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AN ANALYSIS OF REV. OAK, HAN-HUM'S SERMONS

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BY

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LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF REV. OAK, HAN-HUM'S SERMONS

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Liberty Theological Seminary, 2010

Mentor: Dr. H. David Chung

An accomplished preacher, teacher, and church-planter, Rev. Oak, Han Hum was the pastor of Korea's famous Sarang Community Church, which he founded with less than 50 members but grew under his leadership to over 80,000. In an attempt to better appreciate Rev. Oak's success, this thesis will analyze Rev. Oak's sermons, giving special attention not only to his preaching techniques and style but also his mindset, philosophy, and attitude toward his pastoral responsibility. Unquestionably, his passion for and commitment to preaching the Word of God, was a significant part of his ability to connect to his congregation through his sermons. By the end of this thesis may every pastor who reads this thesis learn from the example of Rev. Oak! May each pastor walk away with a better understanding of the importance of thoroughly preparing each and every sermon, and realize the crucial value in maintaining a passion for the Word of God.

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I would first like to give thanks to our Lord for this opportunity to study at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.

My studies at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary have firmly established me in evangelical theology and enabled me to preach with greater assurance that the Bible is the Word of God. If there is any one lesson I have learned during my time at the Seminary, it is the importance of sermon preparation. As pastors, we must remember that since we are proclaiming the words of God Himself to people, we should not be satisfied with only moderate preparation. Our best effort, not one that is half-hearted, should go into preparing each and every sermon. We should spend time in research and study, but especially in prayer each time we prepare to deliver God's message of reconciliation to our congregation.

I am greatly thankful to Dr. H. David Chung who taught me this lesson. I will do my best to deliver the deep and mysterious Word of God to congregations by practicing his teachings in my life and pastoral career as I preach in the churches in Korea.

I would also like to thank Dr. Dempsey who was instrumental in the progression of this thesis. I give my thanks also to Dr. Gho who helped translate this thesis into English. I also say thank you to Dr. Elmer Towns, Dr. Frank Schmitt, Dr. C. Daniel, Kim who taught me as a Doctor of Ministry student. Thank you also Rev. Gwon, Sung Muk and Rev. Park, Sang Hoon for allowing me to study at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary while doing full-time ministry.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The 20th century witnessed unprecedented growth in Korean Protestant church populations. Half of the 50 largest churches in the world are in Korea. Korea is sending out more missionaries than any other country except for America. Korean Protestant churches also have boasted many attendees at their early morning prayer meetings. Many of the prestigious seminaries in the world have more than 20% Korean students. Contrary to the decreasing number of seminary students in other countries, seminaries in Korea are overflowing with applicants. The average acceptance rate for seminaries is 28. 6%. Some students have to study for three to four years to enter the seminary at which they want to study.

However, Korean Protestant churches are going through a crisis today. In the last ten years, Korean churches have experienced a decline in the size of their congregations. According to statistics from seven major denominations in Korea, congregation sizes are decreasing, while the number of churches and their staff are increasing.[1]

According to the Korean Statistical Information Service, statistics of religion in Korea from 2005 shows that the Christian population in Korea decreased by 1. 6% from

[1] Ham, Taekyung, "Korean Protestant Churches, Rise up Again," *Kookmin Ilbo*, June 22, 2006, 25.

2004 and that Catholic population increased by 74. 4% from the past year.[2] This obviously proves that Korean protestant churches have stopped growing and that their reputation is instead plummeting.

Even more discouraging is that the number of Sunday school students has decreased. This is one of the measures with which we can foresee the future of Korean Protestant churches. However, what is more important is not just the declining numbers. Korean protestant churches as a whole are not good examples of biblical, Christ-like churches and are not fulfilling their roles and functions. The churches become the target of condemnation rather than becoming the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

KBS 1TV, one of the major national television channels, showed a documentary on the crisis of Protestant churches in Korea in 2004.[3] The documentary focused on the revival, recession, and reduction of protestant churches in Korea. They pointed out that the major reason for the decline of the churches is that they have lost society's trust. The program demonstrated several different reasons for the churches' decline: churches' attitude that the individual church itself was the end of God's mission, Christian protestants' lack of participation in relief services, Christian protestant church leadership yielding to Shinto worship under Japanese rule, church leadership taking sides on Japanese government to survive while Korea was under Japanese rule, church leaders' taking sides on the dictatorial government, pastoral leadership succession to their own sons in mega churches leading to church split, tax evasion fraud by churches, personality disorders of some pastors, and unclear financial management by the church leadership.

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[2] http://kosis. kr/metadata/main. jsp?surv_id=48&curYear=2005

[3] Broadcasted: Oct. 2, 2004, KBS 1TV, 60 minutes. Executive Producer: Yongho Hwang, Director: Kwangnok Lee, Sunghoon Kang

The documentary harshly declared that Christian protestant churches in Korea have no hope unless they overcome these problems and regain their credibility. Several newspapers and other media have also dealt with these problems as their feature stories.

In these circumstances, Korean protestant churches should stop boasting about the size of their church buildings and outward appearances; rather, they should check the status of their reputation and reflect on what they need to change. Maybe Korean protestant churches should not prioritize evangelism in Korea or world mission as they now do. They should not certainly neglect them, but what needs to be done first is their internal maintenance. They should endeavor to renew themselves in the Word of God and establish Christ-like churches.

For the recovery and moving on to the next step, our first priority should be 'a righteous church. ' A righteous church does not indicate a legalistic church, but a church based on the word of God and ruled and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

James Packer defined 'revival' as follows:

> Revival is God's ministry through the Holy Spirit, giving birth to those who were spiritually dead through the word of God and renewing the inner life of lifeless and listless Christians. Revival allows the churches to regain livelihood and has spiritual and moral impact on the society.[4]

Genuine revival and a change in Korea's churches can occur when we go back to God's word. When the word of God is preached from the pulpit, congregations will change.

The reason this thesis discusses the sermons of Oak, Han-Hum is that his sermons are significant and timely. Since Rev. Oak founded Sarang Community Church 31 years ago, in July of 1978, its membership has increased to 80,000 with 35,000 active adult

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[4] James I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 36.

members. This is phenomenal when most Korean churches have shown negative growth. It is not just numerical growth. Sarang Community Church members are trained in the word of God and demonstrate spiritual growth by reproducing born-again Christians; they are changing the world in their schools and workplaces. Sarang Community Church has demonstrated both quantitative growth and qualitative growth. The main source of this growth is the discipleship training and sermons of Oak, Han-Hum. This dissertation will focus on and analyze his sermons as a modeling example for the spiritual revival and revolution of Korean churches.

The Statement of the Problem

As mentioned previously in the introduction, Korean churches are experiencing a major crisis. Many offer views on and solutions to the problem, but none can deny that the fundamental reason for the crisis in the Korean Protestant church is a lack of proclaiming the true Word of God from the pulpit. In order to survive the crisis, Korean Protestant churches must go back to the word of God and regain the power of the preaching its truth from the pulpit. In the past, Korean congregations hungered and thirsted for God's word. Their desire for God's Word was very similar to the desire Chinese congregations demonstrates today. This thirst for the Word of God drives Chinese Christians so much so that they ask for more preaching in addition to the several hours of sermons and Bible studies many already receive.

In contrast, Korean congregations today are intolerant of any sermon that goes over thirty minutes. Many in those congregations spend little time on their knees praying and prefer an easy-going laid back Christian life. They lack the determination to

overcome adversity and to make sacrifices, and they do not acknowledge the authority of the Bible.

Pastors also contribute to the crisis. Their uninspiring sermons have played a role in the demise of the Korean church. Certainly, when a pastor wholeheartedly preaches the truth from Word of God and people in the congregation refuse to be changed by it, the pastor cannot be held responsible. However, when a pastor lacks the very desire to see lives affected by God's Word, his sermons reveal it. In effect, sermons are dull and superficial, and cause the congregation to have an apathetic attitude toward God. Pastors must renew their passion for God and for God's people that they might deliver sermons with sound theology and teach the righteousness of God.

Pastors must also have the correct focus; they must stop focusing on numbers and start focusing on God. For many Korean pastors, the number of members in their church is vital. However, when the focus is more on the quantitative growth of their church, sermons are affected. Instead of focusing on delivering sermons that are Biblically sound and pleasing to God, pastors focused on numbers deliver sermons that people want to listen to, sermons that satisfy and appeal to people's desire so that they may draw more people into their congregation. Some preachers even try to imitate the sermons of mega-church pastors, believing that the key to having their own mega-church is in their sermons. They do not know that imitating others' sermons would not make any difference. Even if they mimicked the very delivery, it will not change a soul. Korean churches need sound theology. Pastors should focus on this need. Their sole interest should lie in the type of sermons that would please God and that would teach their congregation to discern truth as it corresponds to the Word of God. If pastors prepare

their sermons with this focus, they will be able to deliver more effective sermons in the long run.

Second, Korean pastors are overworked. Their workload is often far too heavy and takes away from their ability to adequately prepare their sermons each week. This is especially the case in newly established churches where there is just one preacher. The preacher has to be responsible for delivering sermons at least 10 times each week, which is more than 500 times per year.[5] This is quite demanding for one person. As an individual with limited knowledge and a busy schedule, it is impossible to deliver fresh and powerful messages each time. In the past, with congregations that were hungry for the Word of God but less educated, a low quality sermon might still have blessed many in the church.

However, with today's churchgoers being more educated and more exposed to Bible experts and resources, a poor sermon is no longer acceptable. According to sermon experts, preachers need to spend one hour of preparation for one minute of the sermon, which means they must prepare at least 20 hours for each sermon. If they follow this standard, it will be not possible to preach more than twice per week.

Third, Korean pastors must overcome laziness. They need to spend more time meditating on the Bible that they might better avoid their tendency to improvise and preach off the top of their head. Moreover, the temptation to copy others' sermons will not be as appealing. With the technological advancements we have today, like the Internet, it has become very easy to plagiarize other preachers' sermons. It is no problem for a preacher to reference another preacher's sermons, but copying another person's work

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[5] Park, Samyol, "A study on Korean protestant church pastors' perception of sermons," *Pastoral Care and Theology* Vol. 169 (2003:4), 157-167.

cannot be dismissed. Every preacher should remember the statement of John Chrysostom, the Golden Mouth, "if a preacher used another person's sermon to reveal himself, it would be more humiliating than a thief stealing another person's possession".[6] Therefore, pastors should remember preparing for sermons is their most important responsibility and should spend most of their time doing so.

Pastors should also keep in mind that preaching sermons is the most burdensome and onerous of any of a pastor's tasks. This is so because a pastor is accountable for his sermon. In the first verse of the third chapter of the James, James says, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." With this in mind, pastors should have a 'holy burdened heart' when it comes to preparing for and delivering their sermons.

While preaching sermons may not be an easy task, it can be enjoyable. As pastors prepare their sermons, they can reap personal benefits when they believe and apply God's truth to their own lives. One of the greatest preachers of the twentieth century, Martin Lloyd-Jones' confesses that "To me being able to preach is the most supreme, greatest and honorable calling a man can get. I do not hesitate to say that the most imminent need in church today is true sermons."[7] This should be the attitude of all pastors. Preparing for sermons is an onerous task, but when the pastor learns to enjoy that time, that pastor will be able to carry out the responsibilities and tasks that come with being a pastor. Furthermore, preachers should continue to study the word of God for their own growth. They should not cease to study to improve what they lack in their sermons.

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[6] John Chrysostom, "The Temptation of Greatness," in *The Company of Preachers*, ed. By Richard Lischer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 58.

[7] Martyn D. Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 9.

A preacher should also believe what he is preaching. His belief in the power of the Word of God is the most important element in his life. The word of God is living and active. Shaper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. If we proceed with the assurance in the power of the word, we will be used by God just as Peter, Paul, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Jonathan Edward, D. L. Moody, and Billy Graham were. When we proceed with the assurance in the power, the word of God will melt and change the hardened heart.

This paper will now present Oak, Han-Hum's sermon preparation and his sermons as a modeling example for Korean protestant church pastors. Rev. Oak always tried to spend 20 hours for a sermon in spite of his busy pastoral ministry. I would like to explain a few terminologies used in this paper.

Discipleship Training: A training program for lay church members who are training non-Christian lay members to be the Disciples of Christ. Rev. Oak started this 32-week program. A small group of fewer than 10 gather together to memorize Bible verses, to praise and worship, to pray, and to study the Bible. After each week's training, each member receives an assignment, such as memorizing verses, having devotionals, or attending all formal worship services during the week. When they return the next week, they each share how they applied what they learned from the meetings and the devotionals. After 32-weeks of training, the members are considered Disciples striving to be Christ-like.

Ministry Training: Among those who have completed Discipleship Training, people who have proved to have the gift of teaching are selected for Ministry Training.

During the 32-week program, the selected are split into men and women groups and trained to develop the personality and leadership skills required for leaders in the church. After the program is completed, they are given the opportunity to lead a Garret. Sarang Community Church is an example of one church that has been training about 1,000 lay workers through Ministry Training to serve as lay leadership.

Garret: It is a similar meeting to a cell meeting in a cell church or regional Bible group study in a Presbyterian church. A Garret is led by a leader who has completed the discipleship training and ministry training, and the group consists of about 10 families. In the weekly meeting, the group shares a meal together and spends time in praise and worship, prayer, Bible study, and preaching the Gospel. If a Garret has a leader candidate, the person is sent through Discipleship Training and Ministry Training first and then leads another Garret. If one Garret multiplies its members and they have more than 10 families, it is split into two Garrets.

The Theoretical Basis for the Project

Sermons are a key characteristic of Christianity. They are the primary means for Christian preachers to convey the Word of God to those who desire to be Christ-like. The origin of sermons can be found in the Old Testament. In Hebrew, prophets are called ‘Nabi. ’ Nabi comes from (נבא) and it means “delivering a message.” In the Old Testament days, the prophets’ proclaimed the Word of God verbally. This verbal proclamation was their sermon. The Old Testament is about God’s redemption and His salvation. Prophets played the role of today’s preachers in Old Testament times. When the prophets delivered the Word of God, Israel was blessed. In the same way, when there was

no message from the prophets, Israel faced darkness.[8]

Prophets pinpointed the sins of the Israelites, warned them of God's judgment day and urged them to repent. Their sermons were straightforward as they tirelessly proclaimed messages on sin and judgment to all the people. They also preached the blessings of salvation to those who repented of their sin and the hope of messiah's coming. During the 400 years between the last prophecy in Malachi and the appearance of John the Baptist, Israel lost its nation status and had no message from prophets.

Sermons were delivered usually in the synagogues. It was the only place where someone looking to hear the Word of God could hear it preached. The worship service at the synagogues is the origin of the worship services in today's church. In the synagogues, reading the Law of God and delivering the sermon were the most important functions the synagogues exercised. At that time, the ruler of the synagogue presided over the service while the rabbi usually delivered the sermon. The sermon consisted of reading the Bible and expounding on the verses read. They usually adopted the method of Exposition of Scripture when they taught. This method was just like a traditional Jewish sermon style.

In the New Testament, one can see that Jesus usually preached in the synagogue as a circuit preacher. One may also see that during Apostle Paul's mission trip, the synagogue rulers in Pisidian Antioch sent word to Paul and his companions (Acts 13:14, 52). The sermons of synagogue rabbis gradually lost its freshness and changed. Later when some of the sermons gained popularity, rabbis would quote the translations of famous Jewish Law scholars or Talmud or other Jewish legendaries rather than the Word of God. Moreover, the words of elders replaced the Word of God, resulting in the dark

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[8] Chung, Sung-Ku, *Reformed Homiletics: Redemptive Historical Expository* (Seoul: Chongshin University Press, 1991), 66-67.

period in Jewish religion.[9]

In the New Testament, sermons began with the preaching of John the Baptist. His sermons were unlike those of other rabbis in his day. They pronounced messages on God's judgment and the coming of Jesus Christ. Later, when Jesus came, He delivered the true sermon. The need for sermons was because of Jesus; without His coming, there would be no need for sermons. Jesus is at the crux of the Bible. He is the object and the very reason for sermons. Moreover, Jesus was the first preacher in the history of Christianity. In Mark 1:14, Mark reveals the advent of Jesus as a circuit preacher, saying "…Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God…"

As a sermon deliverer, Jesus Christ himself declares that He came to the earth for that reason. When Jesus taught in the synagogue in Nazareth, he declared that what the prophet Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 61 was His own coming (Luke 4:16-30). Jesus emphasized that he is the Lord of salvation and came to preach the gospel in Luke 4: 20-21, "Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him." Jesus' sermons were different from those of Jewish leaders and changed the people. In short, he had authority (Mark 1:22) His authority was founded in God's authority.[10] Jesus' sermons contained the forgiveness and grace of God who saves sinners, the infinite value of a man's soul, peace of God, assurance in blessing, and glorious victory. Jesus' sermons gave life to dying souls, changed souls, and won victories.

Jesus often spoke in parables: the parable of the sower and the seed, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the parable of budding fig tree, and the parable of a divided

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[9] Ibid. , 69-70.

[10] A. E. Garvie, *The Christian Preacher* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 29.

kingdom. He understood the mindset and reality of his audience and used the parables to make it easier for them to understand. In short, Jesus had an awareness of the nature of His audience. His sermons were sermons of repentance, of God's kingdom, of love and blessing, of God-centered lives, of salvation, and of fulfillment of Bible prophecy.[11]

His apostles were also great preachers. Acts contains sermons by Peter, Stephen, and Paul. Paul especially gave powerful sermons—recorded nine different times—in Acts.[12] The Apostles' sermons had differences and specific characteristics in form, but they all had the same content. Mainly, their message was that God provided a means for our salvation and that in His time sent Jesus Christ to the earth to fulfill his plan. Furthermore, the Apostles testified that many people including the Jews refused to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah, nailing Him to the Cross instead. Thus, they proclaimed that all needed to repent of sin and accept Jesus as Savior. Also, the Apostles prolifically quoted the Old Testament in their sermons.

There were many preachers in the history of Christianity. In the early churches during the post-apostle period, there were famous preachers like Clement in Rome, Ignatius, Origen, Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Augustine. At that time, sermons were delivered using the Rhetoric method, or elocution. The sermons contained Christian theology, man's theology, warned against cults, etc. However, the translation of the Bible was not advanced and sound theology was not established yet.[13]

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[11] Chung, Sung-Ku, *Reformed Homiletics*, 72-77.

[12] The first sermon was in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16-41), the second was in Lystra (Acts 14:14-18), the third was in Athens, (Acts 17:16-34), the fourth was in Miletus (Acts 20:17-38), the fifth was in Jerusalem (Acts 22:1-21), the sixth was at the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1-11), the seventh was before Governor Felix (Acts 24:10-21), the eighth was before King Agrippa (Acts 26:1-23), and the ninth was in Rome (Acts 28:17-20).

[13] Chung, Sung-Ku, *Reformed Homiletics*, 92-107.

In the Middle Ages after Augustine, the dark age of sermons started. For about 1000 years since the 4th century when Catholicism prevailed, sermons disappeared. The Gospel was attacked by Scholastic School and eventually disappeared. Worship services were held in Latin, leaving lay people unable to read and understand the Bible or join in collective prayers. In the 6th century, they even stopped reading the Bible verses during the worship service. For Bible translation, an allegoric translation was mainly used. There were preachers like Bernard, Francis, and Thomas Aquinas, but their influence was minimal.[14]

During the Reformation Era, sermons based on the Word of God finally resumed. After 1000 years of formal Catholic religion, they turned back to the Word of God. In this era, there were great preachers like Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. When he preached the word of God, Luther believed that it was important to understand the grammar, the social and historical background, and the context of the events in the Bible verses in addition to understanding the verse itself. Luther always emphasized that Jesus Christ must be the central motif of a sermon. Luther's sermons were sensible and enthusiastic, whereas Calvin's had less sense of humor and more intellectual sense. His sermons were expository type sermons. His preaching was not an allegoric preaching as was used in the Middle Ages, but his sermons were based on the text of the Bible using commentary and notes for each verse. He claimed that Bible must be commented and translated based on the Bible. His sermons also had a firm foundation on his theology, especially his theology on God's absolute authority. This theme controlled his sermons and was always preached

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[14] Ibid. , 107-126.

after the temple rituals.[15]

Under this firm foundation of the Reformers bloomed the sermons of Puritans and Evangelists: John Bunyan, Richard Baxter, George Fox, John Wesley, Samuel Rutherford, and Jonathan Edwards.[16]

As stated above, sermons are a key characteristic of Christianity. When the word of God is delivered to the congregation via sermons, repentance, change, and revival take place.

Sermons should go hand in hand with theology. Sermon deliverers should be balanced, having an adequate understanding of the whole Bible, including the doctrine and theology that compose it. They need to have a full understanding of Christian Dogmatic theology such as Theology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology, and their sermons should be proved by their theology. They also need to prepare for their sermons using Exegetics and Biblical theology in order for their sermons to be not allegoric translation but straightforward and righteous sermons. Therefore, sermons should go hand in hand with theology.

