Liberty University

Self-Efficacy Among Christian Educators

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by

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Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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Doctor of Ministry Thesis Project Abstract

SELF-EFFICACY AMONG CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

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Liberty University School of Divinity, 2020

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Christian educators often lack specialized training in message delivery which leads to a lower self-efficacy. Christian educators devote their lives to fulfillment of the Great Commission; it is the job of the church universal to provide resources and support that equip the saints to boldly share the Gospel with great confidence. When self-efficacy is low, confidence is low. Theological foundations are often strong and well-developed by the local church. The practical aspect of preaching, meaning delivery, is an area that is underrepresented in academic research. This project presents specialized training in message delivery as a catalyst for improving self-efficacy. The goal of this action research project is to provide ministry settings with a framework of how to increase the self-efficacy through message delivery training for Christian educators, which include both laity and clergy.

Acknowledgements

During my life, I have been blessed by many who have encouraged me and paved the road that I have traveled down. It would be impossible to list all of the teachers, preachers, parishioners, childhood neighbors, aunts, uncles, and family friends who have molded me. Also, the seven churches that I have served, each church has made me a stronger preacher of the Gospel. To each of you, I am grateful for the impact you have made in my life. My life is better because of you. The Interdenominational Theological Center (Class of 2016, M.Div.) and Liberty University have provided me with professors and colleagues who have challenged me to grow in my theological understanding and as a servant of Christ. I would like to thank my pastoral mentors, Albert Willis, Buddy Royston, Archie Looper, and Denman Frazier. At different phases of my life, each of you have taught me more about grace, leadership, and staying in love with God. I hope to one day be as great of a mentor to someone as you have been to me. Thank you to Dr. Sherri Southerland, Shelby Short, Katy Bell, Steven Lay, and Nicole Takayama who have encouraged me to be a life-long learner. Thank you to my daughters, nieces, and nephew. The five of you are such a big part of my life and I could not imagine it without you. To my mom and dad, the two of you taught me what hard work is and to never give up. I cannot imagine what it was like to raise me but am thankful you did. I would also like to thank my beautiful wife, Brittany. You have been the most loving and supportive life partner possible. You have listened to my thoughts (positive and negative), encouraged me, and been the best friend that anyone could ever imagine, I love you.

And finally, I want to thank the almighty triune God. You have been with me through every hill and valley. I pray this project brings glory to your kingdom and look forward to serving on earth until you call me home.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Public speaking is a commonly known fear for many individuals. Jerry Seinfeld once said: "According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy."[1]

Although this statistic is exaggerated for comic effect, the statement illustrates the general anxiety that accompanies public speaking. Christian educators find themselves in a unique position of having to speak in public, often many times a week. Not only is content important, but Christian educators need to also have a solid foundation in their delivery skills.

The purpose of this project was to explore the relationship between preaching and the presenter's delivery skills. Preaching is an art form that requires diligence and care. Although not emphasized heavily, the writers of the New Testament were concerned with body language and vocal variety. When Peter preached at Pentecost, the preface to the sermon states: "Peter stood with the other eleven Apostles. He raised his voice and declared…" (Acts 2:14).[2] The writer stated that, "Peter stood," showing a concern with the kinetic movement within preaching. Continuing on with, "he raised his voice," the writer illustrates that Peter's tone was different from normal while preaching. This illustrates that from the beginning of the church special attention has been given, not only to the content of a sermon, but how it is delivered. Additionally, the details of sermonic delivery being described before the sermon demonstrates the special care and emphasis that must accompany the words of a sermon. Christian educators

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[1] ExplainItStudios, "Seinfeld-public-speaking," January 26, 2014, YouTube video, 0:27. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQ6giVKp9ec

[2] Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *Common English Bible* version (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011).

have a responsibility to ensure that their message is being received by the target audience. A large component of ensuring audience retention comes from the delivery of the message. If delivery is distracting or makes it difficult for the target audience to focus and understand the message, the power of the message is lost, and the Christian educator is not living up to his full potential. Focusing on message delivery is just as important as message content and will enable Christian educators to spread their message and have higher audience retention.

As orthodox 21st-century Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, how a sermon is delivered is not only relevant, but continues in the New Testament tradition of expository preaching. Being faithful to the word of God is more than just crafting a sermon well—it is presenting it in a way that is relevant and inspiring. A shortcoming is that oftentimes, Christian educators lack confidence in the proclamation of their message. This leaves room for ministry coaches to assist the Christian educator in his delivery.

The overarching desire and inspiration for this project was hope that congregations give freedom to their Christian educators to be the best version of themselves, while giving the educator the power to live out his unique calling in a bruised and battered world. The project was not designed with the intention of changing the Christian educator into something he is not.[3] It was, however, designed with the purpose of empowering Christian educators to be the best version of themselves. It is important to stay true to who God called them to be, and gaining more confidence in their skills and abilities will allow them to reach more people for Christ and have more of an impact on their congregation. Whether through inexperience, hurtful words, or other sources, many Christian educators doubt their abilities and skills which allows fear to constrain message delivery; gaining self-efficacy will enable them to better use their skills and

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[3] He is used as the pronoun to mean he or she when referring to Christian Educators in general.

gifts in their ministry context. This will increase audience retention with the larger, more laudable goal of reaching more souls for Christ.

Ministry Context

Ministry coaching has the ability to better equip servant leaders in the art of transformational leadership.[4] Transformational leadership should be a trait that is demonstrated in the life of any effective congregation and should be demonstrated by all leaders, both laity and clergy. Transformational leadership journeys from equipping to empowering, and finally, to sending. Jesus demonstrated these traits throughout the Gospels. In both Luke 9 and Luke 10, Jesus sends believers away to minister, but only after equipping and empowering them to do so effectively. Ministry coaching is one of many tools that can be utilized to equip and empower believers to do the sacred work of the Gospel.

Sankofa Ministry Coaching is an organization that focuses on strengthening the mission, vision, and practice of congregations and their leaders, both clergy and laity. The name of this ministry originates from the African tribal language of Twi and means "go back and get it," meaning that as people move forward, participants are encouraged to reach back and grab what is important while moving ahead to be the best version of themselves.[5] Sankofa Ministry Coaching came about in 2016 when a clergyperson was given the opportunity to seek specialized training in how to be a ministry coach. The purpose of the training was not to remove him from vocational ministry but was to better equip the clergyperson to assist other people in ministry. To

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[4] Tom Cerny, Guy J. Curtis, and Susan H. Colmar, "Executive Coaching can Enhance Transformational Leadership," *International Coaching Psychology Review* 5, (2010): 81.

[5] Appiah K. Kwartang, "The Sankofa Bird and Reflection," *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 10, no. 1, (2016): 60-69

meet the requirements of the program, he provided ministry coaching to several colleagues that were affiliated with the same denomination. Due to high demand, Sankofa Ministry Coaching was established, and an attempt was made to be an interdenominational service.

The life coach of Sankofa Ministry Coaching is a clergyperson with over a decade of church experience, and has served in many positions within church ministry from Sunday School teacher to Senior Pastor. This experience gives the life coach more of an understanding of what struggles Christian educators may be facing in their congregations and with their self-efficacy when it comes to message delivery. Many of the clients served by this ministry are fellow clergy people and their congregations. Although the ministry has primarily focused on the mission and vision of churches, there has been a growing need for vocational enrichment and professional development within the area of message delivery and teaching. This growing need is evident in all aspects of ministry and can assist anyone, whatever his role.

The clergy and laity served by Sankofa are extremely diverse. Both categories have men and women serving, and the laity category consists of both paid members and volunteers within their respective ministry setting. The level of education obtained by both groups varies significantly, with the lowest being a GED and the highest being post graduate education. This diversity requires the ministry coach to provide support for many of the services offered, contingent on the Christian educator's academic ability. Currently, 78% of the clients who use Sankofa are clergy and 22% are laity. For this study, special attention was given to having an equal division of clients. Also, currently Sankofa is only serving clients in the Middle Tennessee area; however, it has the ability to expand virtually into other regions.

The majority of the congregations whose pastors are served by Sankofa are Wesleyan in theology. In the past few years, Sankofa has made a genuine attempt to reach others that are

outside of the Wesleyan demographic and now serves some Christian educators who are Calvinist or are non-denominational and practice a hybrid of Calvinistic and Wesleyan theology. Most of the congregations served have over a century of history, giving them a long-established subset of unwritten rules that govern them, which are outside of the official denominational polity. Adding to the layers of challenge that must be navigated is that most of the congregations involved are assigned a clergyperson, and have minimal influence over who is leading the congregation. This has its own unique set of challenges within the local church and relationships, as well as the views of the pastor and pastoral team. When clergy people come to Sankofa, one of the chief complaints is the lack of communication surrounding unwritten rules when it comes to preaching and teaching. Congregations often have their preferences when it comes to a clergyperson's style of preaching, including whether or not the clergyperson uses the pulpit and dresses to preach, the influence of technology, and reception to visual aids. Many clergy people who come to Sankofa have already treaded on some of these unwritten rules and have lost confidence in their own abilities when members of the congregation criticized their sermon and sermon delivery. At Sankofa, the life coach strives to teach that the messages are the greatest and reach the most people when the clergyperson shows the truest version of himself when he preaches, and has confidence in his message delivery.

A common concern among the Christian educators that Sankofa has served is a fear of inadequacy and a concern that they are not as good as others who have previously served in their position and/or fear that the congregation would prefer to have a previous minister return to that position. These worries are oftentimes a compelling factor in their involvement with Sankofa. These fears have been disproportionately seen among pastors who serve churches where the congregation has little input into the selection of their pastor. These fears and worries can

sometimes cripple pastors and other Christian educators by engendering feelings of inadequacy which can lead to poor delivery and may contribute to a cycle of delivery dysfunction. When a congregation is hostile towards a pastor and/or make negative comments about his preaching ability or sermons, the pastor can be left with a feeling of inadequacy. This can then negatively impact in his ability to preach, due to the fear and worry they are experiencing, which leads to the congregation to make even more comments. This cycle of delivery dysfunction is common among pastors just starting out in their careers but is not limited solely to this group. Congregations are not always hostile towards a pastor regarding their sermon delivery. Many times, members of the congregations who engage in this feel that they are being helpful to the pastor. However, they are actually causing anxiety and fear, while not allowing the pastor to finetune his strengths and gifts to become the person God called him to be.

In addition to over a decade of ministry experience, the primary coach of Sankofa possesses a Master of Divinity and has taken additional graduate coursework in applied communication, conflict communications, history, and education. The primary coach of Sankofa is also a certified life coach, with an emphasis on ministry coaching. In addition to the education mentioned above, he has also served as an adjunct professor of numerous subjects, including speech, which is relevant to this project. These experiences and education have given the life coach at Sankofa a unique view on sermon delivery from a practical and academic point of view.

<center>Statement of the Problem</center>

The problem is that Christian educators appear to lack specific training in message delivery. Although most seminaries offer courses on preaching and teaching, the majority of the coursework emphasizes how to craft a sermon. In addition, many college-educated students enroll in a basic speech course in fulfillment of their general education requirements; however, in

many courses, structure is emphasized over delivery. The way the sermon is crafted is significant but is still only a segment of the sermonic process. Delivery must be intentional since the majority of sermons are designed to be listened to instead of being read. The metacommunication being presented by the Christian educator during message delivery either enhances or detracts from the message itself. Without proper message delivery, many messages do not hold the power they would otherwise have. If body movement and gesticulations become too distracting or if vocal inflections are missing, it can be difficult to maintain the attention of the congregation and the message will not be received as the Christian educator intended. Ensuring that delivery enhances the message that is being taught, rather than distracting from it, further ensures retention of the message.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN thesis was to provide Christian educators with specific training in message delivery. By providing training, Christian educators will be better equipped to deliver their message. This training focused on delivery, rather than message development. The intention of the training was not to evaluate the audience's reception of the material, but to impact the presenter's self-efficacy in message delivery.

Thesis Statement

If Christian educators are provided with specific training in message delivery, their self-efficacy will improve measurably. Not all Christian educators receive formal education and not all formal education programs emphasize delivery; however, delivery is an essential component to any message. If self-efficacy is increased, the deliverer is more confident, and it is, therefore, reasonable to believe that they will possess stronger skills in message delivery, which will lead to greater sermons and comprehension among the deliverer's audience.

Definitions

This thesis project will utilize the following definitions unless otherwise noted:

Christian Educator: A person serving in the ministry of teaching and/or preaching, whether it be paid or volunteer, clergy or laity.

Clergy: Licensed or ordained ministers. Within this thesis, the clergy may or may not have formal education but have met the requirements of their respective denominational affiliation to be recognized as a clergyperson.

Fixed mindset: An individual holding the idea that they cannot improve a certain skill, regardless of how much work they do.

Growth mindset: An individual holding the idea that they can improve a certain skill through hard work.

Kinetics: Within this thesis, kinetics refers to the study of body movement in the delivery of a message.

Licensed local pastor: Clergy within the United Methodist Church who may or may not have had a seminary education.

Message(s): Content created and delivered for evangelism and/or education in a ministry context.

Metacommunication: The study of how a message is presented in relation to body movement and voice. The way we communicate about communication.

Ordained Elder: Clergy of different denominational affiliations who are clergy members with a formal seminary education.

Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA): A common psychological worry involving public speaking, typically diagnosed through a survey.

Self-Efficacy: The confidence one possesses in his ability to do something. Within this thesis, this word will be used specifically in relation to the intrapersonal confidence to present a Christian message to an audience.

