, New York. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2016, 48.

end of the sermon, I delivered His words so that a space was cultivated for people to be open before the Lord and one another.

An area I would like to improve on is in narrowing down a singular main point. I did speak to the main point in my sermon, however, some people in my group commented that it was slightly blurred in with other points. This made me realize that I needed to hammer this point again and again and also re-address it throughout the sermon as needed. Haddon Robinson states that “an effective speech centers on one specific thing, a central idea”<sup>2</sup>. Preaching this teaching as the preacher as opposed to listening to this teaching as the congregant are two completely different experiences. I also want to improve in addressing my main point sooner. My introduction was contemplative and questioning, however following my introduction, I could have more immediately hammered the main point and emphasized it. I think if I spoke with a PowerPoint, this would help in pushing out the primary point in question. However, my long introduction may have muddied the waters for people trying to ascertain the singular main point of the message. I would also like to practice preaching more in general. I realized that like anything else, experience is key. The more I am given opportunities to teach and preach, the more I’ll learn what works and doesn’t work for my personal style of preaching and preparation. Lastly, I’d also like to improve on preaching from my script and ad-libbing. Sometimes, I find that preaching from my script can seem rather constrained and formulaic. However, I know that I’m not at a place yet where I could comfortably ad-lib based off a simple sermon outline. I anticipate that I would need to practice writing hundreds of sermons, delivering them privately and publicly, and going off script countless times before I get to a place where I can

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<sup>2</sup> Robinson, Haddon. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. Baker Academic, 2014, 38.

simultaneously preach through these two styles of delivery. In his *Ted Talks*, Chris Anderson says that “as you start to rehearse, the difference between the two modes starts to fade”<sup>3</sup>.

I recognize that there is plenty of room for growth both in character and in preaching aptitude. As much as I want to grow in preaching aptitude, I recognize that the former is of the utmost importance. What marked renowned preachers, teachers, and men and women in history who have proclaimed the word of God powerfully was simply His presence and anointing. This was not based off their gifting or merited by their studies; this was from their intimacy with the Lord and their private victory in the secret place. Especially in the context of the pulpit, transparency requires speaking from a place of victory. Regarding specific topics like purity or money, an atmosphere of breakthrough and victory are more easily cultivated when the preacher has already gone there first. I want to be a preacher, teacher, and just a lover of God who can communicate under the anointing of the Holy Spirit with my testimony as my witness to His faithfulness. I trust the Lord in this growth process and will be steady in the journey.

## **Bibliography**

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<sup>3</sup> Anderson, Chris. *Ted Talks: The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking*. New York, New York. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2016, 147.

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