The Statement of Methodology

The author will use various methods to analyze the sermons of Rev. Oak, Han-hum whose sermons were the driving force for Sarang Community Church's revival and proved to be the healthiest of revivals by Korean Protestant churches. He will first collect and analyze the books written by Rev. Oak. He will then sit in Discipleship Training, Ministry Training, and Garret at Sarang Community Church. Through the meetings, he

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[15] Ibid. , 126-151.

[16] Ibid. , 151-191.

will collect feedback for Rev. Oak's sermons from the congregations. Questionnaires will be distributed if necessary. He will also listen to Rev. Oak's sermons that are found on line or that are available through CDs. He will analyze Rev. Oak's sermons based on his dogmatic theology, from the point of Homiletics from the viewpoint of the audience. Through the analyses will be discussed the characteristics of his sermons, the contributions of Rev. Oak's ministry, and the lessons that Korean Protestant churches can learn from him.

In the first chapter, the introduction, the author will discuss how and why Korean Protestant churches and their members are being criticized and explain that the reason for the criticism is non-existence of a true sermon. He will then delineate the obstacles that Korean Protestant churches are facing today and will suggest using the sermons of Rev. Oak to overcome the obstacles.

In the second chapter, Rev. Oak's childhood background and his ministry will be discussed. Through this, the author will show that Rev. Oak is adequate and eligible to be a model example for Korean Protestant churches.

The third chapter will discuss his homiletics and his attitude in preparing for his sermons.

The fourth chapter will include the analyses of Rev. Oak's sermons: his grammatical analysis, his translation based on his biblical theology, the organization of the sermons including intro, use of anecdotes, body, and conclusion. It will also include his facial expressions and gestures while delivering sermons.

The fifth chapter will evaluate Rev. Oak's sermons based on the analyses: the characteristics and contributions of his sermons and the lessons and implications.

The sixth chapter will end with a conclusion.

The Statement of Limitations

Since this dissertation has selected and analyzed the sermons of only one of the prominent preachers in Korea, there is no choice but to reveal the characteristics of Sarang Community Church and the denominational background of Rev. Oak. Rev. Oak is a pastor of Hapdong Korean Presbyterian Church. Therefore, the Conservative Theology and rather solemn and rigid sermonic atmosphere of the Korean traditional Presbyterian churches may be revealed in his sermons.

Also, because Sarang Community Church is located in the center of the wealthiest community, (Seocho, Kangnam), the regional characteristics may be revealed in his sermons and his church.

CHAPTER II

REV. OAK, HAN-HUM'S FAMILY BACKGROUND AND MINISTRY

Rev. Oak, Han-Hum's Family Background

1. Repentance

Rev. Oak, Han-Hum was born to Oak, Yakseul and Lee, Heesoon in Kuje, Kyungnam, in 1938 when oppression and persecution under the ruling Japanese government was at its peak.[17] During this time, the Japanese colonial government heavily persecuted its subjects, intentionally trying to control Korean thinking and culture in an effort to divide the nation and wipe out the Ethos. They also tried to destroy Christianity by forcing Shinto worship.[18]

Yongkyu Park describes the social historical background when Rev. Oak was born. The year 1938 was phenomenal in Korean protestant church history. Pyungyang Soongshil Junior College, Soongshil Junior High, and Soongshil Women's Junior High School were forcefully closed because they were against the Japanese Colonial Rule by not worshiping Shinto. Hyongyong Park, Professor of Pyungyang Seminary, and even Rev. Kichul Ju were arrested by the Japanese Colonial Government for their objection to Shinto worship. Union Congress of Chosun Protestant Churches and YMCA got

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[17] Oak, Han-Hum, *The Passion of Discipleship Training for 40 years* (Seoul: Disciple Making Ministries International, 2008), 16-17.

[18] *The Institute of Korean Church History Studies: A History of Korean Church*, 2 Vols. (Seoul: The Christian Literature Press, 2003), 147-158.

forcefully dismissed and finally that year Korean Protestant churches decided to worship Shinto.[19]

Rev. Oak was born in that dark time in Korean history. His Christian faith developed under the influence of a small church with a thatched roof in a small town named 'Three Way Intersection Town" The church was founded by Rev. Oak's grandfather, Oak, Jure who had accepted Christ as his Savior when he had heard the gospel from a missionary. After his salvation, he decided to stop ancestor worship. As a result, the townspeople severely persecuted him.

He had to attend all the church revival camps that his mother went to, and one day when he was in the third grade he heard the gospel, repented of his sin, and accepted Jesus. He describes that experience "It was as if you stay out in the coast for over a certain period of time, you experience a high tide and get to be sunk in the water. It is a blessing of mystery."[20] He began to read the Bible diligently and to serve at his church every day. Elders who were watching his changes would urge him to be a pastor, and in his junior high years, people called him "pastor-to-be".

However, he refused to commit to a fulltime ministry because when he was young, he witnessed how full time ministers were going through poverty and persecution. He felt the call to be a pastor deep inside himself, but tried to ignore the calling. Wanting to be Navy officer, he applied to the Navy Academy. Although the application competition ratio was 70 to 1, everyone expected him to be accepted because he was such a good student. Surprisingly he was rejected because he did not pass the medical examination due to his high blood pressure.

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[19] Park, Yong-Gyu, *Awakening Korean Church* (Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1998), 22.

[20] Ibid.

Oak, Han-Hum wanted to retry the next year, but it was not easy to get permission for another year to study for college admission. Then, the church his grandfather founded gave him a wonderful offer—a room and financial support while he studied for his college entrance examination in exchange for his commitment to preach on Sunday Worship Service and lead the Sunday School. Oak excitedly accepted the offer and began his life as a pastor.[21] It started with his own plan for success, but it was God's providence to train him to be a pastor.

After failing the entrance exam a second time, at the age of 21, Oak, Han-Hum committed himself to follow God's calling on his life to be a pastor and went to Korea Seminary in Pusan with a full scholarship. While there, he resolved in himself to study at a non-Christian school and to integrate his studies there with Christianity. However, before he could implement his plan, he was called to serve the army due to the military Coupd'etat on May 16th. While in the military he got admitted to Sungkyunkwan University. There, he majored in English Literature. He fell ill because of the fatigue and stress of going both to school and serving in the army. [22] While in college, he met a woman named Kim, Youngsoon and later married her. After being discharged from the army, he finished college. Rev. Oak says that the two years of fighting pneumonia helped him to have sympathy for those who are poverty stricken and suffering from distress in life and better proclaim the gospel to them.[23]

2. Preparing for full time ministry

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[21] Ibid. , 21.

[22] Park, Yong-Gyu, *Awakening Korean Church*, 27.

[23] Ibid.

After finishing college, Oak went to Chongshin Seminary during a time when Chongshin was at its peak academically. At that time great scholars such as Dr. Hyongyong Park, who was the ideological forebearer and founder of Korean protestant churches; Rev. Yoonsun Park, who was widely known as a representative of Korean biblical theology; Missionary Habe Kahn, who is now a professor at Westminster Seminary; Dr. Euwon Choi; and Dr. Shinhong Myung, who was both a passionate and well-read teacher at the seminary—all of these men were present at the seminary while Oak was attending. Among them, Oak was especially favored by Euhwan Kim and Habe Kahn.[24]

Oak Han-Hum's teachers at the seminary gave him zeal for the Word of God and taught him to use it as the foundation for all his theological studies. They adequately quenched his academic thirst. His teachers' teaching was not just theoretical, but down-to-earth and applicable to everyday human life.[25]

While at the seminary, he served at two different churches. He first served as a youth pastor at Eunpyung Church, where the youth membership increased by 450 from 7-80 in a few months. After serving at Eunpyung Church for two years, he took a position as a pastor for a college ministry. While there, he also witnessed remarkable growth.[26] He started the college group with only one member and the membership increased by 350 with 200 regular attendees within three years.[27]

The driving force of the remarkable revival was his discipleship training. Many

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[24] Ibid. , 30.

[25] Oak, Han-Hum, *The Passion of Discipleship Training for 40 years*, 26.

[26] Ibid. , 32.

[27] Ibid. , 35-41.

college students left local churches to join mission organizations like Navigator. Oak decided to study under what Navigator in order to understand why college students were leaving church. He eventually discovered that the mission organizations were offering young people a vision and taught them small group dynamics and leadership skills. He also felt burdened to disciple and train young people, and began doing so using a new discipleship training program. It proved to be very effective. He saw and experienced an amazing revival.[28]

After experiencing the effectiveness of discipleship training in the ministry sites, he decided to go to the USA to find theological support to back up his ministry.

In August 1975, he went to Calvin Theological Seminary, but failed to find the theological support for his ministry.[29] After finishing his Master's degree in one year at Calvin, he entered the D. Min. program at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia where he also could not find the theological basis he desired for discipleship training.

Then one day he found the book, *Ecclesiology* written by Hans Kung at the school bookstore and there found the theological basis for discipleship training.[30] After that, he thought the rest of his studies would go easier and was going to stay another year to finish his dissertation in the U. S. He found out, however, that he was required to serve full time at a ministry site for three years to complete his D. Min. degree. He came back to Korea to complete his requirement.[31]

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[28] Ibid. , 36-45.

[29] Ibid. , 47-49.

[30] Ibid. , 50-52.

[31] Ibid.

Rev. Oak's Church Planting and Growth Factors

1. Planting of Sarang Community Church and discipleship training

Rev. Oak Han-Hum started a church named Kangnam Eunpyung Church in 1978 with nine members. The following describes the background. Rev. Oak founded Kangnam Eunpyung Church with nine members in July of 1978. Rev. Oak's vision for the church was to train lay persons to preach the gospel to the young and to communist countries. In September of 1981 the formal title of the church was changed to Sarang Community Church and it was the premier evangelical church that has contributed to the qualitative and quantitative growth of the Korean evangelical movement. Sarang Community Church succeeded in the evangelical spirit of Han, Kyung-jic, Kim, Jun-kon, and Han, Chul-ha of the 1970's evangelical movement, and in 1990s contributed to the expansion of the evangelical movement throughout Korean Protestant churches.[32]

Laymen Training was the most important vision Rev. Oak had when he planted the church. There was no reason to add another church to the many others. He did not want to establish another church full of religious pride and unable to produce born again Christians. He prayed hard and received a vision to train laymen, make them the Disciples of Christ, send them out to the world, and have them shine the light in the darkness.

The tool he used was his discipleship training. Once, a rumor spread that Sarang Community Church was fanatical about discipleship training, and that the people at the church experienced amazing qualitative and quantitative growth.[33]

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[32] Pastoral Care and Theology, "Story of Sarang Community Church's Early Period" Oct. -Dec. 1998, 51-59.

[33] Oak, Han-Hum, *The Passion of Discipleship Training for 40 years*, 60-61.

At first, the growth rate was not as high as other churches in the neighborhood. Other churches focused on having seasonal spiritual revivals as traditional churches did. Spiritual revivals are far from systematic training of the congregation and people may commit themselves to the Lord, but it lasts only for a short period of time. Church members were used to that traditional method and other churches' membership would experience a rapid growth by 1,000 to 3,000.

However, Rev. Oak focused on training laymen with the word of God rather than expecting a short term result. Though it seemed slow, his goal was in making one person at a time a disciple of Christ. Changes started to take place as the lay members changed. The impact was tremendous. Their enthusiasm for preaching the gospel and commitment to church were amazing and systematic.

This resulted in a marvelous growth in numbers; now Sarang Community Church has 45,000 adult members who are well trained in the word of God with 80,000 in membership, including the youth and children. The church is firmly established as an evangelical church and has a big influence on other Korean Protestant churches with evangelism movement.

The following table shows the growth of the church since Rev. Oak founded it.[34] Sunday school has grown from 0 members to around 5,000 children, whereas the college group and the adult group, which started with nine members, showed a remarkable growth of more than 27,000 by the year 2003. Sarang Community Church's founder and senior pastor Oak, Han-Hum retired on the 21st of Dec. , 2003 at the age of 65. On the 14th of January 2004, he became the retired senior pastor, passing the torch to the Rev. Oh,

[34] Park, Yong-Gyu, *Awakening Korean Church* (Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1998), 191; The church officially revealed the statistics of their attendance until 1998, when the church stopped doing so. The author had to contact the church administration office directly to obtain the information.

Junghyun. Under Oak's leadership, the church has amazingly grown to have a membership of about 80,000 with 45,000 adult members and about 28,000 regular attendees.

The overall growth patterns of Korean Protestant churches show that they had a rapid growth between 1960s and 1980s, and in the 1990s there showed a decrease in growth or staggering growth at best. The main reason Sarang Community Church could continue to grow steadily was Rev. Oak's enthusiastic discipleship training.[35] The lay leadership who had been trained through the discipleship training had a strong calling for their ministry and did their best to preach the gospel in their community.

They have practiced their faith in their lives by being the light of the world and salt to the earth in their neighborhoods, their workplaces, and schools. In so doing, they have drawn more souls to the church, resulting in an exploding revival.

Since Sarang Community Church was founded in 1978, its adult attendees on Sundays had grown 40. 2% each year until 1985 when they had built their own church sanctuary. For the next 19 years until 2004 when Rev. Oak retired, it had grown an average of 30% each year.[36] Their membership is still growing at a similar rate. This is the fruit of having well trained lay leadership leading the church. At the beginning stages of the discipleship training, the growth was slow, but with the hard work of a well trained congregation, the church experienced astonishing growth.

2. Discipleship training and ministry training

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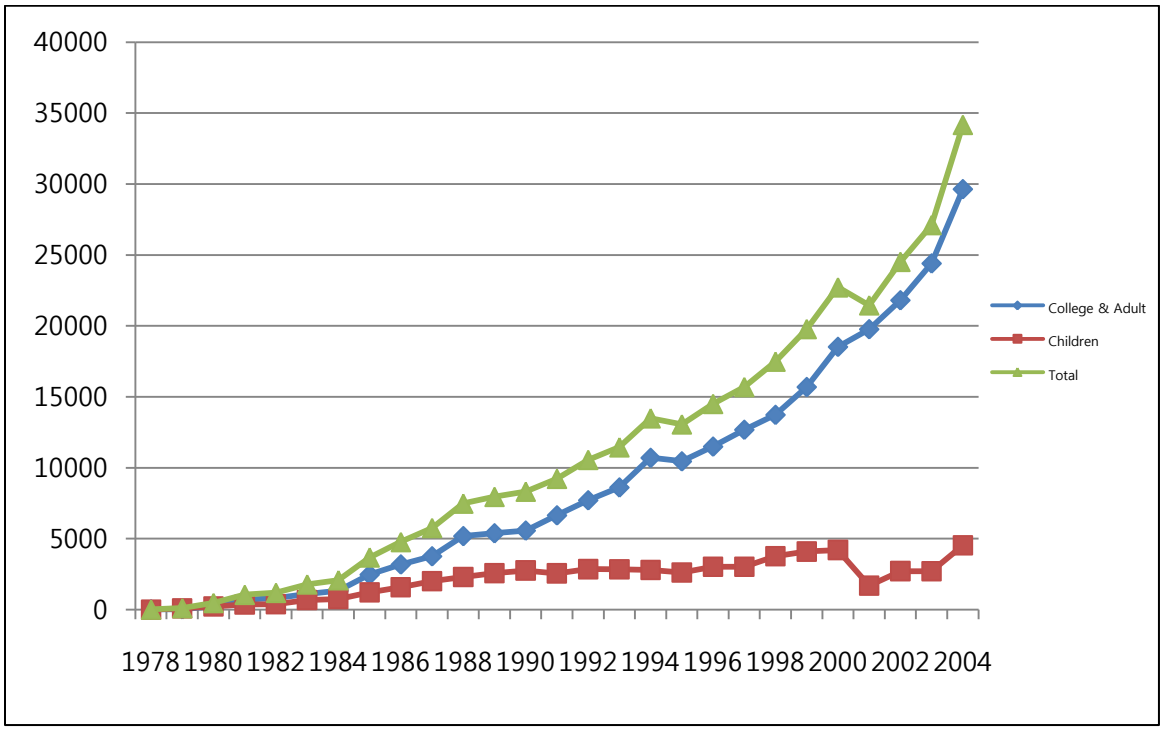
[35] Oak, Han-Hum, *Called to Awaken the Laity* (Seoul: Disciple Making Ministries International, 2001), 320-321.

[36] Ibid. , 323-324.

Rev. Oak Han-Hum has devoted his whole life to his discipleship training ministry. Nonetheless, he did have a tough time at the beginning. One month after he founded his church, he started discipleship training for a group of six women in September 1978. The total membership was about 30, but he wanted to train a smaller number of lay people to be the Disciples of Christ.

[Figure 1] The numerical growth of the church attendees (Blue: College & Adult, Red: Children, **Green**: Total)



After only six months, however, they faced an obstacle. It was hard for the people to gather together for the training and there was lack of motivation for the training when the discipleship training was considered to be only a type of Bible study. He ended up

having only one member left, his wife. [37] Later, however, several well educated women signed up for the training. They were committed to the training. With these women, the training could resume and it has continued ever since. In order to be the leader of small groups at the church, they had to have completed both one year of Discipleship Training and another year of Ministry Training.

Discipleship Training for men started one year later than the women because the number of men in the church was far lower than that of women at the beginning. The men's group started with 12 members, most of who reluctantly agreed to join because of their faithful wives. These men needed basic Christian training rather than Discipleship Training.

Rev. Oak patiently served to lead them to Christ and tried his best to make them change. Many nights he would go home after midnight and could not spare time even to dine out with his children or go on a picnic with his family on the weekends.

With his faithful commitment, six months later those who were obstinate with no faith began to change one by one. The congregation experiencing the joy of salvation and the deep blessing of the word of God began to obey the Word of God in their own lives. The congregations were full of joy and peace and their conversations were full of deep thanks and love. With change in each individual, their homes and workplaces also changed. At the church gatherings or at a Garret, the congregations began to share what they had experienced outside the church during the week. The church was experiencing spiritual health.[38]

Several thousands of men and women have been trained through the discipleship

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[37] Oak, Han-Hum, *Called to Awaken the Laity,* 308.

[38] Ibid. , 311.

training at Rev. Oak's church. They have been serving both inside and outside the church for the kingdom of God as lay leadership.[39]

Rev. Oak then introduced Ministry Training, hoping to have lay leadership who could serve with the church leadership just as Priscilla and Aquila did for Paul. Ministry Training is for those who have completed Discipleship Training and have proved to have the gift of teaching. Those selected are split into men and women groups and during a 32 week program trained to develop the personality and leadership skills required for leaders in the church. After the program is completed, they are given the opportunity to lead a Garret.

Sarang Community Church has been producing about 1,000 trained lay Christians and lay leadership per year through Discipleship Training and Ministry Training. According to their record, 1,271 people have completed Discipleship Training (671 people in Class of 33) and Ministry Training (600 people in Class of 20) in 2008.[40]

At present, Sarang Community Church has a lay leadership of 3,300 with 890 Garrets for men and 1,914 Garrets for women, totaling 2,804 Garrets. In these Garrets, 45,000 adult members receive strict faith training, sharing their lives.[41]

3. CAL discipleship seminar

With a strong demand to author a book introducing his successful discipleship

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[39] Discipleship Training is a 32 week program, starting at the beginning of February and ending at the beginning of December. Students are qualified to receive the training only after they have been a member of Sarang Community Church one year and three years after they have been baptized. Their ages should be between 33 and 50, they must have also attended a Garret for at least 12 months, and they must have gained permission from their spouse. Without the permission from their spouses, it is hard to complete the intensive training. They also need to be ready to serve at the church whenever there is a request.

[40] http://news. godpia. com/sub_con. asp?db_idx=36960&division=A004

[41] http://info. sarang. org/frameindex. asp?url_flag=/mok/01040101_mokyangformation. asp

training ministry, Rev. Oak published a book called 『Awaken the Laity』 in 1984. The book has been a best-seller and has even been translated into several foreign languages. It has been printed 95 times, which is remarkable and reveals the genuine interest in discipleship training by Korean Protestant Church pastors and pastors in other countries.

Because there was a limitation to introduce discipleship training, the church started CAL Discipleship Seminar. 'CAL' stands for "Called to Awaken the Laity". In CAL Discipleship Seminar, trainees (church ministers) stay in a camp for a week. The program includes theory, site visitation, and an internship.[42] In 'theory' trainees learn that discipleship training is a necessary requirement for ministry. They also learn about ecclesiology in addition to an inductive Bible study and developing small group leadership skills.

Through 'site visitation' the church opens their Garrets and small groups to the trainees. They visit and sit in the Garret meetings and experience what is happening in the discipleship training and how the small groups are run. Through the 'Internship' phase, the trainees in CAL Discipleship Seminar become small group leaders and lead a Garret themselves.

The first CAL Discipleship Seminar started on March 3rd, 1986. Although the registration fee was as high as 150,000 won ($100 American currency) and was very intensive training from 8 to 9, it became very popular. Registration would be sold out early and many had to leave without registering for the seminar. The CAL Discipleship Seminar that started with this exploding popularity had its 84th seminar in 2009 and

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[42] Oak, Han-Hum, *The Passion of Discipleship Training for 40 years*, 142-143.

17,870 ministers have gone through the seminar.[43] Rev. Oak has served Korean Protestant Churches by helping them to produce the Disciples of Christ through this seminar.