Social Cognitive Theory: The belief that behaviors can change through an individual's use of self-control.

Tone: The utilization of vocal variety.

Old Testament Abbreviations

Genesis: Gen	Nehemiah: Neh	Hosea: Hos
Exodus: Exod	Esther: Esth	Joel: Joel
Leviticus: Lev	Job: Job	Amos: Amos
Numbers: Num	Psalms: Ps	Obadiah: Obad
Deuteronomy: Deut	Proverbs: Prov	Jonah: Jonah
Joshua: Josh	Ecclesiastes: Eccl	Micah: Mic
Judges: Judg	Song of Solomon: Song	Nahum: Nah
Ruth: Ruth	Isaiah: Isa	Habakkuk: Hab
1-2 Samuel: 1-2 Sam	Jeremiah: Jer	Zephaniah: Zeph
1-2 Kings: 1-2 Kings	Lamentations: Lam	Haggai: Hag
1-2 Chronicles: 1-2 Chr	Ezekiel: Ezek	Zechariah: Zech
Ezra: Ezra	Daniel: Dan	Malachi

New Testament Abbreviations

Matthew: Matt	John: John
Mark: Mark	Acts: Acts
Luke: Luke	Romans: Rom

1-2 Corinthians: 1-2 Cor	Philemon: Phlm
Galatians: Gal	Hebrews: Heb
Ephesians: Eph	James: Jas
Philippians: Phil	1-2 Peter: 1-2 Pet
Colossians: Col	1-2-3 John: 1-2-3 John
1-2 Thessalonians: 1-2 Thess	Jude: Jude
1-2 Timothy: 1-2 Tim	Revelations: Rev
Titus: Titus	

Limitations and Delimitations

Several limitations for this project exist and are outlined in the section below. Additionally, the researcher has also indicated delimitations put in place to ensure the highest quality and integrity of the thesis project which are outlined below in the second subsection. Limitations are anything that hinders the researcher in the thesis project.[6] Limitations exist in all studies and data collection methods. Outlined in this section are several identified limitations of the data collection procedures, as well as limitations of the study design. Delimitations are constraints put on the project to ensure the highest quality and integrity possible.[7] The researcher identified and put in place several delimitations when designing and completing the project. These delimitations also assist in the validity and reliability of the research.

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[6] Tim Sensing, 2018, *Qualitive Research*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stoc). 20.

[7] Sensing, 20.

Limitations

As this thesis included both laity and clergy, the public speaking skill level was varied among the group. This could be a limitation of the research because those with a lower skill level could be intimidated by those of a higher skill level and not score as well in the evaluation. Also, within the different categories of educators, the level of education varies significantly, with the educational level ranging from a high school education up to a Master of Divinity. Although the participants of the project did not know each other's educational level, those with more training on the topic may have been perceived as performing better than those without training.

Additionally, those recruited for this project were all individuals interested in increasing their skill level when it comes to preaching and teaching. This is a limitation because it may not be representative of the population as a whole due to these individuals being more sensitive and aware of their strengths and shortcomings in this area. Those who participated in this study showed a willingness and desire to continue to be transformed, and demonstrated the potential for growth before the study even began.

Participation in this research was voluntary and involved a time commitment on the part of the participants. Therefore, a limitation is that the researcher had no control over participants who chose to drop out nor at what point in the research a participant chose to do so. One drop-out did occur after the first conference, and the participant's information was not used in the final research presentation. This person's information was appropriately discarded by the researcher.

Time would also be a limitation. Although the researcher had plenty of time to complete the project in full, the more time devoted to the study could possibly yield stronger results. This will be addressed in the conclusion, but the potential for a long-term cohort study could show stronger results.

An additional limitation is the possibility that participants believed they wanted to improve but had a set psychological mindset that blocked them from fully engaging in the training. Motivation to improve, as well as having a growth mindset, is essential for real and lasting change in any area.

Another limitation is that preaching and teaching are contextual; therefore, the style and methodology utilized by each participant may vary based on their ministry context. Although participants can be provided with general skills with the intention of improving their self-efficacy, the skills may not translate as well in their ministry context. The researcher attempted to mitigate this issue during the first and second conferences by asking participants about their own ministry setting. During the second conference, the researcher and participant brainstormed ways to incorporate more of what they learned, and they discussed how they felt, and how their findings could translate to their own research setting.

Additionally, the purpose of this thesis was to work with individuals on how they present a message; therefore, this project is limited to delivery rather than content. This was made clear to participants and it helped the researcher recruit more participants, since issues of doctrine were not discussed.

A final limitation is the researcher's background coming from a historically black university for his Master of Divinity. This preaching style is very different from traditional white protestant preaching. In addition, the researcher's undergraduate degree is focused on public speaking and rhetoric. Although the skills gleaned from these two educational institutions lend the researcher credibility, it may lead to participants not feeling as though they are able to relate to the researcher as well.

Delimitations

In order to ensure the highest quality and the integrity of the research, the researcher imposed several constraints on the project. These delimitations are established in order to ensure the highest integrity possible while also making sure that the D.Min. action thesis is a spiritual gift to the community of believers and is useful for the future building of the body of Christ. The first constraint was that participants were recruited for this thesis from different area churches and ministry contexts. None of the participants were staff members or subordinates of the researcher. This was to ensure participants did not feel that they had to participate and could be open and honest about their struggles in their ministry context.

The second delimitation for this thesis was that recruitment and participation in the thesis were voluntary. All participants received and signed an informed consent document outlining the expectations for participation, as well as how the information collected from them will be used for the project. This is standard practice in research involving human subjects. None of the participants recruited were from protected categories in order to ensure that all participants were comfortable with the project and aware of what was expected of them and how their information would be used and protected going forward.

Additionally, every effort has been made to ensure confidentiality, and the researcher appropriately disposed of any identifying documents at the conclusion of the research period.

Due to the time commitment required for participation in this project, the researcher limited participation in this project to no fewer than ten and no more than twenty participants. Thirteen participants started the project, and twelve completed the project. This proved to be a good sample size and allowed for room to discuss and analyze without having too many people in the room voicing their thoughts and opinions.

Assumptions

The researcher made several assumptions in this research, the first of which is that the participants desire to improve their public speaking abilities due to the commitment they made by participating in this research.

The second assumption is that all participants believe that the work of a Christian educator is to present life-changing, Christ-centered messages to the people they are serving.

A third assumption was that all participants have a working knowledge of the Bible as a sacred text and believe in the tenets of Christianity as laid out in the Apostles' Creed.

Another assumption was that all participants have experience in crafting messages for an audience.

The researcher assumes that a gap exists between effective communication of Christian messages and the equipment of Christian educators.

The researcher assumes that all participants took their participation seriously and were open and honest in their reporting.

The researcher also assumes that all participants made any necessary changes suggested by the researcher to improve their preaching and/or teaching and reported on the changes made and the reception of the message based on these changes.

The researcher also assumes that all who participate will inform the researcher of any apprehensions as laid out in the introductory module and informed consent document.

The researcher assumes that the participants are in contact with their home congregation and have obtained their support on the journey of educational improvement.

The participants are able to craft theologically appropriate messages that fit the context in which they serve.

The final assumption is present as a reminder that growth must occur in the community, and the congregation not only have roles as disciples of Christ, but also as a community of believers who will support their clergy and laity on their journey.

Project Overview

Chapter 2 begins with a review of literature that utilizes both religious and secular studies regarding public speaking, preaching, self-efficacy, growth mindset, and metacommunication. The review of literature is followed by the theological framework for the project. The theological framework is a review of Scripture that lays the Biblical foundation for the project's relevance and how it is intended to enhance the Kingdom of God on Earth. Concluding chapter 2 is the theoretical foundation which interweaves the review of literature and the theological framework.

Chapter 3 covers the methodology utilized in the project, which is mixed methods by using quantitative and qualitative data to determine if a training program enhances the self-efficacy of Christian educators. The chapter provides a detailed explanation of how the research was conducted, as well as data analysis and participant demographics. Chapter 3 also covers the timeline of the project, data collection methods, and discusses data triangulation within action research.

Chapter 4 discusses the results of the project, including suggestions for further learning given to each participant after completion of the research. Participants received the coaching free of charge and were given additional resources and opportunities for growth. Chapter 4 details the findings from the research and ties the results back to the problem, purpose statement, and thesis of the project. Discussion on conclusions drawn from the research is also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion, which summarizes the findings and offers suggestions for further study. Chapter 5 also includes discussion surrounding best practices and limitations of the research project. Discussion surrounding the applicability of the project to other ministry settings is also addressed. Additionally, suggestions for stakeholders, including pastors and ministry leaders, are also included.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

The following chapter includes a review of literature that focuses on the delivery of a message and how tone and movement impact meaning. The review of literature also includes an analysis of shifts in styles of preaching and teaching. The review of literature is followed by a theological base that provides a Scriptural lens through which this study is to be viewed. The final section of this chapter is the theoretical foundation that illuminates the current realities and relevance of this thesis project, as well as ministry models that may seem similar on the surface but have deficiencies that this thesis project addresses.

Review of Literature

The amount of time allowed for preaching and teaching in many Christian communities occupies a significant portion of weekly gatherings. Although the disciplines of preaching and teaching are given a significant place of honor in Christian communities, little attention has been given to the way in which a message is delivered. Much of the existing literature surrounding preaching and teaching emphasizes the structure and content; however, a large gap exists in the literature surrounding the methodology of delivery. Pulling from other disciplines and existing literature on the topic of message delivery, many themes emerged and are discussed in the review of literature.

Semantics of the Preacher/Teacher

According to Fry Brown, the orator's academic, social, and vocational experiences will influence the academic level in which they speak.[8] This can be challenging if not kept in check because congregations with lower reading levels may struggle to comprehend a highly cerebral

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[8] Teresa Fry Brown, *Delivering the Sermon: Voice, Body, and Animation in Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 20.

sermon, and it is the deliverer's job to adapt to the audience's vocabulary and vernacular.[9] In addition to the deliverer's role in ensuring the accessibility of the sermon, the deliverer must also be able to adapt to the setting, mood, and general attitude of the congregation. This can be done through the use of stories, jokes, or riddles, in a way that removes barriers and allows the listener to feel a connection to deliverer.[10] Spurgeon[11] would concur, as he argues that the more comfortable a deliverer becomes with his congregation, the more the deliverer will feel at ease, and reading the congregation will seem more natural. George Whitfield also used this idea for his sermons approximately 250 years ago.[12] He wrote that the preacher should be able to preach to the people in such a way that the lowest academic level present should be able to glean something from the sermon. In his open-air preaching, it was not uncommon for him to have farmers, field hands, and indentured servants present to hear his messages.[13]

Balancing Delivery and Content

As time progresses, the methodology within delivery appears to be shifting. Jana Childers claims that the day of the traditional, three-point message is over, and that messages must not only be crafted differently but must also be delivered in a more engaging way.[14] While the three-point sermon served a purpose for many years, in the grand timeline of Christianity, the three-

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[9] Randall Deville, "The Application of Adult Learning Principals in Effective Preaching," (D. Education Diss., Walden University, 2012), 1.

[10] Erica Britt, "Can the Church Say Amen": Strategic Uses of Black Preaching Style at the State of the Black Union." *Language in Society* 40, no. 2 (2011): 211-33. www.jstor.org/stable/23011808.

[11] Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 380.

[12] Alan Cotney, "Persuasive Elements in the Teaching of George Whitfield," (D. Min. Diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014).

[13] Cotney, "Persuasive Elements in the Teaching of George Whitfield."

[14] Jana Childers, *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 42.

point sermon was short-lived and should not be clung to out of tradition. A key component of George Whitfield's sermons was a desire to utilize Biblical and doctrinal truths in a way that was easy to understand.[15] Christianity is an auditory religion with much of the content being vocally presented instead of read. In fact, it was not until the 17th century that the Bible was made easily accessible to the common population where they could read for themselves what the Scriptures say, although it was not until recently, when literacy rates worldwide began to dramatically climb, that people did not solely rely on their preacher in order to hear the Scriptures. Sermonic moments still hold a large piece of the Christian worship service. Regardless of how beautifully crafted the sermon is or how many points the sermon possesses, it is not a sermon until it is verbally delivered.[16] The metacommunication of sermonic delivery is an often overlooked but important component. Tone, posture, and kinetic movement are basic metacommunication skills covered in introductory public speaking courses. Spurgeon emphasizes this by suggesting that, although body language is a relatively small component of sermonic delivery, preaching a sermon is a holy endeavor, meaning that all areas should be given diligent attention.[17] Updegrove would disagree with Spurgeon, writing that preaching is a performative action, emphasizing that rehearsal and performative preparation and body language are equal to, if not more important

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[15] Cotney, "Persuasive Elements in the Teaching of George Whitfield."

[16] Michael Duduit, *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 393.