4. Sermons of Rev. Oak, Han-Hum

Therefore, behind the astonishing growth of Sarang Community Church lies the success of Discipleship Training, Ministry Training, and CAL Discipleship Seminars. However, even more important are the sermons of Rev. Oak. Some claim that his sermons were the most significant contribution to the qualitative and quantitative growth of the Sarang Community Church.[44]

Rev. Oak is recognized as one of the most prominent preachers among Korean Protestant churches. He has been recognized as a model preacher by the Korean Institute of Church History at Yonsei University.[45] He was also recognized as the best preacher with the greatest church growth. Recognized as such, his sermons were analyzed by the July issue of 2004 『Church Growth』.[46] One of his sermons was included and analyzed in the seminar, "Let's discuss the sermons of 16 preachers in Korean Protestant churches",

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[43] The author received the statistics from Disciple Making Ministries International by contacting them directly.

[44] Cho, Jung-ik, *Strategy for Church Growth by studying the causes of Korean church revival* (Seoul: Chongshin University Press, 2007), 124; Kwon, Sungsoo, "An analysis of Rev. Oak's sermons based on Exegetics," *Pastoral Care and Theology.* Nov. 1998, 70.

[45] Yong-Doo Lee, *"The Analysis of the Growth of Korean Mega-Churches and Its Application to Ministry"* (Ph. D. dissertation, Graduate School of Christian Studies Baekseok Uiversity, 2007), 164.

[46] Institute for Church Growth, "The best preacher with outstanding church growth," *Monthly Church Growth*. The five preachers whose sermons were analyzed were Cho, YongKi, Kwak, Sunhee, Lee, Dongwon, Oak, Han-Hum, and Lee, Jaechul in the July issue of 2004, 46-52.

led by The Christian Literature Society of Korea.[47]

The year 2007 was a meaningful year as it was the 100th anniversary since the Pyung-Yang Revival of 1907. In July of that year, all denominations of Korean Protestant churches gathered together at the Seoul World Cup Stadium to hold "The 100th Anniversary festival of Pyung-Yang Revival". Rev. Oak, representing all the pastors from the different denominations, delivered the sermon. With his 23-minute message, all the 100,000 congregations that were there were overwhelmed with his message and repented of their sin before God and asked for the Lord's blessings. Most recently, at POIEMA, Rev. Oak was chosen as one of the ten representing preachers in this age and his sermon theology and methodology were studied by other pastors and theologians.[48]

No one can deny that Rev. Oak's sermons are one of the best in Korea. Especially noteworthy and more meaningful is that all these formal evaluations were performed after his retirement in 2003.

Not just the outside the church but inside Sarang Community church, his sermons were appreciated and cherished by the congregation. When they did a short survey for the new members asking what they think the strength of Sarang Community Church is, 53% of the new members picked Rev. Oak's sermons as its strength. It was higher than the Garrets[49] 24%, Discipleship Training 20%, Utilization of the Gifted and systematic Sunday school 3%. [50] This shows that the driving force for the growth of the church was

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[47] Kyungje Yoo et al. , *Let's discuss the sermons of 16 preachers in Korean Protestant churches.* (Seoul: led by The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 2004, 89-105.

[48] Lee, Tae-Hyeong, *The Fearful Glory* (Seoul: POIEMA, 2008), 16-46.

[49] Garret is similar to cluster meetings in Presbyterian churches or cell meetings in cell churches.

[50] Oak, Han-Hum, *Called to Awaken the Laity*, 402. The survey was performed on June 10th and

Rev, Oak's sermons rather than Discipleship Training. His sermons were appreciated by all members including the new members.[51]

When members were asked what made them change churches, 50% answered that their friends or relatives' recommended it and 32% answered that they liked Rev. Oak's sermons.[52]

It could be easily assumed that those who received Rev. Oak's Discipleship Training give a positive evaluation of his sermons, but when one considers the fact that new members—those without any theological background--praise Rev. Oak's sermons as well, it testifies to the true brilliance of Rev. Oak's sermons.

His sermons have been appreciated by both those inside and outside his church. His congregation especially believes that his sermons were the main driving force behind the church's growth. Clearly, the two main growth factors of Sarang Community church were Rev. Oak's enthusiastic discipleship training and his great sermons.

June 14th for 1,264 new members of 1998.

[51] Lee, Tae-Hyeong, *The Fearful Glory*, 25.

[52] Oak, Han-Hum, *Called to Awaken the Laity*, 400.

CHAPTER III

OAK, HAN-HUM'S THEOLOGY ON SERMONS

His Views on Sermons

1. *His Definition of Sermons*

Rev. Oak defines sermons as 'a communication tool to deliver God's message on revelation to today's people'.[53] What he means is that delivering sermons is like serving as God's voice so that people can hear the Word of God. This is similar to what Moses did several thousand years ago. Rev. Oak views the Bible as the Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit. He acknowledges the authority of the Bible, and the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible. Sermons are a means to delivering God's voice to congregations.

Rev. Oak believes that those who preach from the pulpit must have confidence that their messages serve as God's voice to people today. Without this confidence, a pastor's sermons are without power to change souls.[54] Therefore, those who preach sermons always need to have a close relationship with God, to listen to Him, and to meditate and study His Word.[55]

2. *Sermon delivery is the most important duty of pastors*

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[53] Lee, Tae-Hyeong, 20.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid. , 17-20.

Rev. Oak believes that sermon delivery should be the top priority for a pastor. He contends that sermons lay a foundation for and conclude all other ministries. That is, he does not acknowledge any ministry that is void of sermons. Therefore, Discipleship Training, which became his trademark, actually began with sermons. Professor Jung, Inkyo evaluated Rev. Oak's sermons as the most important factor for the explosive growth of Sarang Community Church among all other factors, including Discipleship Training, New Life Festival, and Training for New coming families.[56]

Knowing the close relationship between sermons and discipleship training, Rev. Oak's "Discipleship Training Awakening Laity" came from his sermons. Puritan preacher William Perkins also taught that sermon delivery is a pastor's most important duty saying that "It would be totally wrong for a pastor to think that he has done his duties because he shows charity and spreads peace among his neighborhood. If he does not deliver the word of God, he has not done anything. If a pastor is not good at preaching the word of God, he is not good at anything."[57] Arthur Hildersham also emphasized the significance of sermons saying that "Sermon delivery is the most precious calling among all the callings from Christ.[58]

3. Sermons are delivered through personalities.

Rev. Oak maintains that it is not all about sermons. The preacher must study the meaning of the Bible verses, write his sermon messages, and deliver them to the

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[56] Jung, In-gyo, "Evaluation of Rev. Oak's Sermons", *Church and its Growth*. Vol. 187 (July, 2004): 125-126.

[57] Youngho Park, *Puritan Faith.* (Seoul: Christian Literature Crusade, 1993), 146.

[58] Peter Lewis, *Puritan Ministry and Sermons.* Translated by Changwon Seo (Seoul: Puritan Faith Press, 1991), 61-62.

congregation, using good communication principles. More importantly, a preacher must live according to the Word of God and deliver the truth out of a life that is honorable and blameless.[59]

He says that a truly powerful sermon is a message based on the life of a preacher with good, strong character. However excellent the message may be, if there is a big gap between the message and the life of the deliverer, the message cannot be powerful. Only a message applied and practiced in the life of the preacher can change the hearts of a congregation. The great American preacher Phillips Brooks (1835-1893) says "Preaching is the truth conveyed through good character".[60]

In preparing for a sermon, a preacher should meditate on the word of God and apply what he has learned to his own life. Only then he can proclaim a powerful living message. Ezra the scribe is an excellent example of a servant used by God to ignite a great awakening among the people because he lived by the Word of God.

Ezra 7:10 says "For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel. Ezra did not try to rebuild the temple or build the wall in order to change the Israelites. What he did was devote himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord and taught those decrees and laws in Israel. When the Law of God was established in Ezra's character and the word was proclaimed, the hardened and corrupted nation of Israel repented, weeping bitterly, and changed. Therefore, a preacher should do his best to apply the Word of God to his life.

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[59] Lee, Tae-Hyeong, *The Fearful Glory*, 36-39.

[60] Ibid.

4. A preacher should pursue a righteous sermon rather than an eloquent sermon

Rev. Oak claims that a righteous sermon could be the answer to the confusion in this age. Sermon delivery is a church's inherent duty and means for meeting the needs of this world. Thus, a preacher needs to believe in giving a righteous sermon rather than an eloquent sermon. Rev. Oak admits that the more experienced he is in preaching at the pulpit, the greater his desire is to preach a well-developed sermon that appeals to many people. Many other preachers would agree and say that they would like to hear from the audience that their sermons are good.

However, Rev. Oak claims that getting a compliment about the sermon from the audience is one matter and preaching the truth is another. It could be a moving sermon if the congregation likes the sermon, but it may not be a sermon pleasing to God.[61] Second Timothy 4: 4-5 says "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths." As the verses say, people prefer to hear a sermon that suits their own desires because of their sin, and a sermon appealing to the congregation may not necessarily be a righteous sermon.

Rev. Oak says that the desire to produce a good sermon stems from an unconscious desire to please humans rather than God. Because by sermons a preacher delivers the word of God, he should be conscious of God and try to deliver a righteous sermon. Most preachers would like to hear from their audience that the sermon was good that day or they were deeply moved or blessed from the sermon. It is true that a preacher

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[61] Oak, Han-Hum, "Preaching Right and Preaching Well," *The Word Initial Issue.* (Aug, 1992), 21.

is encouraged and refreshed when he hears those kinds of comments. A preacher likes feedback from his audience.

Still, when a preacher becomes overly concerned about the reaction of his audience toward his sermon, he will be conscious of the audience and will strive to deliver a message pleasing to them. Eventually his sermons will be affected. Therefore, pastors should try their best to deliver the Word of God as it is.

5. *Sermons should be apparent to the listeners*

Although Rev. Oak was not conscious of his popularity among the audience, he tried his best to make the Word of God plain to his audience. He devoted himself to preaching the Word of God because he knew that his congregation would spiritually die unless they were fed on the Word of God. To help his audience grasp the key points of his message, Rev. Oak emphasized those points using repetition. He also was careful to deliver the important points in a fresh way each time he preached them. There are three principles Rev. Oak gives for a sermon preached to a congregation.

(1) Incarnation sermon

First, before a preacher delivers a sermon, he must understand where the congregation is.

The holy Jesus left the splendors of heaven and came to earth and humbled himself even to the point of dying on a cross. This is incarnation. A preacher should come down to earth on the level of his congregation. He has to preach at the level of the people. He has

to have a loving heart and try to understand what they are struggling with and what worries them most.[62]

He says that as Jesus came down to earth through incarnation, a preacher should also come down to earth; that is, a preacher should come down to the level of his congregation, attempting to understand their struggles and worries as he prepares his sermon. Only when a preacher does this can he rest assured that the congregation will hear his message.

Rev. Oak pursued incarnate sermon technique."Incarnate sermon" means that the preacher makes it possible for God's voice as it was revealed several thousand years ago audible to congregations today.[63] A sermon needs to be understood, accepted, and deeply rooted in the heart before it can change a person's character. This is what the incarnate sermon technique helps accomplish within a congregation.[64] Rev. Oak put a lot of effort in delivering an incarnate sermon while also devoting himself to the discipleship training ministry.

To the question, "How does one develop an incarnate sermon?" Rev. Oak says, first, a preacher should have compassion for his congregation. If he does not have compassion, his sermons may come across as judgmental and interfering—the type of sermon that the congregation will certainly reject. Having sympathy toward them is the key to the incarnate sermon.

Second, as he prepares his sermon, a preacher should come down to the level of

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[62] Rev. Oak Preaching Seminar sponsored by Pastor Association for Church Revival

[63] *Sermons that move souls, Korean Church Longterm Pastoral Study*, (Seoul: Sorusarang, 1997), 262.

[64] Ibid. , 266-267.

his congregations, listening to them to understand their sufferings and worries. He needs to have an accurate understanding of their problems in order to make the Word of God attractive to them and applicable to their lives.

Third, he contends that a preacher should study his congregation to proclaim the appropriate message for them. To study the people within a given congregation is to deeply study the characters in the Bible. When he studies the characters in the Bible, a pastor can have a better understanding of human nature, basic human needs, and human desires.[65]

Fourth, it is important to break any tradition or any ceremony that interferes with the pastor's ability to connect with the congregation on their level.[66] Since Korean pastors have long lived in a Confucian culture, affected by authoritarianism, many of them have a tendency to approach their congregations with an authoritative mindset. Instead of coming down to their level, reaching out to and connecting with them, Korean pastors often seek to be treated as a superior, mystic figure in the church. They believe that if they are too close to the congregation, they will not be acknowledged as pastor or given pastoral authority. Unless pastors abandon these traditions, they will not preach incarnate sermons.

(2) Sermons should be your own.

As God created us as unique beings, each preacher can deliver his own unique sermon. If we try to imitate a famous preacher with the same gesture and voice tone, we cannot produce the same effect. A preacher needs to find his communication style, one

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[65] Oak, Han-Hum, "Sermon and Testimony," *Monthly Pastoring*. (Seoul: Kyomoonsa, 1984), 84.

[66] *Sermons that move souls, Korean Church Longterm Pastoral Study*, 273-286.

that fits his personality, and develop his unique sermon style from that. Rev. Oak confesses that he was able to find his sermon style and plain sermon language because of the discipleship training.

As a senior pastor at Sarang Community Church, I tried my best to preach a sermon to be easily understood by my congregations. What helped most indeed was the discipleship training. Meeting the church members regularly and sharing the blessing of the Lord in small groups allowed me to understand their language and I could get an idea of how to organize my sermons. When a preacher understands his audience, he can preach a sermon that is audible to the listeners.[67]

The reason he had a strong understanding of his congregation is that he could make several thousands of people feel that his sermon was for each of them. To be a good preacher, a pastor needs to fully understand his audience and find his own style.

(3) A preacher should have joy and hope.

Rev. Oak asks preachers to enjoy their sermons, quoting renowned American preacher, Phillips Brooks (1835-1893).

> Phillips Brooks said "God knows us better than we know ourselves. Thus he never corners us to where we cannot be used. When a preacher thoroughly enjoys his own job, he will succeed in his work. The more you enjoy giving sermons, the better you will preach." … the world cannot yet hear the best sermon ever and there must be someone who will. It may be you. Who wants to preach the best sermon? You should have a dream and say, "I will". Then the Lord will give you the blessing and the privilege.[68]

Rev. Oak says that a preacher should have confidence that the Lord will give him

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[67] Oak, Han-Hum, *The Passion of Discipleship Training for 40 years*, 186-187.

[68] Rev. Oak Preaching Seminar sponsored by Pastor Association for Church Revival

the best sermon. When he has this confidence, he will be filled with joy. To be filled with joy, the preacher should also listen to the voice of God through the Word of God. A preacher should first find the joy of listening to God's voice. Without the joy, you cannot expect to give a miraculous sermon.[69] Rev. Oak contends that when a preacher has the joy of listening to God's voice, he can preach a righteous sermon and further he can convey the joy to his congregations.

He explains that a pastor needs to maintain the joy of listening to God's voice in order to preach an audible sermon. He also admits that sometimes he would preach without the joy and whenever he did so, he felt as if the congregation had not understood his message as he intended. He always tried his best not to lose the joy of listening to the Word of God.

(4) A preacher should devote himself to his sermon

Rev. Oak contends that a preacher should accurately interpret and apply the Word of God to give a righteous sermon. A preacher should invest much time and effort to correctly interpreting the text in the Bible. Rev. Oak himself practiced this standard throughout his career.

For Sunday Worship Service I usually preach for about 40 minutes. You cannot preach just as you share your own devotional of the day based on the text. To make the text alive with the life of the Word, you should do your best. At the beginning of my ministry, I used to preach with a sermon note. After we had several thousands of membership, I began to have prepared my complete scripts. Regardless of the number,

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[69] Oak, Han-Hum, "A righteous sermon and a good sermon", 21-22.

however, I devoted my life to my sermons.[70]

Sermons that revive the soul are not produced with moderate preparation. A preacher must give his best effort to preparing each of his sermons. Whenever he goes into his study to prepare for his sermons, Rev. Oak felt a deeply burden—he wanted his congregation to accept the words of God and allow it to change their lives that they might have a relationship with Him.[71]

While meditation on the Bible, Rev. Oak would gain insight into the Bible text he chose for his sermon. Then, he would take that insight, combine with his intuition on the practical needs of his congregation, develop and organize his sermon based on this information, and complete the final script on Friday and Saturday.[72] He says that because a sermon must contain teaching, witnessing, and healing, preaching after only moderate preparation would be irresponsible and even a risky venture. He says a preacher should thoroughly prepare for his sermon. Rev, Oak himself spent dozens of hours preparing his sermon: "A man like me who needs 10-20 hours to prepare a sermon cannot be boastful of himself."[73]

This reveals how much effort Rev. Oak was willing to put into preparing his sermons. He described his preparation as 'a woman giving birth'. This was his attitude toward preparing his sermons. In other words, preaching was his cross in his life.

(5) There must be balance in a sermon

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[70] Lee, Tae-Hyeong, *The Fearful Glory*, 40.

[71] Dukhwan Cho, "A comparison study of expository preachers in Korean churches" (M. Div. Thesis, Methodist Theological Seminary, 2003), 33-34.

[72] Jong Soon, Park, *Light the sermons in Korean churches*, 268.

[73] Oak, Han-Hum, *There Is a Meaning In Adversity.* (Seoul: Dooranno Press, 1993), 105.

Another reason preaching is a cross for Rev. Oak is that it is not easy to find balance in a sermon. His principle is that he should preach anything that will be helpful to his congregation. In Acts 20:20, Apostle Paul said, "You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house…" A preacher likewise must have Paul's attitude. As one who delivers the Word of God to congregations, a preacher must not convey his own words but whatever God has taught him, whether people want to hear it or not. Today, far too many preachers try to avoid teaching things that would make church members feel uncomfortable. Rev. Oak says,

> One of the most serious problems we have on the pulpit of Korean churches is unbalance. Congregations are picky with the Word of God, and the preacher is to blame. For today's Christians to live right with God, they need to listen to even what they don't want to hear. However, those are not clearly proclaimed from the pulpits of Korean churches. Preachers are also human beings and they don't want to impose on the people who have been troubled all week in their workplaces or schools. They don't want to add more burdens on their heart. When the preacher chooses to deliver messages that would comfort the audience, his sermon loses balance.[74]

When a preacher loses balance, he may emphasize grace, for instance, but neglect the significant of obeying the Law. He may stress the importance of faith but minimize the importance of obedience. He may emphasize success and the value of positive thinking, but result in a fantasy-like message rather than one grounded in reality. Rev. Oak warns that these sermons will cause harm to congregations in the long run. A preacher should always ask himself if his sermon is well balanced.

(6) Preaching is the most honorable and joyful service

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[74] Lee, Tae-Hyeong, *The Fearful Glory*, 29.

One of the greatest preachers of the twentieth century, Martyn D. Lloyd-Jones said, "To me being able to preach is the most supreme, greatest and honorable calling a man can get."[75] Rev. Oak too agrees that preaching is the most honorable calling for a human being. He insists that a preacher be proud of his calling and maintain a sense of duty to fulfilling that calling. In his sermon collection titled 'There is a meaning in adversity,' Rev. Oak says,

> Preaching is the most honorable calling among all the callings humans can have because a preacher as a sinner gets to deliver the honorable Word of God for the Lord. Too much the honor, a preacher is destined to have an inexpressible burden for his duty. Frankly speaking, I have always had a kind of complex about my own sermons. I have never talked to anyone about my preaching.[76]

On the one hand, Rev. Oak is thrilled to have been called to be a preacher because it is the most honorable calling human beings can have. On the other hand, because of his high calling, he has also had a greater burden to carry. Because of the tremendous responsibility that comes with preaching the Word of God, Rev. Oak even considers his sermons to be his cross in life. Why does he feel such a burden and so much pressure? Is it because he feels his knowledge in theology and the Word of God is limited? Never! It is because Rev. Oak agrees with John R. W. Stott, who said, "A preacher is a bridge between God and man."[77] The fact that he feels so much pressure shows his honor and responsibility in his privilege to preach the Word of God. It is natural for a preacher to feel such a burden.

However, it is a problem when many preachers today do not carry this burden.

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[75] Martyn D. Lloy-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 9.

[76] Oak, Han-Hum, *There is a meaning in adversity*, 35.

[77] John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait* (Grand Rapid: Eerdmans, 1961), 24-25.

They prepare their sermons with no difficulty and give a message with no sense of responsibility. They merely feel as if they have given a great speech. These types of preachers should learn the mindset and attitude of Rev. Oak.

Although Rev. Oak confesses he feels burdened, he also shares his joy and happiness in preaching.[78] He says that even if someone threw a stone at him for preaching, he would not avoid it because of his joy of preaching the Word of God. He sees his duty to deliver the Word of God as a responsibility so great that if he did not preach, the pain of not fulfilling his calling would hurt more than any physical stone would.[79] There is an indescribable joy and happiness in preaching the Word of God.

(7) Only Jesus Christ should be revealed

Rev. Oak asserts that after all the sermons and ministries in which a preacher involves himself only Jesus Christ should remain and emphasizes that a preacher must never assume Jesus' place and take His glory. Like Baptist John, who lived as the voice of one calling in the desert, each preacher must reveal only Jesus Christ through their ministry and sermons.[80]

Rev. Oak retired in 2003 at the age of 65, passing the torch to Rev. Oh, Junghyun. The average age of retirement for Korean Protestant church pastors is 70. This means that Rev. Oak chose an early retirement when he could have served as senior pastor for another five years or more. This was not an easy decision. Sarang Community Church is the church he had planted 25 years before and had served with all his heart during those

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[78] Oak, Han-Hum, "A righteous sermon and a good sermon", 21-23.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Lee, Tae-Hyeong, *The Fearful Glory*, 42-46.

years. Under Oak's leadership, the church had grown amazingly to 80,000 members, and it was a very healthy church. None of the church members wanted him to retire early.

The reason he made this decision was that he wanted to glorify only Jesus Christ in his ministry. At that time in Korea, passing on a mega-church's leadership was a critical social issue. A few senior pastors who had planted churches themselves and had seen them grow to become mega-churches ended up passing on their positions to their own sons. However powerful their ministries were and however touching their sermons were, at the end of their destination, their own desires and greed were still present. Preachers should live a life witnessing only Jesus Christ, like John the Baptist did as the voice of one calling in the desert. During this time, Korean churches in general were being harshly criticized in their society. In the social background, Rev. Oak made the bold decision to retire early in the hope that only Jesus would be magnified in his ministry.

Looking back at his preaching ministry, Rev. Oak did not want the preacher himself to be remembered, but only Jesus; he wanted the congregations to resemble Christ through his sermons.[81] He glorified God as he saw the church members live Christ-like lives.[82] He maintained that a preacher should reveal only Jesus through his sermon ministry.

His Views on Preachers

Rev. Oak has a clear view of his role as a preacher. He is an honorable agent who proclaims the Word of God. Yet he is still a human being with weaknesses and thus in

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[81] Ibid. , 351.

[82] Ibid. , 44-45.

need of the grace of God. Finally, the Holy Spirit should be present in his life.

1. *An agent of God*

Among all the ministries of a pastor “"feeding the sheep,” (i. e. providing spiritual food for congregations) must be the first priority. A pastor preaches the gospel and provides the bread of life through sermons. Therefore, his first priority should be delivering the Word of God to the congregation.[83]

As an agent of the Word of God, rather than feeling superior to the congregation, he should preach the Word of God to their level, putting himself in their shoes.[84] Rev. Oak considers humbleness, integrity, and godliness as required elements in a preacher.

2. *A person with weaknesses*

In the past Korean pastors had a tendency to hide their personal lives believing that doing so will weaken their authority over congregations. Rev. Oak says that a preacher opening his weaknesses and being vulnerable will have a better influence on his congregations.[85]

He continues by saying that when a preacher’s life is consistent with his character, his sermon will better influence the congregation. The character of a preacher is a key to whether or not his preaching will be well-received; thus, he always should strive to have

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[83] *Duranno encyclopedia on pastoral ministry* vol. 13: Ecclesiology and Pastoral Theology (Seoul: Duranno Press, 1997), 124.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Rev. Oak Preaching Seminar sponsored by Pastor Association for Church Revival, Saronam Church, May 30, 2005

a mature character.[86]

3. A person who needs the grace of God

Rev. Oak says that unless the preacher himself has cried with the joy of forgiveness and salvation, he cannot have any impact on his congregation.[87] Since he experienced God's grace, his bitterness was removed, and his wounds and low self-esteem were healed.[88] He emphasizes that in order to be a preacher who knows the grace of God, one needs to kneel down at the feet of the Lord, cry, and pray.

4. A person led by the Holy Spirit

Powerful preachers used by God have all experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit. Whenever they have gone up the pulpit, they experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit so they could give an enthusiastic sermon.

When Rev. Oak read Charles Spurgeon's words, "He who resides in the Holy Spirit, who calls him to preach the Word of God, cannot but help preaching sermons, and no one can stop him from preaching," he realized that up to that point he had focused on logical sermons rather than being led by the Holy Spirit.[89] He said that from then on he asked the Holy Spirit to be present in him as he prepares a sermon. He confesses that as a

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[86] Lee, Tae-Hyeong, *The Fearful Glory*, 37-39.

[87] Rev. Oak Preaching Seminar sponsored by the Pastor Association for Church Revival, Saronam Church, May 30, 2005.

[88] Oak, Han-Hum, *Calling Never Loss of Heart a Path* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2003), 128-139."Calling Never Loss of Heart A Path?" This doesn't make sense in English.

[89] Oak, Han-Hum, "Revive the Joy and Power of Salvation," *His Word.* (Seoul: Duranno Press, 1996), 128.

preacher he is most interested in the presence of the Holy Spirit.[90]

His Preparation for Sermons

Rev. Oak prepares his sermon in five phases. In the first phase, he selects a text and reads it over and over again. When he prepares for expository preaching, he selects a text according to the order of the Bible. When he prepares for topical or narrative preaching, he selects a text associated with the social-historical context, being led by the Holy Spirit as he selects it. When he reads the text, he first reads the whole text and then reads each word and phrase in detail.

In the second phase, he analyzes the text. He refers to the biblical text in its original languages, Hebrew and/or Greek, and sets out to understand the meaning and structure of the sentences in order to find the points in the text. Then, he compares and contrasts passages contradictory to the one he is studying. He would study the socio-historical, geographical context and the passage's author.[91]

In the third phase, he listens to sermons on the same text by respectable preachers such as John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon, Alexander Mclaren, and some Korean preachers to study what they found and emphasized from the text. Then he considers how he would organize his sermon based on the same text.

In the fourth phase, he develops and organizes the message(s) to learn from the text and tries to obtain his own insight. In other words, he organizes his sermon based on the insights he gained after his analysis.

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[90] *Duranno encyclopedia on pastoral ministry*, op. cit. , 127.

[91] Kwon, Sungsoo, "An Analysis of Oak, Han-Hum's Sermons Based on Biblical Hermeneutics, 87-88.

In the fifth phase, he revises his message by putting himself in the shoes of the congregation. He listens to his own sermon in their shoes.[92] To Rev. Oak, preaching is a communication tool, with which he delivers the Word of God, revealed long ago, to today's audience. Thus, sermons should be tailored to the congregation, and that totally depends on the preacher.[93]

After he is done preparing, he always listens to his own sermon, taking on the viewpoints of various members of the congregation: businessmen, stay-at-home moms, CEOs, and politicians.[94] Throughout these phases, he revises his sermon scripts countless times.

Sarang Community Church members call his sermons apparent to the congregation or plain to the audience."He often gets positive feedback from his congregation, such as, "Pastor, how did you know our situation so well when you preached that sermon?" His church members say that Rev. Oak always delves into the essence of the Bible and doesn't make it boring but easy to understand.[95] He exerts all his effort to make his congregation understand his sermon.

While preparing his sermon, he revises his sermon scripts based on the viewpoints of the congregations. He often revises his sermon scripts more than 10 times.[96] In July 2007, he delivered a 23-minute sermon for the 100th Anniversary festival of Pyung-Yang Revival held at the Seoul World Cup Stadium, representing all Korean Protestant church

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[92] Ibid. , 70.

[93] Lee, Tae-Hyeong, *The Fearful Glory*, 24-25.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid. , 25-26.

[96] Ibid. , 26.

pastors. The number in attendance was more than 100,000; about seven million people watched the program on TV. On that meaningful day, he preached on Revelation 3:1-6 about the church in Sardis. He had to revise this particular sermon twenty times.

For his sermon during the Sunday Worship Service, Rev. Oak spends the whole week preparing. For four days he writes his sermon script, gets feedback, and then revises it over a couple of days. It is like he is going through labor to produce one sermon. As a result of his love and effort, he produces a sermon that is audible and that changes the congregation.

Most preachers today take preparing sermons too lightly. They just use a few sermon collections and commentaries to produce quick scripts. Some even go on the internet, search for a sermon script, and copy the work so they can preach it themselves. In this age, Rev. Oak's attitude in preparing his sermons should be a modeling example among preachers.

CHAPTER IV

AN ANALYSIS OF REV. OAK HAN-HUM'S SERMONS

Change in His Sermons

1. Change in preaching style

Rev. Oak, who founded Sarang Community Church in 1978, has preached from the pulpit for about 25 years until he retired in 2003. Except for the 15 months when he took a medical break due to illness, Rev. Oak preached nonstop during those 25 years. His preaching styles have changed three times.

The first phase was the first six years before the Sarang Community Church had been built. At that time, most of the church members were new believers and the atmosphere was very welcoming. Since Rev. Oak's sermons were targeted to the new believers, the sermons were relatively plain to his audience and he tried to build rapport with the congregation, not confining himself to the traditional format. He would often bring only a short list on an index card and freely preached a sermon impromptu. Because he had not prepared a complete sermon and would preach unrehearsed, he would sometimes use incorrect terminology and would often repeat the same content he had just covered. His sentences were often less fluent and there was an inconsistency in the length of the sermons.

The second phase was the five to six years after they moved into the newly built

sanctuary. As soon as the church sanctuary was completed, the number of regularly attendees rose to over 2,000 within a year. From then on, Rev. Oak's sermons began to have a certain format. As the number in the congregation increased, they had to increase the number of Sunday Worship Services to six services. Because of several worship services on Sundays, Rev. Oak's schedule on Sundays was extremely busy. Since he had to repeat the same messages to so many people, he had to have a well-prepared message beforehand. He began to give a message with a sermon script in 1980.[97]

As he began to prepare his sermon notes, he spent more time on the sermon preparation, his vocabulary usage and terminology developed greatly, and his sentences were more fluent. The length of his sermons was shorter, while the length of his preparation time was three to four times longer. On the second phase, as sermon preparation became his habit, Rev. Oak himself grew in many ways. Yet, he also felt he lost a lot of liberty and sometimes felt frustrated because it was not easy to build rapport with the congregation.[98]

Sometimes the church members would complain that his sermons were less natural and less impressive than the early years. He would try to use appropriate anecdotes or confess his own thought on the Biblical text to build more rapport with the congregation. On the first and second phases, he gave topical sermons. His topical sermons were firmly based on the Bible as in expository preaching.

The third phase is from 1991 to 2003 when Rev. Oak retired. At that phase, he did expository preaching using one book of the Bible. His busy schedule and his heavy work load caused him to fall ill in 1991. Indeed he had not slept more than four hours per day

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[97] Oak, Han-Hum, *The Passion of Discipleship Training for 40 years*, 181-184.

[98] Ibid.

for over 20 years with his busy ministry schedule. He had to spend one and a half years abroad fighting his ailment. After he returned home, he started expository preaching based on the book of Romans. While preaching on Romans, he was healed spiritually and physically, regaining his health. Since then, he has continued to do expository preaching.[99] Although he adopted expository preaching, he still tries to make it easy for the congregation to understand, trying not to use big words or eloquent phrases or very technical information. His sermons are in conversational style, plain to his audience, and moves the heart of the audience, having them go back to the Lord.

2. Change in the content

Rev. Oak often preached on adversity at the beginning of his ministry years. He himself fought illness during his college years and for about four years, from 1992 on, he had to struggle against illness. Because it was right after he had planted the new church, he had to overcome more difficulties. This had a lot to do with his sermons at that time and he also published several books with his sermons on adversity. His sermon book *Every pains have meanings*, which was published in 1983, has been printed 72 times especially. He also wrote *A hand of God treats suffering* (1987) and a collection of his expository sermons on the book of Job, *Whose fault is my suffering* (1991).

After 1990, Discipleship Training was actively performed in the church and his sermons were mainly on the everyday lives of believers as the Disciples of Christ. Based on these sermons, *There is no life of faith without test* (1992), *How are families in Jesus different?* (1992), *How to live in the tough world?* (1993), *The Pride of Christian* (1997),

[99] Ibid. , 213-219.

When we live right, the world will change (1998), *Disciple Training, revival of spirit and a path of renewal* (1999) were published.

From the late 1990s, Korea achieved significant economic advancement. With the incredible burst of affluence for the middle class and high class, churches were affected, both for the better and the worse. Church congregations began to pursue wealth by any means necessary rather than trying to live honest lives as Christians. Thus, Christians began to be the target of much criticism in the Korean society.

At the same time, individualism began to spread among the church members and they began focusing on themselves and their families instead of involving themselves in poverty relief or social welfare problems in the community during a time when a great awareness of and interest in environmental issues rose in the world. Rev. Oak's sermons reflected those social and historical problems, dealt with money, the duty of believers to the country, environmental problems, Christians' involvement in social welfare problems, corruption and dishonesty in the society, etc.

The Principles of Oak's Interpretation of the Bible

A preacher's interpretation of the Bible can be affected by his theological stance, which is why a preacher must have sound theology. Rev. Oak succeeded in the tradition of religious reformation and is on the side of Pietism and Orthodox Theology. Thus he views the Bible as the Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit. He believes in the authority of the Bible as the Word of God, Christo-Centric interpretation, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of the Bible.[100] As a Presbyterian Church pastor, his

[100] Jung, In-gyo, "An Analysis of Five Best Preachers," *Monthly Church Growth* Vol. 133 (July, 2004), 49.

sermons are also influenced by Calvin's theology.[101]

The following are the principles he takes from Calvin.[102]

First, he goes where the Bible goes and stops when the Bible stops.

When Calvin interprets the Bible, he tried to find the original intention of the author. Calvin believed that a preacher delivers the interpreted Word of God as it is, so he should reveal what the Bible says and should keep silent on things that the Bible does not speak about.[103]

Rev. Oak followed this principle and tried not to get carried away or go beyond what the Bible says. For example, when he talked about the book of Job, he warned the congregation about raising questions like how Satan could accuse human beings before the Lord when the angels are presenting themselves before the Lord. He warns that extreme curiosity in the supernatural or mysterious events in the Bible that are not clearly explained maybe dangerous and cause unfaithfulness. So, we should be satisfied with an understanding of what the Bible does address and teaches us.[104]

It is true that many questions arise as we read the Bible. In the Old Testament, many mysterious events take place: Elijah who went up by a whirlwind riding a chariot

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[101] Oak, Han-Hum, *The good news from John(1)* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2002), 381.

[102] When the author says Rev. Oak follows a Calvinistic interpretation of the Bible, it does not mean his theological interpretation. When you read Haddon W. Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* second edition (Grand Rapid: Baker Book House, 2001), 20, Haddon W. Robinson defines expository preaching, "Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, theological, 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 him to his hearers." Haddon W. Robinson classified Bible interpretation methods into four different categories: Historical, Grammatical, Literal, and Theological Interpretation.

[103] David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 33.

[104] Oak, Han-Hum, *A hand of God treats suffering* (Seoul: Duranno, 1990), 32-33.

of fire and horses of fire[105], many mysterious miracles that happened to the Prophet Elisha, and King Saul raising Samuel from the dead through a medium at En-dor are just a few of the many mysterious events in the Bible.[106] If we overinterpret the Bible passages beyond what the Bible says, it may wreak havoc on our faith. Many Christians have abandoned their faith as they were trying to understand foreordained theories.

Rev. Oak says that instead of trying to feed our curiosity, we should humble ourselves before the mysterious truth of the Lord that we human beings cannot solve. It would be less humiliating to admit that one does not know the answers to the questions.[107]

Sometimes preachers are tempted to please the desires of the audience, which stems from pride. This is a dangerous temptation if a preacher surrenders to it. A preacher should always abide by this principle and be honest.

Second, Rev. Oak believes that the Bible needs to be interpreted with the Bible itself. Sanctus Aurelius Augustinus said, "The New Testament is hidden in the Old Testament; The Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament."[108] Because the Bible was written by the Spirit of God, there is unity and progressiveness in the Bible, which explains why the Bible may be interpreted by itself. Calvin followed the principles of

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[105] 2 Kings 2: 11: Then it came about as they were going along and talking, that behold, [there appeared] a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.

[106] 1 Samuel 28: 14: And he said to her, "What is his form?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage.

[107] Oak, Han-Hum, *My salvation that no one can shake* (Seoul: Duranno, 1994), 190-191.

[108] Augustine, *Quaest. in Hept*. 2,73; PL 34,623, quoted in Michael Sharkey, ed. , *international Theological Commission: Text and Documents*, 1969-1985, Vol. 1 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 126.

religious reformers and applied them to the interpretation of the Bible.[109] Calvin would try to understand the whole context of a Bible verse before he interpreted and preached the word.[110] Rev. Oak who was influenced by the religious reformers and Calvin had the same belief. He would often interpret the verses in the Bible using parallel passages that are found in the New Testament or in the Old Testament. For example, he defines unfaithfulness as 'acting as if there was no God', quoting verses from Psalm 53: 1, Romans 1: 21, and Luke 12: 47-48.[111]

Third, he believes in the absolute authority of God and emphasizes the responsibility of human beings. Calvin sees that God's absolute authority is revealed in all areas of human life as well as in church.[112] God is the creator of all things and his absolute authority is not limited in the religious realm, but is revealed in all realms of human life such as academia, culture, economics and politics. Rev. Oak was influenced by Calvinism and believed in God's absolute authority.[113]

Rev. Oak defines Christians as those who admit God's absolute authority and who try to expand God's kingdom by living as the light of the world and the salt to the earth. Rev. Oak urges Christians to be faithful in their duty as believers to glorify God[114] to be

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[109] J. I. Packer, "Sola Scriptura in History and Today" *in God's Inerrant Word*, ed. Jonh Warwick Montgemery (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1974), 43.

[110] Ahn, Myungjun, *Calvin Hermeneutics and the Legacy of Theology.* (Seoul: Christian Literature Crusade, 2009), 36.

[111] Oak, Han-Hum, *1 Explanation of Romans: Fantastic Salvation I achieved* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2002), 90-91.

[112] Abraham Kuyper, *Lecture on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 9-40.

[113] Oak, Han-Hum, *Waiting of God the outside of a door* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2003), 124-125.

[114] Oak, Han-Hum, *How to live in the tough world* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2002), 35.

faithful in their respective occupations, to obey the Word of God, and to act as the light of the world.[115] Therefore, Rev. Oak urges believers to find balance in God's absolute authority and human responsibility.

Fourth, he believes in Christ-centered sermons. Calvin limited himself in the text of the Bible and tried to convey only what the Bible says and believed that the Bible is the word of God. He also believed that God wants his word to be delivered to His church through a preacher's mouth. Thus, on the pulpit, a preacher needs to proclaim the Word of God not as his own thoughts.

For instance, Calvin did not try to prove his own reformation theology to his denomination, but delivered what is in the Bible, not adding or subtracting anything from it. He endeavored to deliver the true meaning of the Biblical text. Calvin mainly preached on the main subject of the Bible--Jesus Christ. [116] Calvin, based on 2 Timothy 3:16, said that the Bible leads us to the core, the belief in Christ.

What is a Biblical sermon? A Biblical sermon is a sermon on the history of salvation, that is, it is a Christ-centered sermon. What is the main subject of the Bible? Both the Old Testament and the New Testament focus on Christ. Calvin preaches on this very message, Christ.[117] His sermons deal with God's redemption, Christ's blessing, and Christians' obedience in life.[118]

Rev. Oak who has been influenced by Calvin put Jesus Christ in the center of his

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[115] Ibid. , 45-67.

[116] Park, Se-Hwan, *the theological and sermon of John Calvin* (Seoul: Jimoondang International Company, 2001), 44.

[117] Shin, Bo-kyoon, *Calvin's God centered theology*. (Suwon: Hapdong Theological Seminary Press, 2005), 21.

[118] T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin: a biography* (Oxford: Lion, 2006), 122.

sermon and proclaims that Jesus only can be the savior, comforter, and problem solver in our lives. He says that a sermon must always be focused on Jesus as He saved us from sin, healed our broken heart and comforted us when we were going through a tough time.[119]

Rev. Oak also emphasized Christ-likeness in his Discipleship Training. Sarang community Church's Discipleship Training program uses three volumes of texts published by Disciple Making Ministries International in 2002. The texts allow the trainees to check if they are practicing Christ-likeness in every area of their life for 32 weeks. Rev. Oak's ministry focused on making each member a disciple of Christ and expanding the kingdom of God, resulting in having 80,000 memberships from people who show Christ-likeness in their lives. His Chris-centered ministry allowed the qualitative and quantitative growth of the church.

Fifth, he believes in social historical interpretation. Calvin interprets the Bible based on the social, historical, and geographical context, trying to find the true intention of the author.[120] Rev. Oak does the same. As he is preaching on 'Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus' based on Romans 1:1-7, he explains its historical background. Rev. Oak preaches that the reason Paul stayed in Corinth was to write the letter of Romans, and he planned many times to come to Rome but had been prevented from doing so. At the age of 50, he was writing the letter to Rome by having it dictated to Tertius.[121] He draws the attention of the congregation by explaining the historical context of the Bible text so that they will open their heart and listen to the message of God.

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[119] Oak, Han-Hum, *Whose fault is my suffering*, 70.

[120] Hans-Joachim Kraus, "Calvin's Exegetical Principle," in *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 31 (1977), 8-18.