[17] Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students,* 370.

than, the content of the message.[18] Updegrove is not alone in this viewpoint; Childers and Byron

also hold this stance and place a large emphasis on the performance aspect of the sermon. [19] [20] [21]

Religious scholars on Tone and Vocal Variety

Within metacommunication, it is essential to evaluate how vocal tone impacts audience

reception. Spurgeon claims that it is "ministerial suicide" to preach in a monotone, saying that

God gives preachers the ability to have vocal variety.[22] Spurgeon is historically viewed as a

quality preacher, yet possessed a style that may not be well received in modern times. However,

vocal variety is still relevant and should be utilized in message delivery. Fry Brown writes that

vocal delivery should be easy and authentic, which seems to contradict Childers, Byron, and

Petievich, who state that it is important for pastors to vocally rehearse and do various

conditioning/exercising activities in order to develop a strong preacher voice.[23] [24] [25] [26] These

three also express that the preaching delivery is a performance that should be developed in the

moment, whereas Britt also stresses that it should be based on verbal and/or nonverbal feedback

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[18] Olivia Updegrove, "Passionate Preaching: Applying the Methods of Performance to Preaching Preparation," (D. Min. Diss., Claremont School of Theology, 2012).

[19] Updegrove, "Passionate Preaching."

[20] Childers, *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre.*

[21] Kyle Byron, "Sacralizing the Sidewalk: Street Preachers, Mobile Bodies, and the Rhythm of Performance," (Master of Arts Thesis, University of Wyoming, 2016).

[22] Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students,* 153.

[23] Fry Brown, *Delivering the Sermon.*

[24] Childers, *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre,* 62.

[25] Byron, "Sacralizing the Sidewalk."

[26] Carla Petievich and Stille, Max. "Emotions in Performance: Poetry and Preaching," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 54, no. 1 (2017): 67-102. https://doi.org/10.1177/0019464616683481

from the congregation.[27] The flaw with Britt relying on the feedback from the congregation is that feedback is sometimes limited and it is the role of the Christian educator to provide an engaging, relevant message regardless of the feedback they are receiving. This is especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic where many Christian educators have had to prerecord messages and/or use live social media platforms to continue providing church ministries. Effective delivery cannot be halted merely because no audience is present, and could potentially hold a higher level of importance in a post-COVID-19 world where digital church has become more relevant.

<div align="center">Body Movement in Preaching</div>

Gesticulation can aid or distract the way the message is received.[28] Spurgeon presents the idea that awkward gestures manifest because of nerves and a lack of knowledge regarding what to do with the hands.[29] He suggests that it is best to keep your hands still if you are doubtful of whether or not it would aid the sermon.[30] This seems to contradict Fry Brown's idea that authenticity is the most important element of sermon delivery.[31] If a person is naturally awkward, than their authentic self may display awkward kinetic movement. If they are being authentic in their delivery, the awkward quirks may actually assist the audience in connecting with them, removing the barrier of the Christian educator being "untouchable" or "above" the congregation. Leaning into quirks and imperfections can enhance the audience's connection with the Christian

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[27] Britt, "Can the Church Say Amen."

[28] Fry Brown, *Delivering the Sermon.*

[29] Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students.*

[30] Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students,* 374.

[31] Fry Brown, *Delivering the Sermon,* 60.

educator. In regard to body movement aiding the sermon, Yang states that sermons are more effective when there is an interaction instead of just a presentation.[32] This means that the story should be told with body movement. This emphasizes Cotney's point regarding Whitfield as one who performed his sermons with passion,[33] and brings to mind if sermons should be more interactive, with audience response, and how much body movement is appropriate before becoming a distraction. The answer is most likely contextual based on the environment that the Christian educator is in. Updegrove cites Albert Mehrabian in saying that in-person communication is over 50% body language, near 40% percent tone, and about 5% percent spoken word.[34] The delivery of a sermon should not focus primarily on the written word but should focus on vocal and physical presentation. Otherwise, Christian educators are missing out on a higher level of audience reception. Unfortunately, many of the existing training programs primarily focus on the crafting of a message and less on the delivery.

Studies of Similar Purpose

Carlos completed a study in 2019 that looked specifically at how a training program could better prepare preachers. His findings show success among vocational ministers but did not explore volunteers. Furthermore, his study was based on improving content and spiritual engagement and did not consider the confidence level of the Christian educator.[35] Many congregations only have one vocational minister, so it is important to ensure that development of

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[32] Sunggu Yang, "Homiletical Aesthetics: A Paradigmatic Proposal for a Holistic Experience of Preaching," *Theology Today* 73, no. 4 (2017): 364-77. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040573616669563

[33] Cotney, "Persuasive Elements in the Teaching of George Whitfield."

[34] Updegrove, "Passionate Preaching."

[35] Emmanuel P. Carlos, "Speaking with God's Words: Preaching Training for a Multi-Site Church" (D. Min. Diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2019).

Christian educators is available to all who serve in ministry, regardless of whether they are

vocational or volunteer. Sundararaj completed a study in 2014 that emphasizes the power

effective preaching has on increasing emotional intelligence.[36] Although this research focuses on

the impact a pastor can make on his congregation, it does raise the possibility of a training

program increasing the self-efficacy of participants. Gulleyan completed a study in 2017 which

found that the ability to change the mindset of parishioners to be possible with effective

teaching.[37] Sundararaj and Gulleyan provide complementary results that suggest effective

training programs do lead to change within a religious setting. This is especially true if the

training program gleans information from both the religious and secular worlds.

<center>Secular Study of Public Speaking</center>

The secular discipline of communication studies not only analyzes the art of preaching

and teaching but also offers college coursework for individuals who wish to improve public

speaking skills, and many of these programs have been evaluated in relation to self-efficacy. In

addition, it appears the secular discipline of communication studies seems to place a higher value

on education and the analysis of that communication than the religious disciplines of homiletics

and Christian education. The section below will report on literary findings that are specific to the

secular discipline but have high relevance to Christian educators.

Surprisingly, there is little research regarding the use of self-evaluation in public

speaking and even less when specifically looking at self-evaluation for Christian educators.

Schreiber, Paul, and Shibley explored the development of a public speaking rubric that would be

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[36] Joseph RajPaul Sundararaj, "Bridging the Pulpit and the Corporate World: The Ministry of Preaching to Enhance the Role of EQ for Ethical Decision Making" (D. Min. Diss., Aquinas Institute of Theology, 2014).

[37] Beri B. Gulleyan, "Armenian Presbyterian Congregation in New Jersey: Transitioning of some Members from Ethnocentric Mindset to Kingdom Missional Mindset" (D. Min. Diss., Nyack College, Alliance Theological Seminary, 2017).

used in classrooms beyond one specific professor.[38] The scholars explain that the limitation to a consistent base rubric would be that a generic rubric is limited in its ability to cover multiple subject areas.[39] They also did not evaluate the effects of self-evaluation, although the educational community does regard self-evaluation as an effective instructional model. For the purpose of this dissertation, content is not a concern, making it more practical to use a standard rubric for self-evaluation.

Public speaking style is contextual.[40] Boromisza-Habashi and Reinig write about contextual elements of public speaking and how each community develops its own unwritten rules.[41] They go on to express that the greatest weakness of public speaking education in the United States originates from the one course having too much stylistic focus, and little to do with the practical aspects of how to deliver a message.[42] The diversity of covering many types of speeches does not leave much time to focus on public speaking anxiety, delivery methods, and discovering one's self as a public speaker. In the United States, communication-related fears are greater than in other parts of the world. This is likely due to the lack of informal public speaking in American culture. People growing up in countries such as Kenya give small speeches, similar

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[38] Lisa M. Schreiber, Gregory D. Paul, and Lisa R. Shibley, "The Development and Test of the Public Speaking Competence Rubric," *Communication Education* 61, no. 3 (2012): 205-233. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2012.670709

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ann Neville Miller, "An Exploration of Kenyan Public Speaking Patterns with Implications for the American Public Speaking Course," *Communication Education* 51, no. 2 (2010): 168-182. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520216505

[41] David Boromisza-Habashi and Lydia Reinig, "Speech Genres and Cultural Value in the Anglo-American Public Speaking Course as a Site of Language Socialization," *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 11, no. 2 (2018): 117-135. https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2018.1428765

[42] Ibid, 119.

to toasts, on a regular basis, and the practice is embedded into their culture.[43] The lack of

frequency could be the reason for the claim that Americans fear public speaking more than

death.[44] Nordin and Broeckelman-Post dispute this statistic and state that public speaking is

feared more *often* than, not *more* than death.[45] Regardless, public speaking is a fear that is not

easily overcome. Fear of public speaking can often manifest itself in a variety of ways such as

low verbal output, non-fluency, physical discomfort, and trembling; however, positive

experiences can lead to higher self-efficacy in public speaking.[46]

The majority of scholars within the secular discipline of communication studies

acknowledge that proficiency in verbal communication is essential to success in one's academic,

personal, and professional life.[47] Nordin and Broeckelman-Post take this perspective further,

calling effective communication a "highly sought and rare skill."[48] These scholars point to the

need for public speaking training and how it is relevant in multiple areas of life, which include

preaching and teaching. The solution provided by the academic community is the introductory

communications course, in which most college students enroll during their first year of college.

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[43] Miller, Ann Neville. "An Exploration of Kenyan." 170-171.

[44] Miller, Ann Neville. "An Exploration of Kenyan." 169.

[45] Karin Nordin and Melissa A. Broeckelman-Post, "Surviving or Thriving? Demographics Differences in Mindset Across Introductory Communication Course," *Communication Education* 69, no. 1 (2020): 85-104. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2019.1679379

[46] Michael J. Beatty, "Situational and Predispositional Correlates of Public Speaking Anxiety," *Communication Education* 37, no. 1 (2009): 28-39. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634528809378701

[47] Luke LeFebvre, Leah LeFebvre, and Mike Allen, "Training the Butterflies to Fly in Formation: Cataloguing Student Fears about Public Speaking," *Communication Education* 67, no. 3 (2018): 348-362. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2018.1468915

[48] Karin Nordin and Melissa A. Broeckelman-Post, "Can I get Better? Exploring the Mindset Theory in the Introductory Communication Course," *Communication Education* 68, no. 1 (2019): 44-60. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2018.1538522

Simonds and Hooker write that over 80% of degree programs require an introductory communication course and that 87% of the material covered in the course focuses on public speaking.[49] It is implied that the other 13% focuses on small group and interpersonal relations but is not clear nor relevant. With communication skills being of such high importance, it remains unclear why only one course in the discipline is required for the majority of degree programs.[50]

The Christian educator's engagement is essential to growth in self-efficacy as a public speaker. Travis suggests having students draw a picture of what they believe public speaking to be and utilizing that as a tool to boost the confidence of the participant.[51] Although this was used in a college class, the principal could easily be adapted for other public speaking training. LeFebvre offers additional resources for instructional methodology by suggesting "Team Based Learning" as an effective way forward for speech education.[52] Team-based learning provides instant feedback to the participant and creates a community culture of learning together and having group success.[53]

According Allen, Hunter, and Donohue having training such as the introductory communication class has historically been viewed as the most effective way to improve in public

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[49] Cheri J. Simonds and John F. Hooker, "Creating a Culture of Accommodation in the Public-Speaking Course," *Communication Education* 67, no. 3 (2018): 393-399. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2018.1465190

[50] Ibid

[51] Eryn Travis, "Drawing Students into Public-Speaking Success," *Communication Teacher* 34, no. 2 (2020): 118-124. 10.1080/17404622.2019.1628995

[52] Luke LeFebvre, "Team-Based Learning for the Basic Communication Course: A Transformative Pedagogical Approach," *Review of Communication* 16, nos. 2-3 (2016): 192-212. https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2016.1187454

[53] Ibid.

speaking.[54] Other scholars such as Nordin and Broeckelman-Post present the claim that the class does not help if there is not a growth mindset.[55] Allen, Hunter, and Donohue do not outright rebuke this claim; however, they introduce the concept that all humans possess some level of public speaking anxiety and conducted a study that shows that any of the main treatments utilized in reducing this anxiety, which can lead to improvement, will be sufficient. Bodie defines public speaking anxiety as a type of social anxiety that stems from fear of poor evaluation/feedback from the audience.[56] This definition is applicable to even the most experienced Christian educator as they face fear of the message not being received well by the audience. The main anxiety-reduction techniques that they explore are systematic desensitization, cognitive modification, and skills training.[57] Systematic desensitization involves utilizing relaxation techniques in an attempt to teach the speaker to self soothe when they feel anxiety related to public speaking. Cognitive modification is encouraging the speaker to vocally address their fears with others. Skills training is focusing on delivery style modifications that can be made to give the speaker more confidence, thus reducing anxiety.[58] Allen, Hunter, and Donohue's study shows that although all three methods are effective, to truly reduce anxiety, boost confidence, and improve public speaking, the instructor must incorporate all three styles.[59]

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[54] Mike Allen, John E. Hunter, and William A. Donohue, ""Meta-Analysis of Self-Report Data on the Effectiveness of Public Speaking Anxiety Treatment Techniques," *Communication Education* 38, no. 1 (2011): 54-76. 10.1080/03634528909378740

[55] Nordin and Broeckelman-Post, "Can I get better?" 45.

[56] Graham D. Brodie, "A Racing Heart, Rattling Knees, and Ruminative Thoughts: Defining, Explaining, and Treating Public Speaking Anxiety," *Communication Education* 59, no. 1 (2010): 70-105. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520903443849

[57] Allen, Hunter, and Donohue, "Meta-Analysis of Self-Report Data," 58-59.

[58] Ibid, 58.

[59] Ibid, 62.