[121] Oak, Han-Hum, *1 Explanation of Romans: Fantastic Salvation I achieved*, 10-11.

He also draws the attention of the congregation by explaining the social and geographical context of the Bible. As he is preaching on 'A person who God helps' based on Chronicles 32:1-8, he explains that when Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah, Hezekiah defended Judah using the geographical characteristics of the area. He explains that Hezekiah drove the enemy away by having a large force of men block off the springs and stream that flowed through the land.[122] He effectively preaches how Hezekiah used his human knowledge and trust in God by explaining the social and geographical context of the passage.

Rev. Oak also draws in the attention of the congregation by explaining the life style of the Bible times. For example, as he is preaching on 'Lying down beside every altar on garments taken inpledge' based on Amos 2:8, he explains that at that at one time, people had to make their clothes with their own hands. He also explains that usually people would wear one piece of clothing for all their life and when they needed money, they would take it to pledge.[123] Today's congregation lives a life several thousand years later than the Bible times. It would be impossible for them to understand the Bible without knowing the old lifestyle. Rev. Oak fills the cultural and time gaps by explaining the old lifestyle of the Bible.

Sixth, Rev. Oak believes in grammatical, literal interpretation. Calvin was against allegorical interpretation of the Bible because he believed that allegorical interpretation ignores the literal meaning of the Bible text. Calvin tried to find the original intention of

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[122] Oak, Han-Hum, *A hug*. 93-94.

[123] Oak, Han-Hum, *There is a hope* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2001), 68.

the Bible scriber, emphasizing the literal and grammatical interpretation.[124] However, when Calvin preached sermons, he made it easy for his congregation to understand based on his interpretation instead of using the original text of the Bible. Based on his literal and grammatical interpretation, he would find a simple truth. Finding that simple truth was important to Calvin because he desired that his congregation understand the true intention of the Bible scriber and be able to apply it to their life.[125]

Just like Calvin, Rev. Oak stuck to the literal and grammatical interpretation. He would study a word in a particular Bible verse within its context. For example, when he preached on "if my words remain in you" based on John 15:7, he would explain that the word 'remain' is used 112 times in the New Testament, among which 66 times was used by Apostle John in the book of John, 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John. The word 'remain' has the different meanings of 'staying at one place' 'having a loving relationship', and 'obeying'.[126]

Another example is Romans. Rev. Oak says that the word 'God' is used 153 times in this book and that it systematically teaches the process of salvation. This means that based on the original Greek version of the book the word 'God' is used every 46 words. He claims that the reason Romans uses the name of God so many times is that the plan of salvation came from God's heart. God deeply loves us human beings.[127]

Another example is in the 21 chapter of John. When Jesus asked Peter, "Do you truly love me,?" the first two times Jesus used "Agapas Me" but the third time, he

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[124] John Calvin, *The Deity of Christ and Other Sermons*, trans. Leory Nixon (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1950), 13.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Oak, Han-Hum, *The good news from John(2)* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2002), 111-112.

[127] Oak, Han-Hum, *1 Explanation of Romans: Fantastic Salvation I achieved*. 33.

changed the word using “Phileis Me”. Rev. Oak says that Jesus wanted to give a special meaning to the word “love”. Jesus did not have to ask Peter if Peter loved Jesus with a Godly love or with a human love because the two words, Agapas and Phileis were interchangeably used in the book of John.[128] Rev. Oak tries to reveal the true intention of the Word of God by using literal and grammatical interpretations.

Seventh, he believes that the Holy Spirit gives inspiration to the interpretation of the Bible. The Bible is a product of the Holy Spirit, and the word of God and the Holy Spirit have an intimate relationship that cannot be separated. Thus, the Bible should be interpreted with the help of the Holy Spirit. Calvin saw the role of the Holy Spirit as a requirement in the interpretation of the Bible as the Bible was written through the inspiration of the Spirit of God.[129] Calvin believed that the author of the Bible is God’s Holy Spirit. That belief became his most important theological principle in Bible interpretation.[130]

Rev. Oak adopted Calvin’s standpoint and emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in Bible interpretation. He says that even if we read the Bible one thousand times, we cannot understand the truth unless the Holy Spirit allows us to learn, understand, and remember the meanings.[131]

He says that human beings cannot simply understand the Bible using human knowledge, experiences, or wisdom, but only when the Holy Spirit who is the original

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[128] Oak, Han-Hum, *The good news from John(3)* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2002), 408.

[129] John Calvin, *Institutes of the christian religion* trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia : Westminster Press, 1960), 233.

[130] Ahn, Myungjun, *Calvin’s Hermeneutics and the Lecacy of Theology*, 33.

[131] Oak, Han-Hum, *The good news from John(3)*,151-152.

author of the Bible gives us the understanding can we finally understand the secret things of God.[132]

Rev. Oak says that the Holy Spirit also changes and allows maturity in believers' lives. The Holy Spirit helps believers obey the Word of God and produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their in their lives. The Holy Spirit also helps them understand the meaning of the Bible.[133] Rev. Oak also claims that we need to lead many souls to the Lord by sharing the gospel with the help of the Holy Spirit.[134] To Rev. Oak the Holy Spirit is the sole being that makes it possible for a Christian to lead a Christian life.

Sermons as A Healing Tool

Rev. Oak focused on "healing' between the 1980s and the early 1990s. Korea was going through political chaos as its democracy had not yet been established. In order to regain freedom and democracy, the citizens were rebelling against the military dictatorship that was ruling Korea. Riots and democratic movements against dictatorship took place throughout the country. Many innocent citizens were arrested, confined, and tortured by the military officials. It was of the darkest period in Korean society.

Korea was also economically struggling because it was still a developing country. Many people were poverty striken. It was not easy to lead a Christian life in those circumstances. In addition to the social and economical obstacles, Buddhism, Confucianism, and other superstitions had a deep root in its culture. Rev. Oak often preached to those struggling in the midst of troubles about the meaning of adversity and

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[132] Ibid. , 160.

[133] Oak, Han-Hum, *Pride of Christian* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 1997),132.

[134] Text: 1 Corinthians 2:1~5, Title: The Power of the Holy Spirit and Prayer, Oct. 10, 1999.

tests in the Christian life and how they could overcome them in prayer. He emphasized that believers should look at the work of God rather than focus on trouble itself.[135]

He explains that the reason God allows pain in our lives is so we can find what God's calling for our life is. Knowing this eventually allows us to understand how God has used trouble in our life to help us to lead a life that pleases Him.[136] God uses adversity so that His children may be God -centered and have mature character and learn that no matter the circumstances to trust and rely on Him, praising Him through it all.[137]

When he preaches on adversity, Rev. Oak does not try to separate himself as a preacher from the rest of the congregation. In his sermons, he considers himself merely as a person who has experienced healing in Christ. He sees himself and all pastors as going through and overcoming the adversity, as being born again as a healer to be used to release the brokenhearted.[138]

He also confesses that he is not from a well-educated, wealthy family. By sharing his painful background with his congregation, he allows them to relate to him and to open their ear to what he has to say.

Despite his background, his life was full of hope and happiness because of Jesus.[139] Rev. Oak gained the trust of those who hear his sermons because his sermons are sincere and honest as he seeks to relate to the agony and grief of his congregation.

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[135] Oak, Han-Hum, *A hand of God treats suffering*, 4.

[136] Ibid. , 207.

[137] Isaiah 43:21 "The people I formed myself that they may proclaim my praise."

[138] Ibid. , 70.

[139] Oak, Han-Hum, *Be full with Happiness in empty mind* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2001), 39.

Sermons Focused on God's Kingdom

God's kingdom is not limited to church. God's sovereign reign should influence all areas of a person's life.[140] Rev. Oak emphasizes that God's kingdom should be expanded to outside the church--in the workplaces, in society, in politics, and in the economy.

He claims that we should allow our Christian walk to influence all areas of our lives, not separating Godly work from secular work,[141] but striving to expand the kingdom of God by being the light of the world and the salt to the earth.[142]

Moreover, Rev. Oak preaches that also taking care of our physical environment helps us to expand the kingdom of God.[143] He stresses that by being good stewards of our physical resources and conserving our natural environment, we leave a healthy environment for the next generation to prosper and lead a Christian life.[144]

Sermons on Discipleship

Rev. Oak had a pastoral vision and philosophy that by training the laity and making them Disciples of Christ, the world will be changed. He suggests that the main

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[140] In regards to the kingdom of God, refer to Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the kingdom* tran. H. de Jongste (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962).

[141] Oak, Han-Hum, *How to live in the tough world*, 40.

[142] Ibid. , 49.

[143] Rev. Oak's sermon collections on Christians' calling in preparing for the coming Kingdom of God: Oak, Han-Hum, *Be full with Happiness in empty mind* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2001) and Oak, Han-Hum, *Pride of Christian* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 1997).

[144] Oak, Han-Hum, *Be full with Happiness in empty mind*, 215.

reason this society is in darkness is that Christians are not playing the role they need to play in society.[145]

A true Christian according to him is not just involved in the mission of salvation. He also has a calling to be a mature man in Christ.[146] In Korea, there are estimated to be about 12,000,000 Christians, one fourth of the total population. Korea has shown tremendous growth in its 100-year history of Christianity. However, unless each of those believers renews their passion for God, those numbers do not mean anything. All churches need to be awakened and to repent of their lethargy toward the things of God.

Rev. Oak has devoted himself for 40 years to preaching with the purpose of awakening the laity and training them to be Disciples of Christ that they might be light the world. Awakening the laity is now a requirement not a choice. Korean protestant churches came to realize that having a pastor-centered church—a church where the pastor is idolized—caused the church laity to be weak and ineffective in society.

Rev. Oak foresaw these problems long ago and has focused on discipleship training and sermon delivery since 1978. His paradigm has also had an influence on cell churches and has been popularly adopted among Korean Protestant churches. During the religious reformation, Luther taught that not only ministers have a calling from God but also every believer has a calling. A believer's job may not be just an occupation (amt), earning a living for the family, but as a calling (veruf) for his life. Each of us individuals

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[145] Text: Isaiah 60:1-9, Title: Rise and Shine, Nov. 13, 1994.

[146] The Letter to the Ephesians 4:13~16 "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all [aspects] into Him, who is the head, [even] Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

is called to be a priest and should actively be involved in changing the world.

Revival of churches and social change may take place when each believer first acknowledges his calling as a priest in his workplace or home, and then practices his faith as an obedient disciple, Rev. Oak stresses. In his ministry, he has invited all members to become trained Disciples and invested all his effort building lay leadership that would play significant in leading in the church. Rev. Oak's method is now widely accepted and adopted in Korean Protestant churches.

Open Bible Translation Based on a New Perspective

Inkyo Jung, a professor at Seoul Theological Seminary, evaluates Rev. Oak as the main reason that Sarang Community Church came to be a mega-church with the 8,000 membership it has today. He also evaluates Rev. Oak's sermons as a model for all other Korean Protestant churches.[147] Rev. Oak also stands as an example to other Korean Protestant churches in his ability to retain his conservative theology, and yet remains open-minded to new perspectives and willing to apply them to his interpretation of the Bible.[148]

Jung was correct in his assessment. Rev. Oak believes in staying within the boundaries of evangelical theology and refuses to have a fixed mindset when it comes to Bible interpretation. For example, in his sermon titled 'Christians' philosophy for labor', he says, "We do not need to worry about whether this society is good or evil because the society itself is neither good nor evil. When the men in the society are evil, they make the

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[147] Jung, In-gyo, "An analysis of the best five preachers," 48.

[148] Ibid. , 49.

society evil".[149]

His view that society is neutral is not totally a new interpretation, but hearing this kind of interpretation from the pulpit of the Hapdong denomination, which represents conservative theology, would be rare. Rev. Oak's positive interpretation plays a key role in helping the congregation, who live in a pluralistic society, open their mind. Rev. Oak even preached that in order for Christians to change the world, if they even needed to go to work at an alcohol factory or a beer tasting station, they should do so if that is what is needed.[150]

Rev. Oak offers a new perspective based on his belief that there is no place where the Disciples of Christ cannot go if it glorifies God. This reflects his view of sermons—that it is the responsibility of a preacher to make the Word of God sound new and refreshing. Only those who have been set free could preach this type of message. Rev. Oak certainly proves how significant it is to have sound theology and a new perspective when it comes to Bible interpretation.

Sermons of Reproach Based on the Word of God

Rev. Oak often gives admonishing sermons based on the Word of God to the congregation as his ultimate focus is to preach a righteous sermon rather than one that is pleasing the audience. He message shows the attitude of a prophet who sharply reprimands the lives of the audience with the Word of God instead of the attitude of a priest trying to cover up the sin of the audience. The reason he could pinpoint the sins of the congregation and the sins in society was that he had had an intimate relationship with

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[149] Text: Ecclesiastes 9:10~12, Title: Christians' philosophy on Labor, July 23, 1989.

[150] Ibid.

the church members through the discipleship training programs and could accurately examine their spiritual status.

He would preach this type of sermon to the church leaders who have gone to church for a long time and are inactive in their Christian lives rather than to new believers who are relatively pure in heart and quite active in the church. As Paul commanded the believers at Philippi who were so preoccupied with their own interest that they need to abandon their greediness in order truly to enjoy the wealth on the earth and repent of their sin before the Lord. In the same way, Rev. Oak asks the leaders in the church if, beneath a righteous look and regular church attendance, they have greed and hypocrisy in their heart.[151]

Many Christians who have gone to church for a long time and have settled into a routine actually lose their joy of salvation and assurance of salvation and become bored with it all. Some people take advantage of the church or church members for their own business, honor, or power. This was especially noticeable in Sarang Community Church because it is located in the wealthiest part of the country with many elites. He sharply points out the problems in the society not just in Kangnam area where the church is located—lookism and material-oriented ideology are just a few of the problems.[152]

Rev. Oak urges congregations to regain their dignity as the children of God and to pursue the glory of God, enjoying righteousness, peace, joy, and freedom in the Lord.[153] Since he had an intimate relationship with his congregation, Rev. Oak knew their lives

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[151] Text: Philippians 3:17~21, Title: Warning with Tears, Feb. 1, 2004.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Oak, Han-Hum, *A hand of God treats suffering*. 24.

better than anyone else and had a deep love for them, which the congregation could feel. This may be the reason the congregation experienced healing when they listened to messages from Rev. Oak. His messages would also include the attitude of a priest,[154] strong character and love toward his people.

His reproaching sermons with his genuine love actually moved the heart of many church members and changed their lives. It was possible because Rev. Oak himself first had repented of his sin and found joy and freedom in the Lord before he gave the sermons with love, humility, and character.

Sermons Focused on One Topic

Rev. Oak exposits each verse of the Bible as he gives sermons. Before then, he picks the main idea after meditating on that book of the Bible and its theme. Then, he interprets each verse. Thus, his sermons have coherency, focusing on one topic. In the introduction, he draws the attention of the audience by using anecdotes that are related to the subject of the day. He does this considerately so that the audience does not have a hard time receiving the message for the day. In the body of the sermon, he focuses on one subject so that the audience may easily remember by the end of the sermon what they have heard.

Although he uses different ways of organizing his sermons, he often uses the following style. First, he starts with a story that is related to his message that day, drawn from the text or from somewhere else. In the body, after delineating the whole text, he picks a specific passage or a word to analyze its grammatical meaning, a separate

[154] Kwon, Sungsoo, "An Analysis of Rev. Oak's sermons based on Biblical Hermeneutics," 64-65.

comparing and contrasting text, and an introduction. Sometimes, he uses rhetorical questions to approach the congregation using topics that are more familiar to the congregation. His coherence and persuasive approach to the topic are the strengths of Rev. Oak's sermons. Now the dissertation will look at the organization and the analyses of his sermons using his sermons.

The Organization and Analysis of His Sermons

1. Introduction

As John Ellison illustrated, the introduction is like a main entrance to a building.[155] This emphasizes how important the introduction is in a sermon as it makes the first impression, but it is not the only function of the introduction. Rather, as Adams claims, the introduction draws the attention of the audience to the theme and topic of the message.[156] Rev. Oak knows about these two functions of the introduction better than anyone else, as one can see in his own usage of the introduction.

For example, there is an opera singer named Helena Halbutton in the US. One day when he heard his son telling his friend "My father knows God so much. I am so proud of him!," he cried and repented because he himself was not really proud of having a Godly father. As he starts his message with this anecdote, he wants the congregation to consider how much they know God and whether they are proud of Him.[157] Using this anecdote, he gives a problem to the congregation—losing the privilege as children of God and the joy

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[155] John M. Ellison, *Thy the Preach* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1975), 107.

[156] Jay E. Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* (Grand rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 59.

[157] Ibid. , 136-137.

of salvation.

Rev. Oak spends about 3-5 minutes in the introduction, stating the problem and developing his thesis. Thus he often starts with a question or with an appropriate anecdote, and asks the congregation to consider, "What should I do if that happened to me?"[158]

In the introduction, he draws his audience's attention by using anecdotes that are related to the subject of the day. He does this considerately so that the audience may not have a hard time approaching the topic. In the body of the sermon, he focuses on one subject so that the audience may clearly remember what they have heard at the end of the sermon.[159]

He tries to stick to the function of the introduction: drawing attention and relating to the topic. In order to draw the attention of the audience, he would discuss social issues, health issues, financial issues, and parenting issues. Especially at the Great Awakening Evangelical meetings, held since 1982, Rev. Oak discusses these issues in the introduction of his message so that nonbelievers may have an interest in the Word of God. As fruit of an evangelical sermon, the church has grown to a mega-church with 80,000 members. However, he never delivered sermons for the growth of his church. Rev. Oak just did not want to lose the opportunity for an invited non-believer to hear the gospel before he leaves the church. God loved his passion for a lost soul and greatly blessed him.

First, let us look at how he discussed health issues in his introduction. In the 1990s, health became one of the most discussed topics among Koreans. As people's

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[158] Oak, Han-Hum, *2 Explanation of Romans: My salvation that no one can shake* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2002), 114.

[159] Jung, In-gyo, "An analysis of the best five preachers," 50-51.

living standard advanced, people's interest turned into how to lead a healthy, quality life. Whether a believer or not, all have a common interest in health. When the preacher discusses this common interest in the introduction of his sermon, non-believers, coming to the church for the first time, as well as the congregation listen closely to sermon. Rev. Oak talks about health issues based on his own experience of having suffered from illness himself. He allows the congregation to be in his shoes and feel sympathy toward the sick by highlighting the psychological state of the ill, who fear going to the doctor, feeling ashamed to reveal their body. There he stresses that just as we need to be naked before the doctor in order to be properly treated, we need to be naked before God in order to receive the eternal life we need and to repent of the sin we really do not want to disclose.[160] By bringing up the health issues in the introduction, he progressively draws the attention of the congregation to the point of his sermon—the value of eternal life and our need to repent of our sin and come to Jesus, naked and humbled.

Second, another subject Rev. Oak often uses in his introduction is economic issues or money. People today are most interested in money, and they listen closely when others talk about money. Especially because of the location of the church, most of the congregations at Sarang Community Church are very wealthy. If asked, they would not deny that they like having money and gaining more of it. Knowing the congregation's interest on this topic, he relates it to a story in the Bible.

For example, he introduces a tax collector Matthew as a typical man who is greedy for money. He vividly describes how distressing and upsetting he was to his

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[160] Text: Romans 1:21-32, Title: Rebelling against the Class System, Nov. 1994 New Life Festival.

neighbors and his people. Rev. Oak delineates the sinful life of tax collector Matthew with pictorial language in order to highlight the severity of Matthew's sinfulness so that even those who are not familiar with the Bible are able to reflect upon their own lives through Matthew's life and realize the seriousness of their sinfulness.[161] In the following message, he urges the congregation to change their lives by showing the conversion of Mathew's life.

Third, Rev. Oak often deals with life and death issues in his introductions. As Karl Barth said, church members want to hear sermons about salvation because though people are surrounded with all sorts of problems, ultimately they fear what happens at death. Rev. Oak has the congregation face the essential issues of human beings. For example, he starts the sermon with Rodin's sculpture, the Thinker, in order to lead the congregation to think of the death issue.[162]

Here we can detect his ingenuity as he starts his sermon with the Thinker, acknowledging the negative reaction of people about the hell. To discuss this awkward issue, he discloses the subtitle of the Thinker 'at the Gate of Hell'. Rev. Oak's creativity with this issue shows how much he wrestled with it to find a connection for the congregation before he preached about this important issue in human life.

Rev. Oak refers a variety of issues in the introduction with an object of getting the congregation's attention. Sometimes he would use anecdotes or raise questions for the congregation to consider.

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[161] Text: Mark 2:13-17, Title: Sin must be taken care of, New Life Festival, Oct. 20, 1997.

[162] Text: Revelations 20:11-15, Title: Sentence at the pleasing bar of God, New Life Festival , Oct. 22, 1997.

2.The body of the sermon

(1) Expository preaching

Rev. Oak uses expository preaching, using the Bible as a text. Although many preachers in Korea consider themselves expository preachers, in many cases they are not. They would read the Bible verses, discuss a few things in the text, and then digress to topics that have nothing to do with the text. So what is true expository preaching? Let us look at the viewpoints of representative scholars in this area.