This is partially contradicted by Nordin and Broeckelman-Post who argue that people can only improve if they have self-confidence and a growth mindset.[60] Within preaching and teaching, it would seem that one would have to incorporate both thoughts in order to increase self-efficacy. Although on the surface it seems that growth mindset comes from the speaker and it is not heavily impacted by others, this is not the case. Feedback such as, "you did a good job," "I could never do what you are doing," and "you are so gifted," damages growth mindset.[61]

Having a growth mindset leads to increased self-efficacy in the public speaking classroom,[62] and is also linked to improvement in the way an audience receives the speaker.[63] Lack of growth mindset does not necessarily mean the student is not engaged; however, it could be a sign that he lacks the confidence to attempt improvement. Larseingue, Sawyer, and Finn also note that expectations can vary significantly between the audience/evaluator and the presenter.[64] When these differences are vocalized, it alters the self-efficacy of the speaker. If the evaluation is more positive than expected, self-efficacy is increased and when the evaluation is more negative than expected, self-efficacy decreases.[65] Based on this research, it can be implied that participants who do not have a growth mindset are not going to benefit from any training unless they change the way they view the situation and/or themselves.

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[60] Nordin and Broeckelman-Post, "Can I get better?" 45-47.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Nordin and Broeckelman-Post, "Surviving or Thriving?"

[63] Ibid.

[64] Matt Larseingue, Chris R. Sawyer, and Amber N. "Components of Students' Grade Expectations for Public Speaking Assignments," *Communication Education* 61, no. 4 (2012):428-447. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2012.708765

[65] Ibid.

Complicating factors that add to public presentation in congregations reside in power dynamics. Beatty addresses the increase of anxiety when public speaking students feel that they are being graded.[66] Although a typical Christian educator does not receive a typical grade for his message, there is often a committee or supervisor present in the congregation that has power over the presenter. This power dynamic may be equivalent of a professor grading a student. Rubin, Rubin, and Jordan mention that holistic training within public speaking will significantly reduce apprehension that is created by the presence of an authority figure.[67]

Simonds and Hooker address the need for trained professionals to assist speakers at all levels in reducing their public speaking anxiety.[68] Simonds and Hooker bring up the issue of instructors not being equipped to assist speakers in overcoming their public speaking anxiety due to their own anxiety about public speaking. The authors argue that this can stunt the growth of the speaker rather than assist them, the solution being to develop resources that assist instructors in addressing public speaking anxiety.[69] The conclusion of the Simonds and Hooker article implies that structural change must occur from all levels involved in public speaking if participants are going to be empowered to improve.[70] In preaching and teaching, congregants, church leadership, and the Christian educator must work together to improve the Christian educator's abilities.

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[66] Beatty, "Situational and Predispositional." 30.

[67] Rebecca C. Rubin, Alan M. Rubin, and Felicia F. Jordan, "Effects of Instruction on Communication Apprehension and Communication Competence," *Communication Education* 46, no. 2 (2009): 104-114. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634529709379080

[68] Simonds and Hooker, "Creating a Culture of Accommodation," 394.

[69] Ibid, 396-397.

[70] Ibid, 397.

Theological Foundations

As a Christian study, designed to better equip the saints of the Church to serve in the ministry of preaching and teaching, the need to be faithful to the Bible is essential. Preaching and teaching are core mandates of the New Testament Church. Jesus models this throughout his ministry as found in the Gospels and appoints Peter and the other disciples to fulfill this mission after his earthly ministry is concluded (Matt. 16:13-20, Matt. 28:16-20). The Bible illustrates the relevance of this study and a sample of the many scriptures supporting the study is included in this section.

Metacommunication in the Hebrew Bible

A student of both the Hebrew Bible and metacommunication can easily see the writers utilizing metacommunication in the first few chapters of the Bible. In the second story of creation, God is anthropomorphic by etching Adam out of the dust and breathing life into him (Gen. 2:7). In this early illustration, the verb for "form" is also used to describe the actions of a potter, which provides beautiful imagery into the kinetics of God.[71] The use of metacommunication is abundant throughout the Old Testament. This section offers reflection on a small sample of Old Testament metacommunication.

In Genesis 18, Abraham is attempting to intercede on behalf of the sinful city of Sodom. The men who were with him left, and Abraham remained "standing before the Lord" (Gen. 18:22). The detail of metacommunication is often overlooked in commentaries; however, Dockery implied that the willingness to remain "standing" was a trait that God found favor upon.[72] In Genesis 28, Jacob has a dream where the Lord is standing on a staircase and speaking

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[71] Donald E. Gowan, *From Eden to Babel: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 1–11*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1988), 39.

[72] David S. Dockery, ed., *Holman Bible Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992), 129.

to him (Gen. 28:13). Joseph interprets a dream where Pharaoh is standing (Gen. 41). When gathering the faithful to follow God, "Moses stood at the camp's gate and said…" (Exodus 32:26). In Exodus, the Israelites would stand and watch Moses as a sign of reverence (Exodus 33:9). In Deuteronomy, the writer explains that Levi was selected to "stand and minister" to God's people (Deut. 18:5). Moses also says that "The Levites will address every individual Israelite with a loud voice (Deut. 27:14). In 1 Kings, Elijah is told by God to "stand at the mountain before the Lord" (1 Kings 19:11). Earlier in 1 Kings, when Solomon prays, he is described as kneeling with his hands raised to heaven (1 Kings 8:54), then "he stood up and blessed the whole Israelite assembly in a loud voice" (1 Kings 8:55). These instances represent a small fraction of the utilization of metacommunication in the Old Testament. Even if subtle or subconsciously, the writers felt it important to note the body language that was being used to communicate about God, showing that metacommunication has an important place in the Old Testament.

<center>Growth mindset in the Hebrew Bible</center>

Growth Mindset is spiritual mandate in the Bible. In the Old Testament, there are multiple instances where a lack of a growth mindset prohibits people from reaching their full potential. Typically, the Old Testament characters who possessed a growth mindset are viewed as heroes of the faith, whereas those without are viewed as wicked.

When Moses encountered God's presence in the burning bush, he was scared and doubted his ability to lead God's people (Exodus 3). However, he did not remain with a fixed mindset, but shifted to a growth mindset. At first, his speech impediment was a weakness, but by surrendering to God and having a growth mindset, he was provided for and was able to develop into an incredible leader.

<center>31</center>

Moses deployed twelve spies to explore Canaan (Num 13). The spies discovered that the land was beautiful and was what God desired for them (Num 13:27). However, there were giants and ten of the twelve were too scared to challenge them (Num 13:28-29). Only two possessed the growth mindset, and they are the only ones able to reach the Promised Land. The ten who did not possess a growth mindset died in the desert. This story illustrates that possessing a spiritual growth mindset is believing that God can do mighty things through His followers.

Saul and David were both anointed by Samuel to serve as king (1 Sam 10, 1 Sam 16). Both received the same divine blessing, yet both sinned. David possessed a growth mindset where he repented and sought God with all of his heart (2 Sam 12). Saul, on the other hand, did not possess a growth mindset, which led to his suicide (1 Sam 31:12). Their anointing by Samuel was essentially the same; however, a repentant heart and a mindset of spiritual growth made the difference and led to David being viewed as a great king and having a mighty heart after God (1 Sam 13:14).

Jonah was called by God to preach in Nineveh (Jonah 1). Out of fear and rebellion, Jonah did not possess a growth mindset, and fled God's calling. His lack of growth mindset caused him to be eaten by a great fish (Jonah 1:17). After his time in isolation, praying while in the belly of the fish, Jonah received the calling from God again and obeyed. The story of Jonah shows that a growth mindset can be developed and nurtured by God if a person is willing to go through the process of transformation.

Haggai, the prophet, received a revelation from God that the temple would only be rebuilt if people were willing to get to work (Haggai 2). By possessing a growth mindset, the temple would be restored to its former glory and the presence of God would be even greater than it was before. Without the growth mindset, the temple would still appear to be "much of nothing"

(Haggai 2:3). Haggai 2 illustrates that a growth mindset does take time and hard work, yet God rewards the hard work and exceeds expectations.

In each of these stories, God provides a means of growth for the faithful who are willing to open up their hearts and minds to God's promises. Fixed mindsets lead to spiritual and, sometimes physical, death; however, a growth mindset leads to fulfillment in God. It is through a growth mindset that humans are able to become more complete and holy. The stories from the Old Testament mentioned above share a common thread—that God desires for His people to constantly be engaged in positive change for the Kingdom through a growth mindset. Had the individuals mentioned above not had a growth mindset, their stories may not be remembered, or if remembered, would not be an example of faith, but rather a warning to have a shift in mindset.

Metacommunication in the Gospels

Often overlooked in reading is the concern that Gospel and Epistle writers had for the methodology of delivery in preaching and teaching. The writer of Matthew describes John the Baptist as fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy being the one "shouting in the wilderness" (Matt. 3:3). By the gospel writer utilizing this passage, he is establishing the message and presentation of John as a contemporary of Isaiah, a great evangelist of God.[73] During this period, it was believed that a true prophet must possess a "clear voice" in order for people to pay attention to the message from God.[74]

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[73] Ralph Earle, "The Gospel according to St. Matthew," in *Matthew-Acts*, vol. 4, The Wesleyan Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 20.

[74] John Chrysostom, "Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel according to St. Matthew," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. George Prevost and M. B. Riddle, vol. 10, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1888), 63.

Matthew describes that Jesus "sat down" during the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1).

Luke omits that detail; however, he did mention that Jesus "raised his eyes to his disciples"

(Luke 6:20). The combination of these two descriptions paints a better picture of the relevant

preaching and teaching style of Jesus. The Matthew verse presents a Messiah who is sitting as a

king and is surrounded by his followers.[75] This Christological statement shows that body

language, or metacommunication, establishes authority and power for a speaker. The Luke

passage contrasts this, giving Jesus the appearance of a servant who should be listened to and

which shows that delivery is contextual. Other examples of Jesus sitting while teaching include

being with his disciples at the Mount of Olives (Matt. 24:3) and sitting in a boat to teach (Mark

4:1).

On the Mountain of Transfiguration, Jesus "came and touched them" (Matt. 17:6). This

frequently overlooked experience was geared to get the attention of his followers and ensure that

they realized they were experiencing reality. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus teaches in the

synagogue "the people were amazed by his teaching for he was teaching them with authority, not

like the legal experts" (Mark 1:22). The use of the word authority makes an implication about

tone and confidence, rather than message content. Although his message was divine, readers

must not overlook the fact that his delivery was also divine. In that same passage, Jesus is seen to

be "speaking harshly" to a demon (Mark 1:25). Once again, this is addressing Jesus' tone while

delivering a message, emphasizing that the delivery methods of communication were highly

regarded in the time of Christ.

In multiple of the miracles of Jesus it was common for him to reach out and touch the

sick or to assist them in other ways (Mark 1:41, Mark 2:12, Luke 5:13). When Jesus healed a

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[75] Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 35.

deaf man in Mark 8, not only does he put his finger in the man's ears and spit and touch his tongue, he sighs and says "ephphatha" (Mark 8:22-28). Not only does this encounter describe his body movement, the description of him sighing deeply provides readers with a visual into his mannerisms and tone during the encounter. The writer is once again making note of Jesus' body movements instead of just his words, painting a clearer picture of Christ's delivery. In Luke's account of Jesus' ascension into heaven, Jesus is described as lifting his hands while blessing the disciples (Luke 24:50).

Metacommunication in Acts

The utilization of metacommunication extends beyond the gospels. In the book of Acts, descriptions of metacommunication are frequent. In Acts, Peter is often depicted as standing, compared to Jesus who was often described as sitting: "Peter stood among them" (Acts 1:15), "Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared…" (Acts 2:14). Peter standing illustrates multiple things. One is that the author wanted to emphasize the urgency and strength of Peter's message.[76]

In addition, the mention of Peter as one who stands while preaching shows that he is not a king, but a *servant* of a king. During this time, it was not uncommon for a follower to imitate the style of his predecessor. Peter's metacommunication shows that he did not view himself as one to take over for Christ, but as one to be a servant whose life points to Christ. As seen in the verse above, the writer in Acts is also concerned with vocal tone. This is illustrated many other times; "They lifted their voices in unison" (Acts 4:24), "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking God's word with confidence" (Acts 4:31). The author points out the confidence

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[76] Charles W. Carter, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *Matthew-Acts*, vol. 4, The Wesleyan Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 500.

in the way the speaking occurred, in contrast to the environment, which was shaken, but the followers had more confidence in their speaking.[77]

Other examples of metacommunication being emphasized in Scripture include, "But Stephen, enabled by the Holy Spirit, stared into heaven and saw God's majesty and Jesus standing at God's right side. He exclaimed…" (Acts 7:55-56), "Falling to his knees, he shouted…" (Acts 7:60), "Raising his voice, Paul said…" (Acts 14:10). All of the above references indicate concern with vocal tone and kinetic movement, showing the relevance of effective communication in the early church.

New Testament Mandate for a Spiritual Growth Mindset

As noted in the Review of Literature, the possession of a growth mindset is essential to increase self-efficacy in the Christian educator. The New Testament repeatedly presents a mandate for followers to develop a growth mindset. Romans 12 verses 1 and 2 state:

> "So, brothers and sisters, because of God's mercies, I encourage you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God. This is your appropriate priestly service. Don't be conformed to the patterns of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is – what is good and pleasing and mature."

Since all are sinners, Paul is demonstrating that the power of grace calls us into a life of transformation.[78] The plural "mercies" shows that followers of Christ do not deserve the gift of transformation but are given it by faith.[79]

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[77] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 100.

[78] Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1985), 195.

[79] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 320.

Although the academic study of a growth mindset is often viewed as secular and modern, it is rooted in Scripture and is a part of the mandate of discipleship. Christian educators must seek a growth mindset in order to fully live out their faith. Earlier in Romans, Paul addresses people living by the flesh versus by the Spirit and states that the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:5-8). The message of God is that of hope; the message of the world is not. Paul is once again providing a look into a godly growth mindset by stating that when your mind is according to the Spirit you have life and peace, which leads to growth.

In Ephesians 4, Paul is once again addressing corruption and improper thought. Verse 23 states, "Instead, renew the thinking in your mind by the Spirit." At first glance, this Scripture seems to be focusing strictly on not living in sin; however, verse 24 goes on to state, "And clothe yourself with the new person created according to God's image in justice and true holiness." This means that, in addition to dealing with sin, Paul is addressing God's plan for His children to be holy. Holiness is linked directly to obedience.[80]

When Jesus gave the Great Commission to his disciples, he commanded his disciples to teach (Matthew 28:16-20). This was during a time where his disciples were already worshipping him, and he called them to do more. This additional calling was to teach or proclaim the Gospel. So, by being a renewed person who is clothed in justice and true holiness, you have to have a growth mindset of obedience to Christ.

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[80] Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 1998), 421.

Theoretical Foundations

The amount of research conducted regarding metacommunication and self-efficacy in preaching and teaching is limited. Most of the available resources originate in secular studies on public speaking, but still do not address self-efficacy; they focus instead on reduction of anxiety when communicating, which is comparable to self-efficacy. If anxiety is reduced, confidence should theoretically increase, leading to greater self-efficacy. The training of a Christian educator on delivery is typically limited. Vocational ministers are occasionally part of an evaluative process that may include his teaching and preaching skills, but do not offer assistance in improving deficiencies. Many volunteer Christian educators are unlikely to ever receive an evaluation out of fear that they may resign from the unpaid position and leave the ministry in need of a new volunteer to fill this position. The biblical mandate to equip leaders and empower them to be successful in ministry is extensive and clear; however, most churches lack the ability and desire to train people in message delivery. It appears that most congregations would dismiss and/or retrain a Christian educator who is lacking in theological competency but seem to be hesitant to address inadequacy within delivery, which could potentially cause as much trouble among the congregation.

Some preachers in larger churches do have a sermon team that provide the preacher with feedback prior to Sunday morning. These teams are beneficial as a tool to improve delivery; however, the feedback presented is often opinion-based, instead of research-based and lacks the authority that a professional could provide. For example, a seminary-trained preacher may not be receptive to a critique from an elderly person who is not well-educated, whereas he may from a peer. Another weakness of this model is the fear a congregant may have of critiquing someone with pastoral authority. This suggests that the unlevel playing field between clergy and

parishioner could potentially hinder authenticity in the feedback setting. The strength of the sermon team model is that it provides feedback even if it is not as effective as it could be. Also, if the sermon team is meeting on a weekly basis, a level of trust and transparency should theoretically develop, which will assist in providing more authentic feedback. This model, when healthy, also encourages the preacher, raising his self-efficacy by increasing his confidence. Although these committees exist, there are no known formal studies of their effectiveness. Further evaluation of this model could be useful in congregations that utilize this method of feedback. Although the training provided in this thesis project is not an ongoing program, like a sermon team, this model could potentially serve as a step toward Christian educators seeing the value of a feedback team.

It is not uncommon for college students to enroll in a basic speech course as a part of their general education requirements. Basic speech courses typically require the student to deliver multiple speeches and receive feedback from both his peers and his professor. This model is effective at building confidence and improving public speaking skills; however, many Christian educators have not participated in this type of course in years and could use a less formal and more relevant refresher in the art of public speaking. Additionally, new methods and theories are constantly emerging regarding effective public speaking to meet the new generation and public speaking in light of technological changes. This refresher could also benefit Christian educators, helping them to realize the new changes and potentially to increase the effectiveness of their public speaking . These classes also do not necessarily include the variety of context that is found in a church setting. For example, a children's minister may need specialized training on how to be engaging while teaching young children, which is typically not part of a college basic public speaking course. Also, as noted in the literature review, the majority of public speaking

courses have evolved to now include small group and interpersonal communication. Although these skills are essential and should be developed, it reduces the amount of time that can be spent on public speaking, thus, creating a greater need for additional training. Additionally, the college course focuses on development of a message, which limits how much time can be utilized for delivery methodology.

Since a large number of Sankofa's clients are United Methodist, the lay speaking model of the United Methodist Church is valuable to explore. Historically, lay speakers were utilized in absence of a clergyperson. It would be his job to provide basic Christian education to the congregation in the absence of the presiding clergyperson. These lay speakers typically did not have a formal education, and many were blue-collar workers such as farmers and factory workers. Over the past fifty years, the denomination has modified instructions for lay speakers and provides them with a one-day training session that focuses on how to design a sermon. Lay speakers can choose to further their education in the program and become advanced lay speakers; however, advanced lay speaking courses focus on content rather than delivery. Basically, the lay speaking program within the United Methodist Church trains people in doctrine and theology, rather than delivery. The common conception within the denomination is that a lay speaker is qualified to preach in the absence of a pastor; however, they are provided with little direction in how to do so effectively.

Another model, or, more accurately, unofficial preparation, is having a youth pastor gain experience teaching youth in hopes that one day they will be effective communicators to be the primary teaching/preaching pastor of a congregation. There are variations of this model that pull from other staff members who are not serving youth. The expectation is that, through trial and error, the necessary skills to effectively preach will be developed. This ministry practice is

negligent as it uses youth as guinea pigs and hopes for the best. It would be more effective if specialized training was provided to the youth pastor so they could be effective where they serve while growing and developing skills for future ministry. Another problem with this model is that the senior pastor has to take the role of supervisor and mentor for the mentee. The presence of a different mentor or ministry coach could provide an additional nurturing perspective. Finally, at times, the youth pastor may be intimidated by the skills of the senior pastor and feel that in order to be accepted by the congregation, they must replicate the style of the senior pastor. The lack of authenticity could be damaging to their journey.

This thesis project differs from the models mentioned above. It is not a formal college class and is tailored to the needs of the Christian educator. Although not as formal as the college class, this model provides more structure and feedback than the sermon committee model. This model utilizes an outside ministry coach without a conflict of interest with the participants and can provide the participant with both positive and negative feedback without the fear of harming the relationship. The ministry coach is also a seminary-trained clergyperson, which gives more credibility to the participants and also helps the ministry coach be relatable. This thesis project has a different focus than the lay speaker model of the United Methodist Church, as it emphasizes delivery over content. It is not designed to replace theological and doctrinal education but should be utilized as a supplement to assist with self-efficacy within delivery. The model is also not discouraging churches from mentoring staff members such as youth pastors with hopes of them becoming the future senior pastor. This model is simply offering additional resources during the mentoring process that connects the youth pastor with people outside of the congregation and provides an additional perspective to that of their mentor pastor.

The review of literature points to contextualization as an important component of effective delivery. The context will vary based on the body to whom the message is being delivered. The most fruitful use of training for a Christian educator would be for him to find his personal way to be comfortable in the environment in which they are speaking. The expectation of tone, semantics, and body language is not universal, nor should it be treated as such. For example, in a contemporary sanctuary it may be appropriate for a preacher to stand away from the pulpit and move around frequently. However, during a funeral held in the same sanctuary, this could be viewed as insensitive and it may be more appropriate for the preacher to remain stationary behind a pulpit as a sign of respect, as well as offering a calm, warm presence of a priestly figure rather than the that of a untamed, evangelical preacher. Having discretion in these different metacommunication devices is essential for Christian educators to make the greatest impact in their setting. Additionally, being comfortable with these situations is also of importance. In addition to style being contextual, it is also personal. Upon occasion, a pastor's successor has a completely different delivery methodology from his predecessor. Although it may be helpful for the new pastor to adapt to vernacular in other contextual elements, the new pastor should not have to change who he is in order to mimic his predecessor. Fear of not being as good as the predecessor oftentimes can create additional anxiety that is not helpful.

Public Speaking Anxiety is another recurring topic in the review of literature. The research suggests that all public speakers, regardless of experience, have or will have public speaking anxiety. A holistic approach to designing an intervention around self-efficacy should include acknowledgement and coping skills for dealing with Public Speaking Anxiety. Research suggests it may manifest in participants who lack the humility to acknowledge that they possess some level of anxiety in relation to public speaking. The greatest chance of this occurring may be

Christian educators who possess extensive experience and are nervous about acknowledging fear which they view as a weakness. Another potential reason for this is when a Christian educator has been speaking/teaching for many years and feels that he should no longer have Public Speaking Anxiety because he has been speaking/teaching for so long. Encouraging participants to address their anxieties surrounding public speaking and to learn coping mechanisms and techniques is one area the mini-conference will address. This is why the pre-training for the mini-conference is based on developing a spiritually based growth mindset.

Growth mindset is another recurring theme that must be included in the development of a project on self-efficacy. The research in the literature review supports the correlation between growth mindset and the ability to increase self-efficacy. Growth mindset has been an area of frequent study and evaluation within the educational community as a necessity for improvement. Within faith communities, specifically in regard to Christian education, the research is limited as to how the concept of growth mindset has been applied to preaching and teaching. In fact, growth in delivery methodology is an area where practical theologians have produced limited research, leading to limited resources for growth.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter builds upon the theological and theoretical foundations from Chapter 2, while addressing the problem defined in Chapter 1. Additionally, this chapter covers intervention design and implementation, as well as participant recruitment. This project is considered action research which is defined as a practical research process that contributes to a perceived need in a community.[81] This thesis project used mixed methods research to capture both qualitative and quantitative data. The data collection instruments that were used for this thesis project were Likert-scale survey questions, recorded interviews, and recorded messages. Participants self-reported their self-efficacy, using Likert scales, regarding delivering messages in ministry settings. The researcher also recorded interviews with participants, who submitted two recorded messages to the researcher: one before receiving the intervention, to provide a baseline for the researcher to denote improvements needed, and another after receiving the intervention, for the researcher to evaluate improvements that had taken place after the intervention. In order to ensure that the researcher's evaluations of the messages were consistent, he used a rubric to evaluate each message, and the participant self-scored their own rubric for both messages. The purpose of this was to compare their own self-perception with that of the researcher.

Intervention Design

The intervention's design, presented below, was designed in order to provide a tool to increase self-efficacy among Christian educators who may lack specialized training in public speaking. Data was collected from the intervention to determine how successful the tools developed are in addressing the project thesis.

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[81] Sensing, 2018.

Participant Recruitment

The researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Liberty University to complete this project. See Appendix A for IRB approval. Participants over the age of eighteen, who served in some area of ministry in local churches in Middle Tennessee, were recruited, and received an informed consent document outlining what the researcher intended to collect and what would be done with the collected data. Inclusion criteria for participation in the thesis project included being over eighteen, serving on staff or in a volunteer position at a local church in Middle Tennessee, and not belonging to an identified vulnerable population group. The researcher did not discriminate against any participant who met the inclusion criteria. Participants were recruited using social media ads, personal connections with area churches, and emails/phone calls to individuals with whom the researcher had relationships, to encourage them to invite individuals who met the inclusion criteria in their personal networks. All participants who connected with the researcher face to face, by email, phone, or social media received a formal email from the researcher inviting them to take part in the thesis project, outlining what the purpose of the research was, and what risks and benefits were associated with it. They were also given an informed consent document to fill out, sign, and return if they were interested in participating. Interested participants were only contacted in this way by the researcher one time, and, if no response was received, the researcher assumed they were no longer interested and terminated their application for involvement in the thesis project.

The research did not involve deceiving research participants, and the purpose of the thesis project was fully explained to research participants prior to receipt of the informed consent document, which was provided to research participants before any data collection occurred. No participants who were subordinate to the researcher or whom the researcher had professional

authority over, were recruited for participation in the research. The researcher worked to minimize bias in the study by being self-aware of facial expressions, not making assumptions about participants, not asking leading questions, and working to not give positive affirmation of a participant's response to lessen the risk for acquiescence and social desirability bias.

The only foreseeable risk to participants was the data being lost or stolen. The researcher ensured that computer files were appropriately protected and used a locking file cabinet that only the researcher has access to which stored any paper consent forms and survey instruments until the project had been completed, at which time all computer files were deleted, and paper forms were shredded. Participants had the option of receiving copies of their recorded messages before they were destroyed by filling out and signing a form. All identifying information was kept confidential and recordings were used to evaluate self-efficacy in delivering messages and would not be released to outside parties. To ensure confidentiality of research participants, the researcher developed a code to link to participant identities. This codebook was kept in a locking file cabinet that only the researcher had access to and would be destroyed upon completion of the research project. All interviews took place over the phone or in a secluded office space where conversations could not be easily overheard. Additionally, all message recordings took place in churches during non-operational hours to ensure privacy of the participants.

This research did not study at-risk or vulnerable populations. Potential benefits to participants who completed this intervention were increased self-efficacy when it came to delivering messages to Christian audiences. This research also has a potential benefit to society in that increased self-efficacy in Christian message delivery engages audiences and can help further develop their Christian faith. Participants did not receive monetary compensation for their

participation in this thesis project but received the intervention free of cost, which has a monetary value of two-hundred dollars.