Here is the most used definition of expository preaching by Haddon Robinson.

> Expository Preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, literary, and theological study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers.[163]

Throughout his book, Haddon Robinson lays emphasis on the following four points.

1) Interest in the body text,

2) Emphasis on the Big Idea,

3) Correct interpretation through careful in-depth study

4) Application.

The next is Bryan Chapell's viewpoint. "It expound Scripture by deriving from a specific text main points and sub points that disclose the thought of the author, cover the scope of the passage, and are applied to the lives of the listeners."[164]

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[163] Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development of Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapid: Baker Book House, 2001), 20.

[164] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 129.

In summary, Bryan Chapell emphasizes that for expository preaching

1) The content of the sermon must be strictly controlled by the Bible text,

2) The meaning of the text must be comprehended accurately and thoroughly,

3) This must be reflected in the sermon,

4) This also must be applied in the lives of the congregation.

Sidney Greidanus defines expository preaching as follows:

> Expository Preaching is Bible-centered preaching. That is, it is handling the text in such a way that its real and essential meaning as it existed in the mind of the particular Biblical writer and as it exists in the light of the over-all context of Scripture is made plain and applied to the present-day needs of the hearers.[165]

In short, for Sidney Greidanus, expository preaching is

1) Correctly understand the intention of the text,

2) Have the congregation apply it to their lives today.

Finally, Walter Liefeld suggests five characteristics of a true expository preaching instead of giving a definition.[166]

1) Expository preaching deals with one basic topic.

2) Expository preaching has hermeneutical integrity.

3) Expository preaching has cohesion.

4) Expository preaching has movement and direction.

5) Expository preaching includes application.

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[165] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 11.

[166] Walter L. Liefeld, *New Testament Exposition: from text to sermon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan publishing House, 1984), 13-14.

These are the definitions and characteristics of expository preaching suggested by prominent scholars. Based on these, the author of this dissertation believes characteristics of a true expository preaching should be as follows:

1) In text interpretation,

A sermon in which the text is correctly and thoroughly interpreted and reflected (Robinson, Chapell, Greidanus, Liefeld)

2) In the organization and development of the content

a) A sermon focused on one topic (Liefeld)

b) A sermon strictly controlled by the Bible text (Chapell, Greidanus)

c) A sermon with one big idea (Robinson, Liefeld)

d) A sermon with movement and direction (Liefeld)

3) In application

A sermon properly applied (Robinson, Chapell, Greidanus, Liefeld)

Let's look at it in more detail.

Above all, expository preaching must be based on an accurate and thorough interpretation of the Bible text. It is not expository preaching without the correct and thorough interpretation of the Bible text. Unger says that the standard for expository preaching is not the length of the text, but the method of dealing with the text. [167]

Furthermore, for expository preaching, the original intention of the scriber must

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[167] Merrill F. Unger, *Principle of Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan publishing House, 1955), 33.

be correctly interpreted according to the principles of hermeneutics. It is unfortunate to see that many preachers who call their sermons expository preaching do not really reveal the intention of the scriber in their sermons.

Also, in expository preaching, each word must be 'thoroughly' interpreted and delivered in the sermon. If other parts are omitted, and only a specific part is dealt with as a topic, it is not an expository preaching. Many so-called expository preachers make this mistake, focusing only on one part of a particular passage in the Bible and omit everything else that passage is also discussing.

Next, unless it is for an exceptional case, expository preaching does not deal with several texts in a sermon but focuses on one main text for its content and application. Even when another text is referred to, there must be always a close relevancy to the focal text or helpful to the exposition of the text.[168]

In expository preaching, content and organization must be strictly controlled by the basic text. Many preachers who claim themselves expository preachers only use the Bible text as a means to convey their own thoughts and arguments instead of allowing the text to control those thoughts and arguments.[169] They need to keep it mind, as Robinson's words explains, 'It is not just a simple method but a philosophy'.[170]

In expository preaching, there must be a clear topic that summarizes the entire content of the sermon. A common mistake of today's expository preachers is there is no unity and coherency in the sermon. They read just one verse, explain it, apply it, and then

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[168] For example, Mark 10:31 "many who are first will be last, and the last first" can be more clearly understood with Mathew 20:1-16 'the parable of the workers in the vineyard'.

[169] Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 20.

[170] Ibid.

move on to the next verse and do the same (Running Commentary Preaching). In expository preaching, they must not ramble or be discursive. Especially, as Robinson maintained, having one theme that controls the whole sermon is the crucial part of expository preaching. Robinson adds that an expository sermon must be a bullet, not a buckshot.[171] Liefeld also said that preaching one coherent theme is like 'making a precious necklace by threading each gemstone'.[172]

Expository preaching also needs progressiveness. 'The progressiveness of the content' is associated with development in expository preaching. In expository preaching, a preacher should not just list the content of the text. Instead, there must be a movement and progressiveness in explanation, and application of the text in accordance with the focal topic. Movement and progressiveness are particularly emphasized and required in narrative preaching as it keeps boredom away and helps the sermon to be effectively delivered.

Moreover, there must be an application. Expository preaching not only needs exegesis, but also needs application. Preachers must clearly suggest the lessons and life standards the Bible gives us. Thus, John Stott calls it, 'bridge-building that connects the Bible and the congregation.[173]

What is significant is that the application must not deviate from the purpose and meaning of the text or distort it; the application must naturally flow from the text. [174]

Therefore, in true expository preaching, three things happen. First, the text is

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[171] Ibid. , 33.

[172] Walter L. Liefeld, *New Testament Exposition: from text to sermon*, 14.

[173] John R. W. Stott. *Between two worlds : The art of preaching in the twentieth century* (Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1994), 52.

[174] Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 26-29.

accurately and thoroughly interpreted and reflected in the sermon. Next, in its organization and development, the preaching must focus on one text, which determines the whole sermon; also, the main subject must be clearly revealed, and there should be the progressiveness in the content. Finally, the preaching should extract an appropriate application from the text.

Rev. Oak's sermons meet these definitions of expository preaching. He interprets and refers to each part of the text. Professor Sungsoo Kwon describes his sermons as follows:

> He digs into the text for about 20-25 minutes, to the point of making it even boring. When he explains the context and the content of the text, he tries not to distract the audience's interest by talking about anything interesting. He does not try to please or flatter the audience. He sticks to the text, to the point of making the audience tired. Thus, his image while preaching to the audience is not that of the diplomat, but more likely that of a prophet.[175]

Sungsoo Kwon says Rev. Oak sticks to the text to the point of making the audience tired. That means Rev. Oak thoroughly interprets the text in the Bible and reflects the main subject. There is coherency in his sermon, and the main subject is clearly shown throughout.

YongGyu Park, professor at Chongshin Seminary, has also evaluated his sermons as a new type of expository preaching different from that of the older generation. Rev. Oak refuses to discuss anything abstract and metaphysical, firmly basing his sermons in evangelical theology. Once someone listens to his sermons, he will not want to listen to those of any other preacher. His sermons move the congregation's heart.[176] Park says that

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[175] Kwon, Sungsoo, "An analysis of Rev. Oak's sermons based on Biblical Hermeneutics, 67.

[176] Park, Yong-Gyu, *Awakening Korean Church*, 227.

Rev. Oak's preaching is powerful and persuasive because he strictly sticks to the biblical text, first applying the subject in his own life and then trying to apply it in the lives of the congregation. He has evaluated Oak's sermons as thoroughly expository, firmly based on evangelical faith, captivating the audience, and awakening lazy Christians.[177]

Rev. Oak often reads one verse of the Bible and explains it; then, he will read another verse and explain it.[178] In doing this, he persuasively leads the congregation to the main subject with ease. It is his typical preaching pattern.

As he explains the text, he never deviates from the Bible. He does not blur his message by digressing from his topic when describing the background, as most Korean preachers mistakenly do. When a preacher digresses to tell a personal story or discuss politics, the congregation gets confused and misses the main idea. Rev. Oak tries to deliver straightforwardly to the congregation what the Bible says.

Rev. Oak prefers to organize the body of his sermon in the following way. He first starts with a story that is related to his message of the day, drawn from the text or from somewhere else. He does this helpfully so that the audience may understand the sermon topic without difficulty. Then in the body of his sermon, after reading the whole text, he picks a main passage or a word to analyze its grammatical meaning in detail. He will also compare and contrast two seemingly contradictory passages and introduce the opposite notion.

His sermon on Psalm 7:1-10, titled, "When we are afraid of a person," is a good example. He interprets 'a shiggaion' as 'shout or scream,' and the reason David screams

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[177] Ibid. , 232-258.

[178] Oak, Han-Hum, *2 Explanation of Romans: My salvation that no one can shake*. 137-148.

is because of Cush, a Benjamite. This man named Cush afflicted David dreadfully, and this man is assumed to be King Saul. 'Cush' means 'dark;' this darkness refers not to his skin color but to his dark mentality.[179]

The bottom line of the sermon on Psalm 7 is to take heed to men. The main idea is to depend upon God when we are hurt and stressed out by men. He highlights the idea using the key words, "a shiggaion," "Cush," and "dark." He refers to the main idea, and using a variety of materials, he helps the congregation completely digest this mean idea.

The main idea of his sermon on 1 Corintians 16:13, titled, "Be strong like a man,"[180] is that men need to have a strong and faithful life. Rev. Oak raises a problem by comparing today's feeble, womanized, and even narrow-minded men with muscular, justly, and compassionate men at the time during which 1 Corinthians was written. This way, he has the congregation reflect upon their own lives and make a strong determination to lead a faithful life.

Rev. Oak first grasps the main idea of the text for himself based on complete study and analysis of the text. Then, he uses a variety of approaches to help the congregation digest the content. His coherent focus and persuasive approach are the greatest strengths of his sermons, which all preachers need to practice.

(2) Topical preaching

Rev. Oak does topical preaching if the need arises. When he needs to deal with issues taking place in the society, he selects a text associated with the social-historical context and preaches topically, interpreting the social issue in light of the Bible. He

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[179] Oak, Han-Hum, *A hug*. 40-43.

[180] Sunday Worship Service, Feb. 26, 2003.

spends many hours in prayer before he chooses Bible verses because the Holy Spirit will lead how the text is preached to the congregation.

The topical sermon most representative of Rev. Oak is his "evangelical sermon". Since 1982, he has invited many nonbelievers to Great Awakening Evangelical Meetings every year in October, where they hear the gospel of Jesus Christ preached. Nonbelievers come for three days of events, including worship and praise, testimonies of Christian celebrities, and meals. Through this festival, each year 5,000 to 7,000 nonbelievers repent of their sin and accept Jesus Christ as their savior. This past year (2009), 4,188 nonbelievers attended; 2,022 accepted Christ and became members of Sarang Community Church.[181]

Although the number this past year decreased slightly from two years ago, 2,000 is still a big number, even enough to comprise a new mega-church. It is incredible for so many people to commit their lives to Christ at one event. Rev. Oak gave his excellent topical preaching on evangelism at this festival and led several thousands to Christ.[182]

For the spiritual growth of the congregation, he topically preached several times on "adversity"[183], on "Christians' pride" to remind them of their identity as a Christian,[184] and on "happiness of Christians based on Sermon on the Mount."[185]

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[181] Refer to http://newlife. sarang. org . It is called "New Life Festival." Pastor Kyungwok Kim is in charge of the festival. The organization committee composed of pastors and lay leadership prepares for the festival thoroughly for 10 months.

[182] Oak, Han-Hum, *Evangelistic Preaching* (Seoul: Kyujang Press, 1999). It is a collection of representative sermons of Rev. Oak during New Life Festival from 1982 to 1998. His evangelical preaching is analyzed in detail.

[183] Oak, Han-Hum, *A hand of God treats suffering*. Seoul: Duranno, 1990.

[184] Oak, Han-Hum, *Christian's self-respect*. Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 1997.

[185] Oak, Han-Hum, *Empty mind with full happiness*. Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2001.

(3) Narrative preaching

Rev. Oak sometimes undertakes narrative preaching, such as the miracle of two fishes and five loaves, Jesus walking on the water, and the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector, usually to vividly describe the background of a text. He does not use narrative preaching from the beginning to the end but produces a very effective sermon by combining narrative preaching and expository preaching. By integrating the two different styles, he reduces the formality and boredom in expository preaching.

Narrative Preaching needs to contain a story and the plot.[186] The plot is the organization of the whole sermon or outline. Thus, narrative preaching is usually done in story style with an introduction, development, climax, conflict, resolution, and conclusion. The representative scholar who emphasizes a plot in narrative preaching is Eugene L. Lowry. He pointed out that the old style sermons were organized in roughly three parts under a topic and that the parts were coordinated in some logical form.

He also maintained that a sermon should not be simply edited or be built upon several different materials but should be developed with continuity and movement.[187] Just like in novels and movies, there should be a kind of tension that keeps the audience's interest with turning points and climaxes. Thus, one cannot call it narrative preaching simply because it has a story, but it should have a plot. Anyone who can achieve these

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[186] Eugene L. Lowry, *How to Preach a Parable: Designs for Narrative Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 27-30; Eugene L. Lowry, *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 24.

[187] Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon As Narrative Art Form* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2000), 14-25.

characteristics can preach narratively.[188]

Rev. Oak's sermons always have a plot. Just as in movies or in soap operas, his story develops to the point of climax. Then with the Word of God he provides a catharsis resolving the conflict and presents the conclusion. Rev. Oak's sermons are organized in story-style with an introduction, development, climax, conflict, resolution, and conclusion.

We will briefly analyze another of Rev. Oak's sermons, titled, "He saw your tears." The background of this sermon is in Luke 7:11-17, "Death of a widow's son in a town called Nain." Oak focuses on the widow crying among a large crowd. Focusing on her past and on the reason she is crying in bitterness, he dramatically illuminates her life. He vividly depicts how hopeful she must have been when she was getting married to her husband, how her hope moved to her son after her husband's death, and now that her son was dead, how miserable she must have been in her son's funeral.

When this widow, who was in misery because of her son's death, met Jesus, the dramatic turning point started. When Jesus saw her, his heart went out to her; he told her not to cry. The widow may have been suspicious and full of conflict in her mind. However, all the conflicts were resolved and her joy was maximized when Jesus touched the coffin and had the dead man get up and return to his mother alive. Rev. Oak organized this sermon in story-style with an introduction, development, climax, conflict, resolution, and conclusion.[189] In this narrative preaching, Rev. Oak conveys to the congregation that only Jesus is the comforter and resolver of all their sorrows.

He concludes his sermon emphasizing that Jesus Christ, who consoled the widow

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[188] Ibid.
[189] Oak, Han-Hum, *A hug* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2007), 15-30.

in her sorrow, and resolved her problems, will comfort us and resolve all our problems.[190] This is how he used narrative preaching.

(4) Analysis of the audience

Another important requirement of a preacher to do after understanding the text's meaning and intended point is to analyze the congregation. To analyze the congregation means to understand the audience in order to decide on the content, application, vocabulary, organization, and the purpose of the sermon. A preacher needs to understand the spiritual level, education level, socioeconomic status, worship environment, and the needs and desires of the congregation in order to more effectively deliver his sermons.

Jesus and Paul are good examples of understanding their audiences. Jesus and Paul each preached to different types of people and used different approaches to preach the gospel. Jesus often used birds, agricultural labor, and shepherds in his examples because his audiences usually were made up of Jews who lived in the country. On the other hand, most of the people who Paul met lived in cities under Roman rule. In his examples, he would use a race such as a chariot race or warfare in his examples. Paul also confessed that to the Jews he became like a Jew to win them to Christ and that to those under the law he became like one under the law, so as to win them to Christ (1Corinthians 9: 19-22).

It is very important to understand the audience and preach according to their needs. If the congregation cannot relate to the sermon, the Word of God will not be conveyed to the congregation very well, despite the sermon's truth. For example, if a

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[190] Ibid. , 30.

preacher uses an example of the deluxe lifestyle of high class people while preaching in a countryside church, or preaches on the topic of Noblesse Oblige to blue collar workers, it shows that he does not properly take his audience into account in his sermon. A good preacher needs to always analyze his audience and try to effectively deliver the Word of God to them.

Rev. Oak analyzes his audience well because he has spent so many years with them through discipleship training since he founded his church. He especially emphasizes the incarnate sermon principle, which means preaching to their level, just as the holy Jesus left the splendors of heaven and came to earth and humbled himself even to the point of dying on a cross. He came down to the level of his congregation with a loving heart and tried to completely understand what they were struggling with and what worried them most. He preached the Word of God to their hearts.[191]

Not only before he writes his sermon notes, but after he is done preparing, Rev. Oak analyzes his congregation again and anticipates feedback from them. He listens to his own sermon, taking on the viewpoint of various congregation members: businessmen, stay-at-home moms, CEOs, and politicians. He then revised his sermon notes again before preaching the sermon.[192]

Sarang Community Church members call his sermons ‘apparent or plain to his audience’. He often gets positive feedback from his congregation, such as, “Pastor, how did you know our situation so well when you preached that sermon?”. His church members say that Rev. Oak always delves into the essence of the Bible and doesn’t make

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[191] Lee, Tae-Hyeong, *The Fearful Glory*, 24-25.

[192] Ibid. , 25.

it boring but makes it plain to his audience.[193]

He exerts all his effort to make his sermon understood by his congregation. In July 2007, he delivered a 23-minute sermon for the 100th Anniversary festival of Pyung-Yang Revival held at the Seoul World Cup Stadium, representing all Korean Protestant church pastors. The number in attendance was more than 100,000; about seven million people watched the program on TV. On that meaningful day, he preached on Revelation 3:1-6 about the church in Sardis. The author of this dissertation was present that day, and he still vividly remembers his message.

He said, "The Korean Protestant Church has a lot to boast about from the outside appearance, but the members' low reliability toward their pastors is because of a deeper reason." He asked the congregation to repent of their sin, saying, "The most unpopular religion among the atheists is Christianity and Christians who are hypocrites." When he said, "I am also to blame. I tried to preach faith that believers like to hear and made the church all about talk and no action," his voice trembled with agitation. His prayer after the sermon touched the heart of the people.

"Lord, I am the sinner. I am the one who made the church to be all talk and no action. Lord, please have mercy on me and have the Holy Spirit come down upon us. Cleanse us Korean churches and please save and deliver us from sin." After the sermon, many people called his sermon a great sermon that really made the Word of God attractive to them and applicable to their lives. Rev. Oak admitted that he had had to revise this particular sermon twenty times.[194]

The reason Sarang Community Church members call his sermons '"apparent or

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[193] Ibid. , 25-26.
[194] Ibid. , 27-28.

plain to his audience" is that they know how much their pastor loves them and tries his best to understand them so that he can effectively witness the Word of God.

(5) Application

Ramesh Richard said that at the end of any sermon, the congregation should be able to answer the following three questions:[195]

1) On what subject did the pastor preach?

2) So what needs to be changed in my life?

3) Now how should I apply what I heard today to my life?

Here 2) and 3) are about application, and in his sermon the preacher should answer these two questions: "So?(2)" and "Now how should I?(3)". That is to say, Ramesh emphasizes that an application is an indispensable element in preaching.

David Veerman explains application this way:[196]

> In short, application is to answer to the next two questions: "so what?" and "now what?". The first question means, "Why is this passage important to me?" and the second question means, "Now what should I do with this lesson?".

Jay Adams used the following comparison for application.[197] If you "apply" pressure on a wound, you do so to stop bleeding. If you "apply" paint on a dirty wall, you

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[195] Ramesh Richard. *7 steps explication sermon preparation* Translated by Jung Hyun (Seoul: Publisher Timothy, 1998), 159.

[196] David Veerman, "Sermons: Apply Within," *Leadership* (Spring 1990), 121.

[197] Jay E. Adams, *Truth applied: Application in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1990), 15.

do so to influence the appearance of the wall. So called “applied” science means that a theory changes our everyday lives by applying it in many useful ways. Application means by connecting one with another, harmony takes place and by doing so, the applying object influences the applied object.

Below are summaries of the opinions of the three theologians of “application.”

1) Application is a required element in a sermon (Ramesh Richard).

2) By applying the story, the preacher shows that what is happening in the text is not an event from the past that has nothing to do with us today, but that it is related to us, and God wants us to learn something from it. (Principles of application: Ramesh Richard, David Veerman),

3) Application urges congregations to obey the Lord and decide to live a life that God wants them to live (Jay Adams).

Furthermore, preaching is not just lecturing or writing a prescription, but having unbelievers meet the Lord as their savior, challenging believers to be more mature Christians, and helping the frustrated and brokenhearted to be restored and comforted in the Lord. In other words, in application a preacher needs to explain in detail how to obey the Lord, how to avoid sinful lives, how to repent of sin and commit themselves to the Lord and then needs to challenge and encourage them to change in their homes, in the workplaces, in their churches, in their neighborhood and in society.

When an application should be introduced in a sermon depends on the genre of the text, the content of the message, or the organization of the sermon. Usually in narrative style, the text is interpreted in the beginning, and the application is done at the

end. In discourse style, the text interpretation and the application are done side by side. That is to say, after each point is made or after one spiritual truth is proclaimed, the application follows.