Participant Demographics

The study began with a sample size of thirteen individuals. However, after the first conference, one of the individuals had to drop out due to personal/family reasons. This individual's information was destroyed and is not included in the results or demographics. Of the twelve remaining individuals, six were male and six were female. The average age of the participants was 45.08. Eleven were white and one was African-American. Four served as preaching pastors, three served as lay leaders/Sunday School teachers, two were youth ministers, two were Sunday School teachers, and one was a children's minister. Denominational affiliation in the group was six United Methodist, five non-denominational, and one Baptist. Four participants had obtained a master's degree at the time of the study, three had obtained a bachelor's degree, one had some college, and four had a high school diploma or GED. Of the participants, four had paid positions in their churches and eight were volunteers. The study took place in Middle Tennessee and included both over-the-phone elements, as well as in-person elements.

Intervention Overview

After recruitment, participants completed a pre-survey and interview with the researcher. The audio from the interview was recorded to assist the researcher in disseminating notes. Participants then video recorded themselves presenting a message and submitted it to a secure DropBox link that they had been given access to; this information was completed during the first three weeks of the project launch. If participants needed assistance recording their message, the researcher assisted them with recording capabilities to remove barriers and to ensure all who

were interested in participating in this project had access to the equipment and the capability to use it. Upon receiving the messages, the researcher evaluated each method using a rubric to ensure the scoring on all messages was consistent. The participants also scored their own rubric to compare their perception of the message delivery with that of the researcher's. During week four of the project, participants were sent, electronically, videos and readings to complete. On Saturday of week four, participants gathered for a one-day mini-conference which had four modules that linked meta-communitive methodology practices to Christian teaching. During weeks five through eight, participants completed a post-survey, video recorded their second message and sent it via a secure DropBox link to the researcher, and then completed their final interview with the researcher with audio recorded for the researcher's notes. The researcher provided any needed assistance recording their second message. After the messages had been received, the researcher evaluated the messages with the same rubric used to score the first set of messages. The participants also evaluated their messages via their own rubric. It was beneficial for them to see how they rated their own growth, as compared the researcher's ratings. The researcher and participant had a final conference to discuss the progress made during the project and discuss areas for growth. The areas of growth included activities and strategies for participants to increase their levels of self-efficacy and thus increase their preaching/teaching skills.

First Survey Instrument

The first survey or "pre-survey" was emailed to participants after they returned their signed consent form to participate in the research. The survey was hosted on the site SurveyMonkey and consisted of twenty-one questions. The survey consisted of demographic questions as well as questions used to measure the participant's self-efficacy when it came to

speaking in group settings. These questions were Likert-style survey questions and included the following:

1. I feel comfortable preaching/teaching in front of a Sunday School class or other small group.

2. I feel comfortable preaching/teaching in front of a congregation.

3. I am confident in my vocal projection.

4. I am confident in my body movement when preaching/teaching.

5. I know what to do with my hands when preaching/teaching.

6. My church/ministry setting has unwritten rules about where to stand when preaching/teaching (i.e. behind a pulpit).

7. I feel restricted in my movement when preaching/teaching.

8. My congregation empowers me to be myself when preaching/teaching.

9. I have received negative feedback from a member of the congregation and/or class I was teaching.

10. I receive positive feedback when I preach/teach.

11. If a pastor were sick and provided me with his/her sermon manuscript, I could deliver the sermon well.

12. I think it is good to watch a video of myself preaching/teaching to analyze my delivery.

This survey took an estimated 10-15 minutes for participants to complete and the results were immediately available to the researcher. The responses to the Likert scale questions were: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Answers to the questions were all required, so participants would not be able to submit the survey unless

they completed them all. This was done to ensure the data did not have missing gaps. This part of the intervention took one week to collect.

First Message Recording

After completing the pre-survey, participants were asked to record themselves giving a 10-to-20-minute message. The recording had both audio and video elements, so the researcher could pick up on the participants' metacommunication during their message as well as the vocal delivery and tone of the message. The researcher assisted participants who were not comfortable recording their message by meeting them at a location and setting up the equipment to record the message for them. This was done to remove barriers for those who lacked access to the technology to record messages and those who were not comfortable enough with technology to record a message on their own. After the message was recorded, participants submitted them to secure DropBox links assigned to them by the researcher.

Once the researcher received the messages, the evaluation of the messages began. First, the researcher watched each message in its entirety to get a feel for the style of the participants. After watching the message the first time, the researcher evaluated the message based on a predetermined rubric. The rubric evaluated the participant's eye contact, vocal variety, body language, and confidence. The rubric was rated 1-4 with 1 being needs the most improvement and 4 being little to no improvement needed. Quantifying these four aspects of public speaking made it easier for the researcher to ensure the message evaluation was consistent for each participant and also made it easier to see areas of growth between the first and second message recordings. The participants were also asked to evaluate their own message to compare with the evaluation the researcher gave. The rubric used was the same one used by the researcher to ensure consistency. The researcher gave participants a three-week window to record and submit

their messages for review. The researcher reviewed the messages as they came in. All participants had submitted their messages to the researcher within two-and-a-half weeks.

First Conference

The first conference was completed through phone calls and Skype sessions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent shutdowns and social distancing recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prior to the phone call/Skype call, the researcher would look over the participant's survey answers and use the questions to help guide the conversation. The researcher would also share the evaluation results from the first message recording and would ask the participant to do the same. Additionally, the researcher would ask participants about their comfort level with public speaking, what they felt were their strengths and weaknesses when it came to public speaking, and what they hoped to gain from the training. These interviews were recorded by the researcher with the participant's consent. This was to ensure the researcher could replay the conversation if needed when compiling notes and making recommendations and was also helpful when identifying themes and coding the data. The first conferences were scheduled and took place over the course of two weeks, following the submission and evaluation of the first message recording.

Modules and Mini-conference

The distance learning modules and one-day mini-conference were designed to be the intervention for this research. By receiving these, participants would ideally show growth between the first and second recorded message and would show greater self-efficacy toward public speaking between the pre-survey and the post-survey. After participants sent in their recorded messages and participated in the first interview, they were sent a link to a distance-learning module to complete. This module took between 45 minutes and one hour to complete

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and included videos for participants to watch and articles for them to read. The researcher's

expectation was for the module to be completed prior to the mini-conference. Due to the

shutdowns imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the distance-learning aspect of the intervention

was easy for all participants to complete from home. The distance-learning module contained the

following framework:

- <u>Online Educational Module: Establishing a Biblically-based growth mindset and basic
  framework (45 minutes, online)</u>
  - o Introduction (5 minutes)
  - o Devotional (5 minutes)
  - o What is a growth mindset and why have a growth mindset? (10 minutes)
  - o How does a spiritual growth mindset impact my preaching and teaching? (5
    minutes)
  - o Finding Your "Why" (5 minutes)
    - Excerpt from "Let Your Life Speak" (3 minutes)
  - o Closing Prayer (2 minutes)

The one-day mini-conference was held in a hybrid format due to the social distancing

procedures recommended by the CDC. Depending on the comfort level, participants had the

option of taking part in the mini-conference in person as originally intended or online through

Zoom. Procedures to ensure the safety of participants were put into place and included requiring

all participants to wear a mask covering their mouth and nose (if a participant did not have a

mask, one was provided to them by the researcher), frequently sanitizing commonly-touched

surfaces (i.e. door knobs), and spacing the seating so participants could remain six feet apart at

all times. The conference was 4½ hours long and took place in between meal times so food

would not need to be served. Although food was not served at the mini-conference, water and coffee were available to participants and were pre-poured and set at their places prior to their arrival. Individual creamers and sugar packets were also placed at each seat to minimize contact and to lessen the risk of spreading COVID-19. The mini-conference was scheduled before the project began and participants were made aware of the date during their initial communication with the researcher. The mini-conference was held on June 13, 2020 from 8 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at a local church in Middle Tennessee. To practice social distancing, most activities occurred in a large fellowship hall with some components occurring in the sanctuary.

The mini-conference consisted of four modules that covered the following areas: What is public speaking to you? Evaluating why you speak and dealing with fears; Tone and Vocal Variety; Body Language; and Putting it all Together. Each module was designed to take one hour to complete and included the following components: introduction, devotional, lesson, activity, wrap-up, and closing prayer. It was important to end each module in a prayer to keep the participants and researcher grounded and focused on the work they were doing and the reason for it. The researcher addressed different learning styles of the participants through videos, conversation, and activities. This was carefully thought through to ensure different learning styles would be addressed in the intervention in an effort to make it as accessible and inclusive as possible for the participants.

Post-survey

The post-survey was sent to participants via email after the one-day mini-conference. The post-survey, like the pre-survey, was housed on SurveyMonkey. The post-survey contained fourteen questions designed to capture the participant's self-efficacy regarding public speaking. The questions from the post-survey are listed below.

1. I feel comfortable preaching/teaching in front of a Sunday School class or other small group.

2. I feel comfortable preaching/teaching in front of a congregation.

3. I am confident in my vocal projection.

4. I am confident in my body movement when preaching/teaching.

5. I know what to do with my hands when preaching/teaching.

6. My church/ministry setting has unwritten rules about where to stand when preaching/teaching (i.e. behind a pulpit).

7. I feel restricted in my movement when preaching/teaching.

8. My congregation empowers me to be myself when preaching/teaching.

9. I have received negative feedback from a member of the congregation and/or class I was teaching.

10. I receive positive feedback when I preach/teach.

11. If a pastor were sick and provided me with his/her sermon manuscript, I could deliver the sermon well.

12. I think it is good to watch a video of myself preaching/teaching to analyze my delivery.

13. I feel that I have improved in my public speaking ability as a result of this training.

The survey took 10-15 minutes to complete and the results were measured against the participant's pre-survey results to identify areas of growth the participant had experienced between surveys. The final question, "I feel that I have improved in my public speaking ability as a result of this training," was asked to gauge how effective the participant felt the distance-learning modules and mini-conference were in increasing their self-efficacy when it came to public speaking. All of the questions were required so the participants had to complete all

questions before they could submit the survey. This ensured all of the data was collected and did not have any gaps.

Second Message Recording

The second message was recorded in a manner similar to the first. The message was required to be between 10-20 minutes and had to include audio and video so the researcher could see the metacommunication being presented by the participant, as well as their vocal projection and tone. If participants had issues recording the message themselves, the researcher offered to meet them and record the message for them to eliminate barriers. After the message was recorded, participants were asked to submit the message to an assigned, secure DropBox link.

After receiving the recorded messages, the researcher watched the message in its entirety before evaluating it to get a feel for the participant's style of delivery. After watching the message for the first time, the researcher used the same rubric from the first recorded message evaluation to evaluate eye contact, vocal variety, body language, and confidence. Once the researcher assigned a value to each of the four areas being measured, the researcher compared the evaluation of the second recording to the evaluation of the first one to see if the participant had progressed in any of the categories or if they had regressed. The results of this were notated and were used to drive the conversation at the second conference. The participants were also asked to evaluate their second message and compare it to the evaluation from the first. This was discussed at the second conference, and the participant's self-scoring was noted. The researcher also identified clips from the first recorded message and the second to show the participant during the second conference. These clips were isolated based on the growth shown by the participant so the participant could see the progress they made as a result of this intervention.

Additionally, the research made note of areas for further growth and development for each participant to discuss during the second conference.

Second Conference

The second conference took place after the participant's second recorded message was evaluated and compared against the first recorded message's evaluation. The researcher first isolated clips from the first recorded message that led to lower scores, clips from the second recorded message that demonstrated growth, and clips from the second recorded message that showed a need for further growth. The second conferences were completed in person so that the researcher and participant could watch the clips together and discuss the evaluation of the first recorded message, the evaluation of the second recorded message, and areas for further growth. The second conferences were approximately one hour long and took place in isolated locations where the researcher and participant could discuss the results. The researcher provided the participant with direct feedback on the second message and discussed how the participant could continue to grow and improve in the target areas. The participant was asked to bring his two evaluations (the self-evaluations from the first and second messages) and was asked to explain the ratings. This was useful for participants to see the difference between their perception and the perception of the researcher (an "outsider"). The participants were also asked to report on areas of weakness that they would still like to work on. These were noted and the researcher gave the participants advice and suggestions for ways to improve.

Data Analyzation

The data captured was a mix of quantitative data (which was captured using surveys) and qualitative data (which was captured using a rubric to evaluate messages and codes to code themes from the first and second conferences). This section discusses the different methods for collecting the quantitative and qualitative data, as well as the analysis methods used to determine growth. Microsoft Excel was used for most of the calculations and SurveyMonkey's built-in data analysis software was also used for analysis.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data for this project was captured through SurveyMonkey during the pre- and post-surveys. Using descriptive statistics, the researcher measured the mean for each of the twelve pretest Likert scale questions for the group against the mean for each of the twelve post-test Likert scale to see if growth occurred. Likert scale questions were used due to their ability to measure more than a simple "yes" or "no." Likert scales are commonly used in action research and are used to measure beliefs and attitudes of a person.[82] This was essential for this research project to measure self-efficacy or a person's beliefs or attitudes about their ability to complete a task; in this case, to deliver a message. Additionally, the researcher measured each individual's pre-test and post-test scores for each of the twelve questions against each other to determine if growth occurred at an individual level. The responses to the Likert scale questions were quantifiable through the following data coding: Strongly Agree = 1, Agree = 2, Neither Agree nor Disagree = 3, Disagree = 4, and Strongly Disagree = 5.

After collection, the data was put into an Excel sheet and data was coded using the coding mechanism listed above. This gave the researcher the ability to see individual and group

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[82] Sensing, 114.

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level data. After all participant data was exported to the Excel sheet and coded (question 16 on the pre-survey and 8 on the post-survey had to be coded inversely), the individual growth for each question was determined using the formula (Post – Pre)/Pre. This gave the researcher a percentage of the growth or lack of growth each participant had for each question. After this was determined, the researcher found the cumulative average of the individual growth for each question. The researcher also determined the cumulative average for each individual to determine their cumulative growth as a result of the intervention. Finally, the researcher found the cumulative average of the individual participant growth.

After determining the growth of each participant, question, cumulative question, and cumulative average, the researcher used participant demographics to determine if one demographic showed more or less growth than the others. This was determined by coding the data with each of the following demographic indicators: degree level, participation in public speaking courses, paid or volunteer at their church, and sex. Following this coding, the researcher found the average of the cumulative percentage growth for individuals who fell into each of the categories defined by the above indicators.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data for this project was captured through two recorded conferences with the researcher and two recorded messages. During the first and second conferences, the researcher's goal was to observe and make note of the participant's comfort level with public speaking and to note any strengths or weaknesses the participant offered during the conversation. This data was then coded based on the following categories:

- Anxiety/Fear
- Judgment

- Doubt

- Time

- Inexperience

- Confidence

- Feedback

- Not Knowing Expectations

- Eye Contact

- Hand/Body Movement

- Standing (pulpit, sitting in a chair, on a platform, walking around, etc.)

- Vocal Tone

- Nervousness (sweating, voice cracking, shaking)

- Sermon Delivery Method (memorization, paraphrase, reading off notes, reading off

   transcript)

- Energy

- Vocal Projection

The researcher used these codes to determine if common themes came up during the conferences with participants. The data collected from the first conferences was then used to determine additional areas the group needed to work on during the mini-conference. The themes from the second conference were compared against the themes from the first to see if the discussion surrounding these topics changed from negative to positive thoughts and attitudes toward the theme.

The first and second messages were recorded and reviewed by the researcher using a rubric. The researcher watched the messages one time through without evaluating the message and then

evaluated the messages based on a prewritten rubric the second time the researcher watched the messages. The data collected from the rubric measured eye contact, vocal variety, body language, and confidence. The scale on the rubric was 1-4 with 1 being poor/needs improvement and 4 being excellent/needs little improvement. The researcher compared the scores from the first message to the scores from the second message at both the individual and group levels to see if growth occurred as a result of the intervention. The results of the rubric scoring were shared with the participants during their second conference and suggestions for improvement were given at this time. The participants were also asked to evaluate their first and second messages using the same rubric as the researcher. This information was collected from the participants to compare against the researcher's evaluations. This data was helpful in measuring self-efficacy because it provided another resource to see how the participants' perceptions of themselves changed as participants of the study.

Reliability and Validity

Every research study strives for reliability and validity. Reliability within research is when research results can be repeated using the same or similar methodology.[83] Validity is defined as the accuracy of the representation of the data and the means being measured.[84] It is important to take these two concepts into consideration from the beginning of the planning process for research. Within this study, the researcher spent time reviewing all of the evaluative tools, rubrics, and surveys, to ensure no grammatical or wording errors had occurred. Additionally, the researcher designed the evaluative tools and the evaluation using the literature review as a guide to ensure that the underlying theme of the research were being measured,

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[83] Sensing, 214.

[84] Ibid.

increasing self-efficacy to lead to improved message delivery. All calculations were run multiple times to check the data and ensure no statistical or human errors had taken place when working on the data analysis.

Data Triangulation

Data triangulation is the use of multiple methods to collect data on a topic,[85] which is necessary to give the study more integrity and to allow the researcher to see the data from multiple vantage points.[86] Researchers suggest using at least two different data collection methods; however, more than two methods are ideal. Within this research, the following data collection methods were employed: pre- and post-surveys before, rubrics filled out by the researcher and the participants to rate their message delivery before and after the intervention and coding the conversations during the first and second conferences to find common themes.

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Ethical Considerations

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It is important for a researcher to take into account ethical considerations when beginning work on a project. Questions such as, "Does this project have the potential to negatively impact another person?" and, "How am I going to ensure participant privacy?" are both questions that should be asked at the onset of a research project. In order to receive approval to conduct research, the researcher received approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was required to explain how data would be kept secure and confidential, how privacy would be ensured, and what (if any) harm could come to participants as a result of this project.

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[85] Nancy L. Leech and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie, "An Array of Qualitative Data Analysis Tools: A Call for Data Analysis Triangulation," *School Psychology Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (2007): 557-584. https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1037/1045-3830.22.4.557

[86] Ibid.

This section discusses these ethical considerations and how the researcher prepared for and handled these situations.

Online Data Security and Privacy

The bulk of the data for this project was collected using web-based technology and/or was stored on a computer. The two surveys were both collected using SurveyMonkey, an industry leader in survey software. The data collected was stored in their secure servers and the researcher was the only person with access to the password-protected data. The interviews were recorded with the participant's consent, and the recordings were stored on a password-protected computer to which only the researcher had access. Additionally, the two recorded messages were submitted to the researcher via a secure, unique DropBox link that was sent to each participant to upload their message recordings. The DropBox account was password protected and only the researcher had access. The researcher also took every action to maintain the privacy of individuals during the mini-conference. The researcher did not single out participants or compare participants or their strengths or weaknesses.

In-Person Data Security and Privacy

Paper data was also collected during this project. The signed informed consent documents, the researcher's notes and the codes from the interviews were all stored in a locked file cabinet that only the researcher had access to. Participants were each given a code name under which the information was to be stored. Finally, the rubrics were coded using each individual's unique codename and were filed in a locked filing cabinet along with the codename breakdown. These measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality of the participants.

Participation and Informed Consent

Participation in this project was voluntary, and no one with whom the researcher had power over was invited to the study. All participants were recruited via church connections, friend connections, and Facebook ads. Upon receiving an interested participant's information, the researcher sent him a welcome and introduction email, as well as an informed consent document for him to fill out. Upon completion and return of the informed consent document, the researcher then sent the participant the link for the first survey. The informed consent document outlined the goal and purpose of the research, what was being asked of the participants, if any risks, benefits, or compensation was identified in the project, and how the participant could contact the researcher's superiors should the need arise. The voluntary nature of this project was made clear to all participants who were informed that they had the right to drop out of the project at any time and for any reason. If a participant dropped out of the project, their results were not to be used in the final project and their information would be destroyed to ensure confidentiality.

Risks, Compensation, and Benefits

The only identified risk of participating in this project was normal risks that occur in everyday life, as well as the potential for a breach in confidentiality. This was disclosed to the participants in the informed consent document, and participants were assured that the researcher would make any arrangements necessary to protect participant information. There was no compensation associated with this project, though coffee and water were served at the mini-conference. The identified benefits of this project to the participant was free coaching from a certified clergy life coach. This coaching has an estimated retail value of over $200. This type of coaching will hopefully serve as a starting point for participants to see the benefit and need of having a coaching relationship in their ministry setting.

Summary

The intervention was designed to address the problem of Christian educators appearing to lack specific education in message delivery. This intervention had multiple facets to it and included a mix of online and in-person instruction designed to meet the needs of multiple learning styles. This was achieved through videos, conversation, and activities. The role of the pre- and post-surveys was to measure the self-efficacy of the Christian educator by asking a series of Likert-style survey questions to measure their comfort level and self-confidence in public speaking/teaching. The first and second conferences gave the participants the opportunity to discuss areas of growth and weakness and discuss practical ways to improve the areas they felt needed to be addressed. At the second conference, the researcher was able to give the participant feedback for both of the recorded messages and discuss the growth made between the first and second recorded message. Additionally, the researcher was able to compile a list beforehand to discuss areas for future growth with the participant based on weak areas seen in the first and second recordings. The researcher was able to give practical activities and ideas for the participants to further engage in their journey to greater self-efficacy in public speaking. Having the participants watch recorded messages of themselves and be asked to evaluate them on a rubric was also helpful because it helped in the discussion of perceived weaknesses in a coaching conversation, identification of areas of growth that the participant had undergone, and utilization of self-reflection which, when done in correctly, is believed to be a helpful tool for growth.

Chapter 4: Results

The goal of the research was to increase the self-efficacy of Christian educators when it comes to delivering messages to audiences. Self-efficacy was measured using self-reported surveys with Likert scales and interviews with the researcher. Message evaluation was also conducted by the researcher prior to and after the intervention to measure growth between the first and second messages. The intervention was considered effective and valid if the participants self-reported an increase in self-efficacy and if the evaluation of the recorded message received after the intervention showed an increase in scoring from the first message received prior to the implementation of the intervention. In public speaking, more practice, training, and experience delivering messages leads to greater self-efficacy. The scope of this research is not designed to measure this long-term increase that should naturally occur over a period of time but is intended to measure the effectiveness of a training program to better equip and increase the self-efficacy of Christian educators. Combining the self-reported self-efficacy with the scoring of the messages, the researcher expected to see marginal growth in study participants. This mixed methods approach, which combines qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, provides a fuller picture of the effectiveness of the training program and will better equip Christian educators to deliver meaningful messages to audiences.

Participant Demographics

Thirteen participants began this project and twelve completed it in its entirety. The information from the participant who did not complete the project is not included in the results. 50% of the participants were male and 50% were female. 33.33%[87] of participants had a high school diploma or GED, 8.33% had attended some college, 25% had received a bachelor's

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[87] Unless noted, all decimal points are rounded to the hundredths.

degree, and 33.33% had received a master's degree or higher. 50% of the participants identified their denominational affiliation as Methodist, 8.33% identified as Baptist, and 41.67% identified as non-denominational. 33.33% of participants reported that they hold a paid position at their church and 66.67% reported that they are volunteers at their church. 58.3% reported that they had participated in a public speaking class before and 41.67% reported they never had. 33.33% of participants reported that they had received formal training in Christian education, while 66.67% had not. 41.67% of participants reported that they have received other training in Christian education (non-formal) and 58.33% reported they had not received this informal training.

Survey Results

This section discusses the results of the pre and post-surveys given to participants. As noted in the methodology section, the scoring ranges from 1 to 5, with higher scores representing a greater perceived self-efficacy. An average growth from 2.8 to 4.1 between the pre- and post-surveys was reported. The three areas of greatest cumulative growth for participants was feeling less restricted in their movement (increased from 2.2 to 3.7), ability to deliver a pastor's message from their manuscript in the pastor's absence (increased from 2.8 to 4.4), and viewing it as helpful to watch their own delivery over video (increased from 2.3 to 4.2). The significant growth that occurred in kinetics shows greater comfort in the ability to express oneself authentically as a Christian Educator. Since this intervention did not require congregational or peer feedback, the Christian Educator's growth is based on their own perception of their comfort level. The ability to deliver a pastor's message in his absence highlights that the intervention was not based on improving content but on improving delivery. The growth recorded regarding self-evaluation by watching oneself through video recording depicts a positive growth mindset and

greater self-efficacy. Growth in this specific category may suggest a willingness for participants to continue self-evaluation as they gain more experience.

The three areas that reflected the least cumulative growth for participants were comfort level preaching/teaching in a Sunday School class or small group (increased from 3.8 to 4.6), confidence in vocal projection (increased from 3 to 4.1), and comfort level preaching/teaching in front of a congregation (increased from 2.8 to 4.1). All three of these categories had higher scores in the pre-survey, leaving less room for growth. Since none of the categories experienced a consistent decline, the results present a successful intervention.

A difference in the cumulative growth of participants based on education level achieved was reported. Participants with a high school diploma/GED experienced less growth than participants with some college, a bachelor's degree, and the same as a master's degree or higher. None of the participants with a high school education had received any public speaking training prior to the intervention. See Figure 1.

Cumulative Growth Based on Education	
High School	1.28
Some College	1.56
Bachelor's Degree	1.52
Master's Degree	1.28

Figure 1: Table showing Cumulative Growth based on Educational Achievement

Participants who did not have prior public speaking training (five out of the twelve participants), experienced a greater cumulative increase in all areas measured in the survey. They reported an average growth of 1.38, while those who had prior public speaking training reported an average growth of 1.33. The intervention showed the greatest success among participants

whose highest level of education was some college. This seems to be closely correlated to the participants not having public speaking training; however, it could point to a generalized lack of experience since higher education typically presents a larger quantity of public speaking engagements. Due to the small sample size, the difference between bachelor's and master's growth is not significant enough to draw a strong conclusion except that the intervention is slightly less effective for people of higher levels of education.

Participants who identified as volunteers at their church (seven out of twelve) also reported higher cumulative growth on the survey with 1.39 growth achieved. Those who identified as paid staff members at their church reported a cumulative growth of 1.31. The paid staff members involved in the intervention all served in a preaching or teaching capacity, thus, most likely, they delivered messages on a more regular basis. The increased experience could explain the lower growth from the intervention. However, the cumulative growth in both categories is significant. Females disproportionately reported higher growth on the survey than males, even though equal representation was achieved in the study. Females reported a cumulative growth on the survey of 1.67, while males reported a cumulative growth of 1.06. The results do not make it clear if this is due to females having less experience or possessing a stronger growth mindset. The difference is significant and deserves further study; it is beyond the scope of this research to determine if the results seen regarding this topic can be generalized.