We need to keep in mind that whether application is done in the middle or at the end, there must be unity and coherency to the application. The application should be closely associated with the topic of the sermon or the main message. It should be coherent with the lesson of the text and naturally flow from the lesson. Then the congregation will trust the preacher, accept the message, and make a commitment; as a result, their life will change. If the preacher applies the sermon messages with a specific purpose such as building the church sanctuary or finding an excuse for his own mistakes, congregations will lose trust with their preacher and their life will not change.

Rev. Oak spends about 20-25 minutes on the text and then about 10-15 minutes on the application, when he takes hold of the congregation and has them surrender to the voice of the Lord without any excuse or reservation. He appeals to the audience with the broken heart of a father who sees his child running toward the end of the cliff so that they can turn toward God and obey his Word.

Professor Sungsoo Kwon delineates his excellent appeal and application like the following.

> There is a narrow path where a group of deer go through, and a good hunter is the one who waits on them at the path. Rev. Oak is an expert hunter. He knows so well the narrow path a group of human deer pass through when they try to escape. When the congregation tries to escape from the Word of God, he waits on the path and gets them back and preaches them the Word of God, teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.[198]

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[198] Kwon, Sungsoo, "An analysis of Rev. Oak's sermons based on Biblical Hermeneutics, 74.

Rev. Oak is evaluated as a preacher who waits at the narrow path where congregations try to pass through and escape from the Word of God. Then he gets them back and preaches the Word of God to them.

The Word of God has an amazing power to change congregations. Hebrews 4:12-13 says, "For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight." Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Rev. Oak changes his congregation with the Word of God by effectively using applications in his sermons.

His effective application is only possible because he studies the Word in depth, and he himself tries to live according to the Word of God. As in Ezra 7:10, which says, "For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel," he first devotes himself to the study and observance of the Word of God. Then he applies what he has learned in his own life. If there is an area where he is not observing the Word of God, he tries to repent of his sin and get himself straightened out. Even on the pulpit he shows humility by admitting his own wrongdoings. His application to his own life before he preaches the sermon makes it possible for him to give an effective application to his congregation.[199]

(6) Anecdotes in sermons

A powerful message proves the truth in the text and gives life to the truth by

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[199] Oak, Han-Hum, *2 Explanation of Romans: My salvation that no one can shake*, 171.

application. An appropriate anecdote helps explain the principles in the Bible, making it a story the congregation experiences and then helps them become absorbed in the experience.[200] It allows congregations to understand the Word of God based on their situation. Thus, anecdotes are an indispensible element in good expository preaching because they not only draw and keep the audience's interest, but they also help the audience understand the meaning of the text in-depth.[201]

Also, anecdotes do not just provide intellectual knowledge. They connect the truth in the Word of God with human experiences, through which they help make the Word of God plain to his audience, easy to apply, realistic, and practical.

Rev. Oak's sermons have abundant anecdotes. Sarang Community Church where he pastors is located in the Kangnam area, in the center of Seoul. Among the congregations are famous celebrities and renowned elites in Korean society, and most of the congregation is highly educated. They would have the intellectual ability to understand his sermon even if he did not use anecdotes. He still utilizes anecdotes to make the contents of his message plain to his audience and living and active, enabling the audience to have the motivation and faith to live according to the Word of God.

In Rev. Oak's sermons, he uses three or four anecdotes, which is appropriate. His anecdotes help people understand the truth in the Word of God, apply the truth in their lives, and make the truth realistic and practical. He invests a great deal of hours to come up with appropriate anecdotes to help his congregation understand the Word of God more easily and apply the truth in their lives. Below are a few examples.

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[200] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 210.

[201] Bryan Chapell, *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 67-68.

In his sermon on Deuteronomy 32: 9-14 titled "God treats you like this," he depicts God training his children, using eagles as an anecdote. When eagles build their nest, they usually select one of the tallest trees in the area, and they pick up broken sticks from the ground (and sometimes branches off trees). They naturally take as many sticks as they can find close to the nest, carrying them in their talons. They interweave the sticks and fill in spaces with grass, moss, cornstalks, and other materials. To soften the bottom, the parents line it with their own feathers. Rev. Oak explains that when the baby eagles are ready to fly away, but still would like to stay in the comfort of the nest, the mother eagle lets the sharp sticks poke the baby eagles. Then, these baby eagles reluctantly fly out of the nest and participate in the flying lesson.[202] Here he emphasizes that it is God's will for the congregation to leave their easy, comfortable lives as believers.

He also uses a work of literature or art as an anecdote, especially for his annual New Life Festival. For example, in Dante's Divine Comedy, Hell, there is Rodin's statue, the Thinker, at the gate of hell; Rev. Oak once used it in his anecdote. He called nonbelievers to think of their final destination before they reach the gate of hell as Rodin's Thinker did.[203] He used this anecdote in his sermon for a New Life Festival, asking nonbelievers who have thought of their life on earth to seriously think of their life after death.

Sarang Community Church preaches the gospel to nonbelievers attending the New Life Festival each year. Up to 2009, as many of 9,196 had heard his sermons and

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[202] Oak, Han-Hum, *A Hand of God treats suffering*, 62-63.

[203] Ibid. , 85.

accepted Jesus as their savior.[204] This was possible because his sermons were not boring to nonbelievers and he used appropriate anecdotes. He also used statistics, newspaper articles, poems, or other literature for his anecdotes, helping nonbelievers understand the truth of the Word and apply the truth in their life.

3. Conclusions in sermons

There is a saying: "If the end is good, all is good." This is also important in sermons. Conclusions wrap up all parts of the sermon. In many cases, the last word remains in one's heart for the longest time afterward. If a sermon ends with a good conclusion, it may give the congregation a new commitment; on the other hand, if the conclusion is weak or dull, it may reduce the effect of the sermon.

In the conclusion, the preacher needs to summarize the main ideas in a few sentences so that the audience may be reminded. They should not be longwinded or complicated. If so, the effect will be low. This is why the conclusion needs to be thoroughly prepared. Brian Chapell said, "The summary in the conclusion is not soft like playing a sonata, but it should sound like hammering down a nail".[205] Also in the conclusion, after the short summary, the preacher needs to emphasize his original purpose that he set out to accomplish in the sermon. The purpose of a sermon is to urge change in the congregation. The preacher should end his sermon drastically to call for commitment to change.

Rev. Oak, in his conclusion, summarizes and intensely emphasizes the main idea

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[204] http://newlife. sarang. org/. Refer to the homepage of New Life Festival, which contains the chronological statistics from 1982.

[205] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 316.

so that his congregation can remember his sermon. In his sermon on 2 Chronicles 32:1-8, titled "The one who God helps", Rev. Oak urges the congregation to think who Sennacherib king of Assyria and his forces are to the congregation members themselves and concludes his sermon by emphasizing that the Israelites won the war against the enemy by trusting in the Lord with prayers.[206]

In this sermon, he preached that Hezekiah king of Judah could evade the crisis by taking three actions. First he did his best he could in his position. Second, he firmly trusted in the promise of God and prayed about the crisis. Third, he desperately cried to the Lord in prayers. In conclusion, he emphasizes these three points (summarizing them) and makes sure the congregation does not miss his points.

He sometimes ends his sermon with questions to the congregation. In his sermon on John 1:19-24 titled "Faithful witness John the Baptist",[207] Rev. Oak says that, although John the Baptist was martyred at a young age in mockery of women at the court banquet, his life was glorified with his beautiful sacrifice to the Lord. Rev. Oak asks his congregations "Don't you want to live this kind of life?", thus leading them to commit themselves to the Lord.[208]

4. The length of his sermons

Rev. Oak's sermon in the Sunday Worship Services lasts about 40 minutes. After he introduces his thesis for about five minutes, he thoroughly interprets the Bible. When he explains the context and content of the text, he tries not to distract the audience's

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[206] Oak, Han-Hum, *A hug*, 107-108.

[207] Sunday Worship Service, Sep. 17, 1995.

[208] Oak, Han-Hum, *The good news from John(1)*, 218.

interest by talking about anything interesting. He strictly holds to the intention of the text and tries to convey the message to the congregation. He does not try to please or flatter the audience. He sticks to the text, to the point of making the audience tired. Thus, his image while preaching to the audience is not that of a diplomat, but more likely that of a prophet.

Proclaiming the strong message for the last 15 minutes, he gets full attention from the audience and urges them to commit themselves to the Lord again. He applies what he learns from the text to the lives of the congregation members and appeals to them to live according to the Word of God. His sermon style and the length of his sermon are appropriate.

5. Communication

After the sermon notes are completely prepared, how the sermon itself is delivered to the audience makes a big difference. Communication is divided into two parts: verbal and nonverbal. Verbal communication is associated with sentence writing skills, and nonverbal communication is associated with public speaking.[209]

Concerning verbal communication, one should be easy and simple words and expressions; simple concise sentences; clear, accurate, and concrete expressions; imagination; and so on.

In nonverbal communication, one should ask several questions. What is the most effective way of using speed, volume, tone, length of voice? What kind of posture is best

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[209] For effective communication in sermons, refer to Duine Liftin, *Public Speaking* (2nd. ed.) (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992); Tom Nash, *The Christian Communicator's Handbook* (Victor Books, 1995); Calvin Miller, *The Empowered Communication* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994); Bert Decker & Hershael W. York, *Speaking with Bold Assurance* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001).

when preaching? When preaching, how much eye contact with the audience should he have? How about one's facial expressions and gesture? This thesis will focus on only Rev. Oak's communication styles.

(1) Rev. Oak's language

First, he uses accurate and concrete words.

When one listens to his sermons, in the beginning his stiff facial expression and formal expressions may make some people feel uncomfortable. However, as the sermon progresses, one begins to pay attention to the sermon because the development of the content is logical. In addition, he uses concrete and accurate expressions.

For example, Rev. Oak preached on how Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah, whom Samuel had anointed as judges, did the unthinkable by taking bribes and perverting justice. In this sermon, in order to concretely and accurately explain the Hebrew word for "bribe," he presents seven related words in Hebrew. For those Korean congregations who are not familiar with these Hebrew words, he presents another seven related words to "bribe" in Korean.[210]

When he preached on Nathanael, who is without guile or cunning deceit, he used the Korean standardized dictionary definition: "the use of tricks to deceive someone; deliberate trickery intended to gain an advantage." He also used a comparison with a fisherman (who tries all sorts of methods to entice fish to eat the bait) to help the congregation understand the word. By using concrete and accurate expressions, Rev. Oak helps the congregation understand the Word of God correctly and further keeps their

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[210] Oak, Han-Hum, *There is a hope*, 134.

attention on the sermon.[211]

Second, he uses concise and clear expressions. He also uses concise and simple expressions instead of rhetorical expressions. These characteristics are even more helpful in the application phase. In his sermon on Romans 12:3-8 titled, "Begin to volunteer in church," he preaches that the congregation should serve God and others according to the grace given them and that this should start in church first. He then asks them if they were ready.[212] He says that when they started to serve in church, they would become more Christlike in their homes, in the workplaces, and in society.

In another sermon on Mathew 6:19-24 titled, "Who stores up for themselves treasures in heaven?", Rev. Oak says believers need to be poor in earthly things and rich in heavenly things, as we are heirs of all the heavenly things. In this sermon, he uses terse and clear expressions.[213] The congregation is spiritually challenged, and the people's lives are changed through his concise expressions.

Third, he uses questions and answers to help them understand.

In his sermons, he commonly asks questions like the following: What is greediness? What's wrong with wanting more? What's wrong with having a desire?[214] "What's the reason? What is salvation? Do you believe in resurrection theology?"[215] "What do you feel when you see Jesus silently taking his steps to Jerusalem? Do you know how much

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[211] Oak, Han-Hum, *The good news from John(1)*, 101-102.

[212] Oak, Han-Hum, *3 Explanation of Romans: The way of persons with salvation* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2002), 47.

[213] Oak, Han-Hum, *There is a hope*, 195.

[214] Text: Numbers 11:1~9, 31~35, Title: Watch for greediness, Feb. 10, 2002, Sunday Worship Service

[215] Text: Mark 16:1~11, Title: Jesus has risen, March 31, 2002, Sunday Worship Service

blessing you have been given?[216]

Using questions, he draws the congregation into his sermon. When the people are listening to sermons passively, it is easy for them to get bored. But with questions, congregations are challenged and invited to actively participate in the sermon.

Also by repeatedly asking similar questions, he leads the people to grasp the main idea of the sermon and apply it to themselves.[217] This way, with repeated questions he leads congregations to actively participate in sermon not passively just sit there and grasp the main idea and apply it in their life with faith.

Fourth, he emphasizes important points in his sermon using several rhetoric skills such as parallelism and repetition.

In his sermon on Easter Sunday, he emphasizes the blessing of the resurrection by expressing that the body that is sown is perishable is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, and raised in glory; and other similar notions using parallelism.[218]

Rev. Oak also vividly describes each character in the Bible, revealing the abundant blessings of God by prolifically using adjectives in his sermon. In the above Easter sermon, he prolifically depicts Mary Magdalene, into whom seven demons had gone, that met Jesus for the first time. By calling her "a woman in sorrow," "a woman in outcast from the society," "a woman who looks like lost hope," he focuses on the blessing of the Lord Jesus who was meeting her for the first time. Using a variety of adjectives, Rev. Oak much effectively highlights the blessings of the Lord.

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[216] Text: Luke 18:31~34, Title: Jesus heading to Jerusalem, March 3, 2002, Sunday Worship Service.

[217] Oak, Han-Hum, *How are families in Jesus different?* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2002), 181-182.

[218] Text: Mark 16:1-11, Title: Jesus has risen. , Sunday Worship Service, March 31, 2002.

Therefore, we can see that Rev. Oak effectively delivers the message to his congregation by using a variety of rhetoric skills such as parallelism, repetition, and questions.

(2) Rev. Oak's attitude and gesture while preaching

Haddon Robinson said, "When the factors in a sermon are listed according to importance, first comes the main idea, then comes organization, and next come language, voice, and gesture. When they are listed according to how much of an impression they make on people, the order is reversed. Gesture and voice are the most important factors in making an impression.[219] Research studies on the impact of speech and preaching all come to the same conclusion that the media of communication is of great importance.[220]

Even some congregations judge their preacher by what kind of suit the preacher is wearing without any valid reason. Thus, preachers always need to be neat, tidy, and well-groomed. Because he preaches with his mouth and his body, there must be harmony between the two. Otherwise, the congregation may be turned off, and his message may not be properly delivered to them.[221] Nonverbal factors such as voice, poise, eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures are as important as verbal communication.

Rev. Oak's outward appearance is very clean-cut, well-groomed, and immaculate. However, his facial expression when preaching can be sort of stiff and makes the worship atmosphere solemn, perhaps serious. Especially at the beginning of the sermon, he often

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[219] Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 191.

[220] Wayne N. Thompson, *Quantitative Research in Public Address and Communication* (New York: Random, 1967), 83.

[221] Ramesh Richard. *7 steps explication sermon preparation*, 190-191.

looks at his notes or talks with a flush in his face. He does not often use humor and maintain his serious look.

When his attitude and the entire atmosphere are considered, however, he is a natural and modeling example. His straight look and posture gives a sense of trustworthiness and comfort. Above all, his strength is his confidence and enthusiasm flowing naturally and powerfully from him when he preaches the Word of God. Looking at his serious facial expression, the congregation believes that the preacher is proclaiming the truth and is moved by the sermon.

Gesture is another important communication method, which helps or hinders verbal communication. A preacher should use gestures appropriately to maximize his communication.[222] Rev. Oak may not use big gestures while preaching, but his confidence in the Word of God naturally flowing from himself moves the audience.

Richard Ramesh says that a preacher's accent is a very effective communication tool and that a preacher needs to develop his own accent that suits his voice and style.[223]

Rev. Oak has a very clear enunciation. By appropriately controlling his intonation and speed according to the development of the story, he draws the attention of his audience and vividly conveys his message. He uses high tone to emphasize something or to appeal to the audience. Some preachers do so unwillingly and thus turn off their audience members, but Rev. Oak effectively proclaims the Word of God by naturally controlling his tone and accent.

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[222] Ibid. , 192-193.

[223] Ibid. , 194.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION OF OAK, HAN-HUM'S SERMONS

The Characteristics of Rev. Oak's Sermon

Here and there, this thesis has mentioned the characteristics of Rev. Oak's sermons. Here, they will be summarized.

First, he did his best to pursue a perfect sermon.

His successor, Rev. Oh Jung Hyun, testifies to Oak's zeal for a "perfect" sermon by saying, "He spent the whole week preparing a sermon filled with life and power. It was nothing but a spiritual childbirth. . . . He never repeated the same sermon in his 25 years of ministry. For this I respect him very much."[224]

Rev. Oh's testimony is quite remarkable, as he has known Rev. Oak and watched his ministry for more than 25 years. Oh was able to watch Oak's faithfulness in his efforts both to prepare a perfect sermon and to carry out general church ministry.

Rev. Oak entered his study with an attitude like that of a mother giving birth to a child. After hours of spiritual wrestling, he gives birth to a sermon. He thinks of the sermon for the upcoming Sunday during the whole week prior. In the midst of and in spite of all the scheduled events and appointments as senior pastor of a mega-church, Rev.

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[224] Oh, Jung Hyun and others Oak Han-Hum as we See Him (Seoul: Disciple Making Ministry International, 2003), 192.

Oak put priority in sermon preparation. This kind of commitment to a perfect sermon has made the Sarang Community Church of today possible. It really sets an example to which each and every preacher should look up and follow.

With the Word of God at the center of his communication, he desired and tried to deliver a sermon that was easy for the audience to follow so that they could sympathize with him. He would consider this incarnate preaching. This desire made him prepare and pursue a perfect sermon.

The other reason for his pursuit of a perfect sermon was his belief that a preacher is proclaiming the Word of God on His behalf. The Bible is not merely a book authored or edited by human hands but the Word of the almighty and omniscient God. Preaching is the task of thoroughly studying the Word of God together with serious and fervent prayer and then delivering the message to the audience so they can easily understand it. Therefore, he believed that a sermon proclaims the voice of God intended for the people of each generation.

This belief drove him to make every effort to continually pray with and meditate in the Word of God and then to listen to and walk with God Himself. It was his conviction that academic research of the Word of God using commentaries and other references is absolutely necessary and recommended it. But he also believed that it alone cannot bring change to the souls of the audience. Rev. Oak desperately sought God's help, taking on the attitude of a mother in childbirth, so that he could preach an incarnate sermon and proclaim God message for his generation each and every time he stood up on the pulpit.

The second characteristic of Rev. Oak's sermons is that they are thoroughly

expositional, based on the biblical text. Preachers in Korea generally emphasize the importance of expository sermons, yet they do not put proper emphasis on the necessity and importance of exegetical and doctrinal study of the text. Professor Sung-ku Chung points out that most sermons from the pulpits in Korea show the tendency for preachers to use the biblical text to prove their own theological understanding[225] and as a proof text to justify his ministerial philosophy and policies rather than to give an accurate interpretation and exposition of the text. These preachers are obsessed with the desire for numerical and quantitative growth.

Professor Jung has shown the weaknesses of three prominent Korean preachers (Paul Young-gi Cho, Kyung-jik Hahn and Byung-moo Ahn) in the area of the interpretation of biblical texts by analyzing their sermons on the resurrection for their Easter Sunday services.[226]

He asserts that they tend to base their sermon on the surface structure of the text without studying the text in depth or thinking critically about the issues the text is addressing. In order to accomplish the purpose that they already have in mind, they zero in on one or two words or just one verse in the text and then preach their message only on these verses.[227]

Rev. Oak, however, had overcome this weakness and showed the strength to draw the most accurate and deepest meaning out of the text and still give a relevant application. He was totally focused on the intended meaning of the text, and yet at the same time he

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[225]Sung-ku Chung, *Sermon History in Korean Churches*. (Seoul: Chongshin Univ. Press, 1995), 395-396.

[226] Jung, In-gyo, *"Die Ausferstehung Jesu, Ein Vergleich Zwischen Osterpredigten aus Korea und Deutschland"* (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of Bonn, 1994), 235.

[227] Ibid.

was very good at using appropriate illustrations and making relevant applications. Park observes that Rev. Oak's sermons are fully based on the biblical text and use interesting illustrations that attract the audience into the text itself. According to Park, unlike some pastors at mega-churches, he frequently quotes from other books of the Bible.[228]

Many pastors regard preaching directly from the Bible as boring and uninteresting. But since Rev. Oak first applies the message from the biblical text to himself and then to the audience, his message carries weight and is very powerful.

Third, Rev. Oak's sermon is based on evangelical theology and proclaims only the biblical truth. While a student at Chongshin Theological Seminary, an evangelical seminary, he was heavily influenced by some of the leading evangelical scholars of Korea such as Henry Park, Yoonsun Park, and Heebo Kim. They also mentored him spiritually. Naturally, he learned of their love and passion for the Bible as the Word of God and uncompromising willingness to obey it. He firmly believed in the inerrancy of the Bible, and he regarded this conviction is the most precious asset that any preacher must possess to be a servant God uses. He inherited this conviction from his mentors.

Rev. Oak understands and preaches from the events in the Bible as factual and historical. Up against the strong stream of liberal theology that has been spread wide across the nation, he firmly stood on the belief that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God and preached from the Word of God with conviction and passion, which resulted in powerful delivery of the message, thus moving and changing the thoughts and lives of his audience members.

One of the most serious problems the church is facing today, including Korean

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[228] Park, Yong-Gyu *Awakening Korean Church*, 150.

churches, is sermons with a distorted message of the gospel. Today's church is confused by false teachings such as prosperity theology and positive thinking. These kinds of messages are being broadcasted with no screening and are causing a lot of confusion among believers. And to make the things worse, they are received as the true gospel by many people.

This tragic phenomenon is largely due to the secularization of the church. The church of Christ imbibed most secular values from the last century and even wrapped them up with some verses from the Bible. Along the way, in terms of values, the distinction between the church and the world has almost vanished. Whatever the world adores, the church adores.

Rev. Oak maintains that pastors are fully responsible for the secularization of the churches. He also makes it clear that the problem is not the stagnation of the church, but the fact that secularization destroys the essence of the church of Christ.[229]

Behind the secularization of the church lies the distorted message from the pulpits, which was forewarned by the apostle Paul: "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" (2 Timothy 4:3). Instead of self-examination, genuine repentance and lives devoted to Christ, the message began to flow out of the pulpits that positive thinking alone will solve all problems. The message of this cheap gospel has been threatening churches worldwide, not just the churches in Korea.

But thankfully, not all welcome the cheap-gospel message. More often than not, it

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[229] Oak, Han-Hum, "Korean Church, Down the Drain?", *The Christian Today*, Dec. 30, 2009.

is rejected. The reason the crowd gathered around Jesus was not merely that he performed miracles but because he proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom. This gospel did not compromise with the contradictory message of the secular Jewish leaders.

Rev. Oak believed in the historicity of the record of the Bible and tried his best to please not the audience but God Himself by delivering the message that He wanted him to deliver. God has been pleased with his pure motive and passion for the Word of God and has honored and rewarded him with distinguished ministry in both size and influence.

Fourth, Rev. Oak's sermon has logos, ethos and pathos.
Logos, the first of the three elements that determine the effectiveness of a sermon, implies helping or persuading the audience to understand something by means of logic and appeal to reason. Ethos has to do with drawing the attention of and gaining trust from the audience through the character of the speaker. Pathos aims at changing the opinion or impacting the decision-making of the audience by way of appealing to emotion.[230]

A preacher should use all these three elements to be able to deliver an effective sermon and persuade the audience. And according to Suh's evaluation, Rev. Oak's sermons have all three elements.[231]

His sermons are very logical in their flow; they appeal to the audience's reason. The structure of his sermons reflects the logical flow of the biblical text itself. He tries to maintain the unity of the sermon and uses concrete and succinct expressions. And for an easier understanding of the sermon on the part of the audience, he uses parallelism, repetition, questions, various adjectives, logic, and clarity. So the audience naturally is

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[230] Park, Sung-chang, *Rhetoric* (Seoul: MoonJi Publishing, 2000), 60.

[231] Suh, Joongsuk, *Position and Characteristics of Rev. Oak's sermons in Hermeneutics*. (Seoul: The Institute of Korean Church History Studies, 2002), 33.

attracted to his sermon. The logical contents and structure of his sermon draw and guide the audience into the world of the Bible without resistance from the audience.

The strongest of the three elements so far as Rev. Oak is concerned is his ethos. He has shared joy, sorrow, pains, and all aspects of his life with his flock since the very first day of Sarang Community Church. Especially by sharing the Word of God, they learned, prayed, and struggled together to learn how to live as Disciples of Christ. He did his best to live out the message that he preached and to set an example before his flock. He even shared his money and possessions to help church members in financial need. The flock knew his character and life; they trusted and followed him as their pastor and their true leader.

Rev. Oak's pathos was very appealing to the audience. When his flock was not living according to the Word of God, he was "a righteous and angry prophet" to them. When his flock was in despair, he was a sympathizing comforter for them. He himself has suffered failure and despair many times. From his own experience, he was able to understand them and comfort them.

Additionally, he delivered his sermons with passion and sincerity. Since he understood and knew his flock very well, he knew accordingly how to organize and structure his sermon for the best result. He maximized the pathos element by using relevant illustrations and supporting materials based on his life experiences he had in common with his flock.

His honesty and transparency were also very helpful in the effectiveness of his preaching ministry. He willingly shared his emotion, frustration, pain, and failure, which made him vulnerable. But the audience appreciated his honesty, transparency, and heart-

to-heart preaching, which really tore down the wall between him and the audience. Thus his sermons were moving and persuasive. Many agree that his sermons had all three elements of effective communication: logos, ethos and pathos.

Fifth, Rev. Oak proclaimed the fruition of both the Kingdom of God and social justice through the Word. As mentioned above, Rev. Oak preached against the sin in the believers' lives and the darkness of the world, just like a prophet. Many of his sermons he preached for 40 years of his ministry are on the righteous living as Christians and the Christian's responsibility for social justice.[232]

He emphasized that Christians should live lives obedient to the Word of God and should then live as salt and light of the world at workplaces. He said this because this is the way to expand the Kingdom of God on this earth and how Christians can maintain and exhibit their identity as people of God in this world. He emphasized that since we Christians have been called to be kingly high priests, that is, to be the leaders of the world, we should not compromise with worldly value systems. Rather, we should transform the world with the Gospel like Daniel and Nehemiah did in their respective time periods.

Since he was fully convinced that only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can transform the world, Rev. Oak tried to transform the world by equipping the believers. Therefore he

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[232] Oak, Han-hum. *The Passion of Discipleship Training for 40 years*. Seoul: Disciple Making Ministries International, 2008; *A hand of God treats suffering*. Seoul: Duranno, 1990; *There is no true faith without the test*. Seoul: Disciple Making Ministries International, 1989; Christian *Pride*. Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 1997; *A revolution of leadership*. Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2000; *Be full of Happiness with an empty mind*. Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2001; *There is a hope*. Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2001; *Little Jesus living with heavens happiness*. Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2001; *How to live in a tough world*. Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2002; *How are families in Jesus different?*. Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2002; *A leader*. Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2002; *For generations with no knowledge of war*. Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2003; *Calling never loose heart: A path*. Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2003; *This is the essence of a pastor*. Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2004.

stressed the importance of Christians living righteously, being the salt and light of the world, striving for social justice.[233] For Rev. Oak the discipleship training ministry was the means to equip the believers with the Gospel of Christ and to transform the world.

Sixth, Rev. Oak complemented his preaching ministry with his discipleship ministry. He did not believe that sermons alone were the key to a powerful ministry. Life is complex; even the most brilliant sermon, meticulously prepared and powerfully delivered, cannot deal with all the various issues and problems an individual may experience. Unless a sermon is applied to the life of the listener, it cannot have a life changing effect. Moreover, unless there is the opportunity for guidance, support, and encouragement through a personal relationship, the pastor's sermon is very limited as the pastor preaches to a group of people.

From his long pastoral experience, Rev. Oak was well aware of this limitation in preaching. This limitation prompted him to start a discipleship ministry. His reasoning behind a discipleship ministry is grounded in his observation that in the Bible, though the Disciples were with Jesus whenever and wherever He was preaching, Jesus had special times where He secluded Himself with His Disciples and privately teach them. Indeed, Jesus was constantly teaching. In fact, the title "rabbi" was applied to Him over 50 times in the Gospels because he was always teaching. He was really the Master Teacher.

Rev. Oak also points out that a major responsibility of a pastor is teaching and caring for his congregation, based on the expression "pastor-teacher" found in Ephesians 4:11. When a pastor trains the members of his church, he fully acknowledges the effectiveness and power of sermons. He also acknowledges that the sermons do not fulfill

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[233] Text: Luke 19:1~10, Title: Only the Good News can change the world, Oct. 6, 2002, Sunday Worship Service.

all the various functions of teaching.

According to Rev. Oak, to transform an individual believer into an equipped disciple of Christ, able to function effectively for the Kingdom of God in this world, preaching is not enough. A discipleship ministry is indispensible. Rev. Oak asserts that the main reason the church is spiritually weak is the absence of discipleship ministries to train church laity.[234]

Rev. Oak's discipleship ministry has played a vital role in meeting the needs of the congregation that his ministry from the pulpit could not meet. Kim praises Rev. Oak in this regard, considering the discipleship ministry an indispensible and integral part of a biblically successful church ministry.[235]

The Weaknesses of Rev. Oak's Sermon

The following discusses some weaknesses to Rev. Oak's sermons. First, Dr. Kwon points out that Rev. Oak sometimes has fallen into the error of illegitimate totality transfer.[236] This is an error that pastors sometimes make when they apply a fixed meaning to a word without considering the context in which the word is found and ignore other hermeneutical factors. Since one word can have various meanings and take on different nuances depending on the context, it is an obvious error to find and apply a fixed meaning of a word to every context.

Second, Rev. Oak sometimes used condescending expressions about a particular

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[234] Oak, Han-Hum, *Called to Awaken the Laity* (Seoul: Disciple making Ministries International, 2000), 203-205.

[235] Ibid.

[236] Kwon, Sungsoo, "An analysis of Rev. Oak's sermons based on Hermeneutics," 66.

sex or group. In a sermon on the biblical relationship between a husband and wife, he used some derogatory expressions to describe a wife's challenging attitude toward her husband.[237] Husbands and wives often use the expression Rev. Oak used in quarrels. However, it was not appropriate for Rev. Oak to preach it in a public environment. It is believed that his intention was to be realistic, but in so doing he risked isolating the wives in his audience, making them feel that they were looked down upon as female, especially in a traditionally male-dominant culture like Korean culture.

His words could have been easily misunderstood as those of a male chauvinist, which of course he is not. All preachers, however, should be careful about the words they use. They must be careful not to use derogatory words and expressions about certain groups, and careful to avoid showing any prejudice toward any particular people. Each word a preacher uses should be carefully considered and selected before he uses them in a sermon or a public speaking environment.

Here is another example. In a sermon on the importance of wisdom, he made the following comments:

> Job 12:12 says "Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?" The perspective toward the aged we find in this passage is totally different from that of young people today. The young generation today tends to despise the old, treating them as out of date. Because they lack sound judgment and wisdom, young people today refuse to show proper respect for the old. It is especially true among the young who are actively involved in the anti-establishment movement.[238]

By saying "young people" he left the impression that he thought that all the young

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[237] Text: Ephesians 5:22-24, Title: Role of a Wife and her Priority, May 22, 1988, Sunday Worship Service.

[238] Scriptural test is 1 Kings 3:4-15. The title of the sermon is "Help Us to Tell Good from Evil" preached on June 16 of 1991.

people today look down on and were rude to the old generation. He gave the same impression about those who are actively involved in anti-establishment movement. These generalizations could have caused a furious reaction from certain groups of people. He should have used the adjective “some” in order to make it clear that not he was not referring to all of the people in that particular group. A preacher should be very careful not to give even a slight impression that he is condemning any particular group of people with abusive expression. Like the Lord Jesus did, a preacher is expected to and should show grace and love even to those who are social outcasts and the target of harsh criticism.

A preacher cannot be too careful about his use of words in his sermons since he is a public speaker. The audience is both directly and indirectly influenced by the use of his words. That influence is soon transferred to the society. Generally, Rev. Oak’s use of language is very discrete and very well prepared, but his errors, as mentioned above, though very rare, must be avoided.

Third, sometimes elitism is found in Rev. Oak’s sermons. Every pastor is may well be proud of his own church and congregation. This naturally comes with a pastor’s love and affection for his flock. If he is not proud of his church, he may be lacking passion and vision for them, causing his preaching to become just a performance and powerless. So in this sense, a pastor should and even needs to be proud of his own congregation.

Rev. Oak was no exception. After all, he started his church from the scratch. Sometimes, however, it pride can become elitism.

Let's take a look at the sermon "Be Rich for God"[239]:

> Our life goal is to fulfill God's will on this earth. It takes money to carry out the mission work, to do good works, and to teach and train our descendents. By the grace of God our church has been able to spread our ministerial philosophy to other churches. This is not something that any church can do.

The ministry of "spreading our ministerial philosophy to other churches" is CAL (Called to Awaken the Laity). CAL is sponsored annually by the Disciple Making Ministries International, which shares and teaches pastors and church leaders' the pastoral philosophy, strategy, and the discipleship program techniques of Sarang Community Church.

There is a general consensus that the programs of Sarang Community Church are very effective and practical. Nonetheless, to say "this is not something that any church can do" sounds like bragging and seems elitist. This statement singles out and puts Sarang Community Church in an exceptional category apart from the other churches. It gives one the impression that no other church could do what the Sarang Community Church has done. This is not a statement that should have been made.

Every preacher should avoid elitism. Pastors must be careful to reject the belief that his church is exclusively the best.

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[239] Scriptural text is Luke 12:16-21, preached on February 9, 2003.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Started by Rev. Oak in 1978, Sarang Community Church has experienced remarkable growth, growing from 35 to 80,000 members currently. Virtually everyone recognizes that Rev. Oak's preaching is the reason for this incredible growth. Again, it was his sermons that laid the foundation for the Sarang church develop a strong biblical base and spiritual health.

Sarang Community Church has demonstrated the importance of training the laity, has provided various programs for training and discipleship of church members, and has supplied important information for domestic and foreign mission programs. Sarang Community Church is making positive and constructive influences on other Korean churches.

At the center of this great ministry lies the godly man, Rev. Oak. It was not the fancy vocabulary and phrases in his sermons that made Sarang Community Church famous. His sermons are rather plain and straightforward, simple yet profound.

So what made his sermons produce such powerful and fruitful results? The author believes that it was Rev. Oak's love for the Word of God and passion for his audience. He fully accepted the Bible as the word of God and has developed a deep love for the Bible. In the midst of the liberal theological flood, he was firmly determined to preach the Bible

as the word of God without diluting its contents. He believed in its full authority and life-changing power.

Rev. Oak's sermons start from and are based on the conviction of the full authority, sufficiency, and completeness of the Bible. By studying the Bible as the word of God, he has found that God will speak to his heart. Hence, his definition of the sermon involves a preacher's ability to listen to the message that God has spoke into the heart of the preacher first during his time in studying and meditation on the Word of God. Once the preacher has heard the voice of God and received the message God has spoken to his heart, only then is he ready to proclaim and deliver that message to the contemporary audience.

All through his life as a preacher, Rev. Oak has done his best to listen to what the Lord speaks to his heart during his regular time in Bible study and preparation for delivering a Sunday message. Sometimes he spent the whole day just studying the text. When he was not able to figure out the meaning of the text, he knelt on the floor and desperately sought the help of the Holy Spirit to illuminate what He meant through that text.

He has been totally committed to the preparation of biblical sermons even to the point of pain if needed. He compared the process of preparing a biblical sermon to that of child-bearing. He has been preparing sermons this way for more than quarter of a century.

He never pursued a sermon that only satisfied the need of the audience or increased his popularity as a preacher. He always did his best to be a "right" preacher. He has always been more concerned with delivering the message that God wants him to deliver rather than preaching well enough to please men.

And Rev. Oak's sermons were not delivered merely through words but through his obedient life. He practiced what he preached. He tried his best to follow the footsteps of Ezra in this regard: "For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).

The attitude of Rev. Oak as a preacher toward preparing and delivering a sermon is that a sermon should be unique and highly appreciated. In this age of information, one can easily find a pre-made sermon using the Internet or other readily available means. One can easily find some popular, silver-tongued preacher and mimic his style. However, the reason that these preachers' sermons do not bring a life-changing impact is that there is disconnection between the life of the preacher and the message he preaches. Unless one exhibits a life that reflects the message one preaches, one cannot expect to produce a genuine spiritual change in the lives of the audience. As the Bible explains it, such people "have a form of godliness but deny its power."

Rev. Oak would even confess that he often did not live according to the Word of God. He would repent of this before the congregation. His honesty and vulnerability helped his congregation to feel comfortable with Rev. Oak and enabled them to be open to the message he preached, causing their lives to change. Because of this open, honest preaching style, Rev. Oak reaped the fruit of his labor as demonstrated in the impressive growth in Sarang Community Church. The church and its members have had a great influence on Korean churches.

I believe through Rev. Oak's genuine and ingenuous sermons, the congregation was able to empathize with him and open their heart to the Word of God. His attitude is a far cry from that of other Korean church pastors with an authoritarian attitude.

What this dissertation is trying to highlight is Rev. Oak's sound theology and attitude toward sermons. I believe it is much more important to learn from Rev. Oak's attitude rather than his preaching skills or theories. All preachers need to mimic his attitude of cherishing the Word of God, trying to listen to God's voice, of trying to obey the Word himself first, of having an open, honest relationship with his congregation, and finally of trying to learn from the Word with the congregation rather than merely exercising authority over them.

His love for the Word and enthusiasm for a righteous sermon has transferred to the congregation and allowed him to give powerful sermons each time. He would often give admonishing sermons to those in the audience who were not walking with the Lord. He would also try to console and comfort those who were going through tough times.

He has also tried to help the congregation find balance in studying the Word of God by preaching on not just a few books of the Bible or on only certain parts of a single book of the Bible, but on each book and all its parts. During his 25 years while he was serving as a senior pastor at the church, he used all 66 books in the Bible to present biblical life principles.

Another strength the author admires is Rev. Oak's incarnate sermon principle. He would prepare a sermon as a mother prepares a balanced meal for picky child.

He would spend the whole week preparing the perfect sermon script, and then after it was finished, he would review what he prepared and evaluate it from the viewpoint of the congregation. He would then revise it several times to make it as plain as possible to his audience. He would revise his script as much as twenty times. He would exert all his effort to make his sermon understandable to his congregation. All of this he

consistently did for 25 years.

How much compassion do preachers today have for their congregations? How much effort do they put into preaching the Word of God? Do they just barely manage to finish a script let alone going down to the level of the congregation? These questions are why Rev. Oak's incarnate sermon is an example to all other preachers.

Many effective communication principles have been establish over the years, but not many seem to know about Rev. Oak's incarnate sermon principle. The author strongly recommends Rev. Oak's incarnate sermon as an effective sermon communication principle.

An additional strength of Rev. Oak's sermons is that after picking the main idea and meditating on that book of the Bible, he produces a persuasive message focusing on that topic. The Bible is written because the scribes intended to deliver messages to the reader. Rev. Oak grasps the main idea of the text for himself from his complete study and analysis of the text. Yet many preachers consider expository preaching just reading the Bible verses and discussing a few things in the text.

That type of preaching will be scattered in topic and focus, and the congregation will not remember the main idea. They will not remember what they have heard after the sermon. Expository preaching should reveal that all the verses are closely connected with and focused on the main idea. Rev. Oak thoroughly interprets the text in the Bible and reflects the main subject of the text. There is coherency in his sermon, and the main subject is clearly shown throughout.

The author of this dissertation intended to reveal Rev. Oak's expository preaching. His expository sermons clearly focus on one topic and allow the audience to clearly

remember what they have heard that day. Through his expository preaching, he dealt with several topics. In 1970s and 1980s, when Korea was under military government, he would often preach on adversity to console and comfort the audience, who was undoubtedly afflicted financially and socially.

He would also emphasize that they should not see the adversity itself, but instead try to see the providence of God who was working in their lives through the adversity and that God wanted his children to lead a God-centered life, always relying on the Lord, patiently enduring and maturing in their faith.

The reason the author wanted to analyze Rev. Oak's expository preaching is that every preacher can learn to prepare a true expository sermon, which involves thorough interpretation of the text, and a grasp of the main idea controlling the whole text. This style of preaching is powerfully persuasive in changing the congregation.

The author hopes that every preacher who reads this dissertation will renew their love for the Word of God and their congregation. In order to lead the congregation to life in the Word of God, they must first obey the Word of God and apply what they learned to themselves. Also, to make it easy for the congregation to understand, they will need to preach incarnate sermon to their level. Especially Korean preachers should not exercise authority over the congregation, but as a steward of God, they should try to learn from the Bible and obey the Lord.

Above all, preachers should thoroughly study the Word of God in the same way that Rev. Oak gives birth to a sermon after spiritually wrestling for the upcoming Sunday during the whole week prior. The author would also like preachers to study the word of God thoroughly, be able to grasp the main idea of the text first, and then make it easy for

the congregation to understand.

Matthew 13:52 says, “Therefore, every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

Every preacher is a teacher of the law and is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old. If preachers are lazy in studying the Word of God, they cannot bring the abundant Word of God out of their storerooms and deliver new treasures to the congregation. This verse clearly represents an example of a good preacher.

CHAPTER VII

SUGGESTIONS

Since the main purpose of this dissertation is to focus on Rev. Oak, Han-Hum's sermons, this dissertation has not detailed his discipleship training ministries into which he has put a great deal of effort. . It would be a great thesis topic to study his discipleship training ministries and investigate the association between the ministries and the remarkable growth of Sarang Community Church.

Another good research topic is the New Life Festival that Sarang Community Church holds each year; specifically, the festival's relationship with church growth should be examined. Focusing on Rev. Oak's evangelical sermons that have led many souls to Christ during the New Life Festival would be a good thesis topic as well. Finally, studying how Rev. Oak developed the introduction of his sermons, what kind of logic he used in the body and the general structure of his sermons would produce good research topics.

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