In addition to reporting on growth due to the intervention, participants also reported on their frequency of preaching/teaching and unwritten rules that exist or do not exist in their churches. This information was helpful to the researcher and provided guidance when steering conversation during the first conference. 33.33% of participants reported preaching/teaching weekly to their congregation, 33.33% reported preaching/teaching 1-2 times a month to their

congregation, 8.33% reported preaching/teaching every other month, and 25% reported preaching/teaching a couple of times a year. In terms of unwritten rules in churches, 75% of participants agreed that their church has unwritten rules when it comes to preaching/teaching, 16.67% did not know if these rules existed, and 8.33% reported that their church does not have these rules.

Some of the participants showed a negative growth between the pre- and post-surveys. Many of these instances can be attributed to lack of comprehension of the pre-survey questions or lack of awareness of the realities of their congregation that were made clear after receiving information during the mini-conference. One particular participant had a decrease on the question, "My congregation empowers me to be myself while preaching/teaching." This decrease in growth does not stem from the congregation suddenly unempowering the participant to be himself between the pre- and post-surveys. This participant felt that his congregation empowered him to be himself; however, after attending the mini-conference and learning about embedded traditions and expectations, the participant realized that their congregation does not empower the participant to be himself as he had originally thought. This suggests more awareness of the participants reality, which with the proper mindset, could lead to future growth. However, the averages between the pre- and post-surveys increased significantly for the group as a whole (see Figure 2).
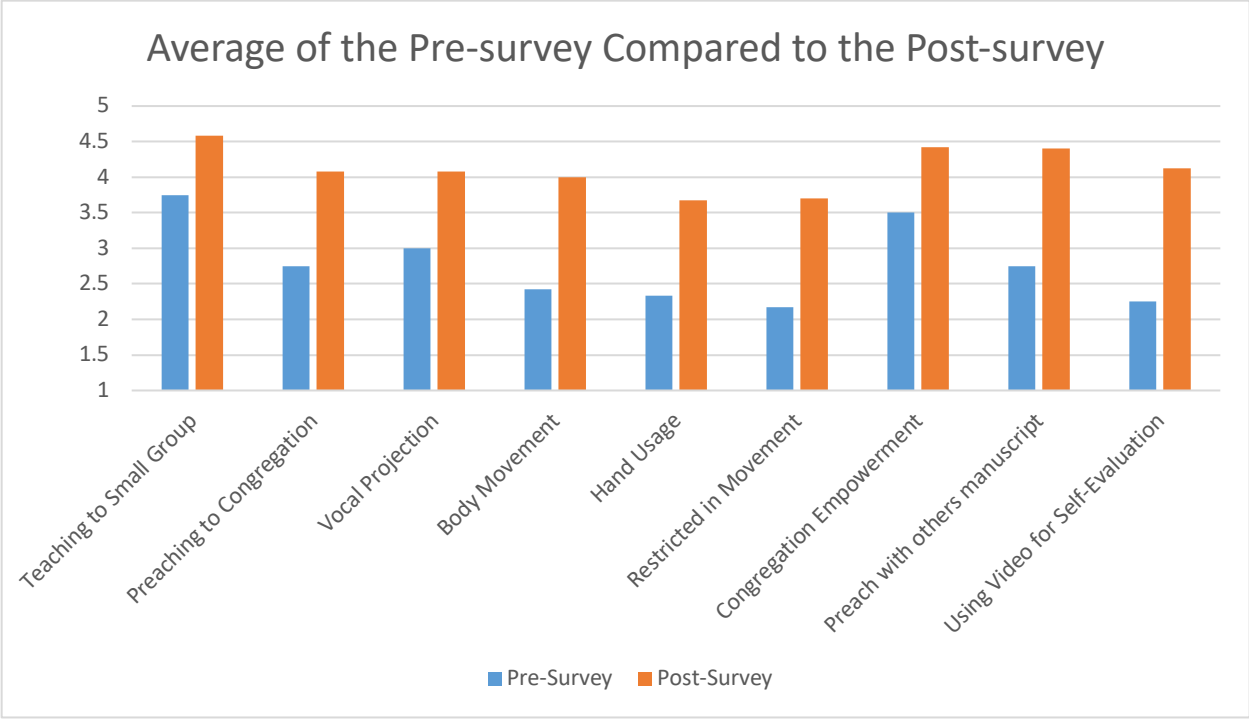
Figure 2: Average of the pre-survey compared to the average of the post-survey.

Rubric Results

This section discusses the results of the self-scored rubric participants filled out when they evaluated their first and second message recordings. The rubric measured four areas: eye contact, vocal variety, body language, and confidence. The rubric was rated on a scale of 1-4 with '1' being 'needs the most improvement' and '4' being excellent. The cumulative growth that participants reported between their self-evaluations of their first and second message recordings was .94 (an increase from 2.33 to 3.27). In terms of eye contact, participants reported an average growth of .83 (an increase from 2.75 to 3.58) between their first and second message recordings. Vocal variety showed a larger average growth of 1.0 (an increase from 2.17 to 3.17) between participants' first and second message recording. Body language and confidence showed the same average growth for participants at .83 (an increase from 2 to 2.83). See Figure 3 below.
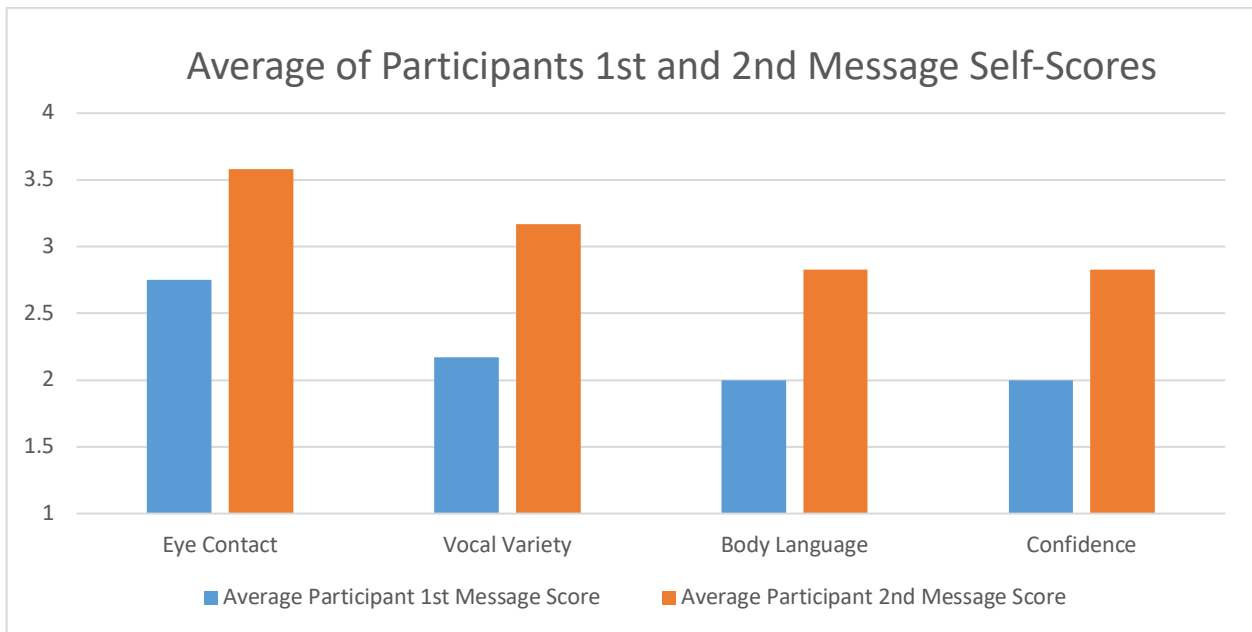

Figure 3: Chart showing the average of participant 1st and 2nd message self-scoring.

Interview Discussion

The interviews took place with participants after their first and second message recordings. Each interview was recorded to assist the researcher in compiling notes and coding the transcript of the interviews appropriately. This section outlines the common themes found in the first and second message recordings and discusses each theme and its context with participants. Where appropriate, names and identifying factors have been changed to protect the identity of the participants and the integrity of the research. The following themes were commonly found in both the first and second interviews with participants:

Anxiety/Fear	Judgement	Doubt
Time	Inexperience	Confidence
Feedback	Not Knowing Expectations	Eye Contact
Handy/Body Movement	Standing (Pulpit, Sitting in a Chair, on a Platform, Walking Around, etc.)	Vocal Tone/Vocal Projection
Nervousness (Sweating, Voice Cracking, Shaking)	Sermon Delivery Method (Memorization, Paraphrase, Reading off Notes, Reading off Transcript)	Energy

Figure 4: Common themes from interviews

Anxiety/Fear

Anxiety and fear during message delivery were common themes in participants' first and second interviews. The context in which this theme was presented by the participants varied, but remained consistent in the sense that participants explained that their anxiety and fear worsened with larger crowds and in contexts where they personally knew fewer of the attendees. This plight was found among 9 out of the 12 participants interviewed and is also a common fear found among the majority of the population when it comes to public speaking. During the first

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interview with participant 3, the participant stated, "When I preach, I have a nervous pit in my stomach, and I don't know what to do." This was echoed during Participant 7's first interview when the participant stated, "…my heart starts racing and I sometimes feel like I want to throw up. [It's] a lot worse when there are more people there." Out of the nine participants who expressed fear or anxiety regarding public speaking, three specifically mentioned the size of the audience and two mentioned their heart racing. In the second interview, Participant 3 said, "I'm amazed at how much better I feel about being in front of a crowd. It's still going to be hard for me, especially when more people come [to church], but [I] think I can handle it better." All nine participants still mentioned being afraid during their second interviews; however, seven of the nine reported that they felt that they could handle it better now that they had coaching and had learned skills to help them through it. Three of the participants downgraded their fear level by specifically using the word "nervousness," which is discussed below. The interviews suggest that fear and self-efficacy has an adverse relationship. Specialized training can lower fear and increase self-efficacy. Further studies could include the topic of fear on a Likert scale to collect quantitative data on the impact that specialized training has on fear.

<div align="center">Nervousness</div>

Three of the twelve participants expressed some nervousness in the first interview, while six participants expressed nervousness in the second interview. Nervousness is considered a downgrade from fear and anxiety, so an increase in participants who felt "nervousness" as opposed to "fear/anxiety" from the first to the second interview, with corresponding numbers reflected in the fear/anxiety theme is considered significant growth. Participant 12's statement seems to sum up the general feeling of the initial three participants in the first interview. The statement was, "Of course I get nervous, doesn't everyone? I mean if you don't get nervous

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sometimes, do you even care about what you're doing? I think being a little nervous is a good thing." The participants that expressed nervousness in the first interview were all actively serving clergy who preach and/or teach on a regular basis. This suggests that practice reduces public speaking anxiety among Christian educators; however, practice does not eliminate nervousness when preaching and teaching. In the post interview, Participant 7 stated that she felt she had developed a "healthier" relationship with fear and its role in her preaching and teaching. The general consensus in the post-interview was a shift toward a healthy perspective and respect for nervousness, with a desire to overcome anxiety.

Judgment

Seven of the twelve participants referred to judgment during the first interview. Participant 4 shared that he often hears people complain about the preacher, which has the participant worried about their sermon reception when they guest preach at their church. Participant 11 did not mention negative comments, but addressed feelings of judgment of people who are preaching and teaching; therefore, the participant feels that people must do the same. During the post-conference, Participant 4 stated "I am trying to let go of fear that I will be judged." Participant 11 stated that "judgment is going to happen regardless. I shouldn't allow it to hinder who I am and look at judgement as an opportunity to improve." Of the seven who were concerned with judgment, the majority showed less worry about judgment and a stronger desire to be comfortable with who they are as Christian educators. It could have been useful to evaluate the participants' willingness to judge other Christian educators to see if the desire to judge others negatively impacts self-efficacy, and this could be an addition to another study. The impact of judging others was an outcome that was not thought of prior to the study and is beyond the specific scope of this study.

Doubt

Doubt seems to be closely related to imposter syndrome, which is when an individual has a persistent worry of being viewed as a fraud.[88] Only two participants discussed feelings related to doubt in their first and second conferences. This category had the least amount of participant discussion, but is nevertheless important to understand in the context of the Christian educator. Participant 2 stated, "…you know, I sometimes feel like I don't belong up there. Like I'm not really prepared because I didn't go to school to be a preacher or worship leader." In the second interview, the researcher asked the participant how her feelings about this shifted after the mini-conference. Participant 2 responded stating, "The session on a spiritual growth mindset is what helped me the most. People are not going to look down on me because I'm not a trained preacher if I'm trying to get better." The thoughts expressed by participant 2 are most likely more common than is found in this study. Participant 2 still has room for improvement, as the second quote still shows insecurity by mentioning "trained preacher." The participant needs to have the confidence to realize that training does not have to be formalized to be effective. However, Participant 2 now possesses a growth mindset which, if nurtured, will continue to improve self-efficacy as a Christian educator.

Time

Time was mentioned in both a positive and negative form during the first interview. Participant 10 stated, "I have been doing this [preaching] for several years. My average sermon is 20 minutes, and, close to that time, I know to wrap it up." This quote expresses the vocational pastors' replies very well. The vocational clergy were confident about time and did not worry

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[88] Darren L. Linville, "Hard to Believe, but we Belong here: Scholars Reflect on Impostor Syndrome," *Times Higher Education*, no. 2362 (2018).

much about it. The volunteers who mentioned time were concerned. Participant 8 stated, "I constantly watch the clock. I'm worried I will go over and people won't care what I have to say." The principal researcher revisited this fear with Participant 8 in the second interview. At the time of the second interview, Participant 8 felt, "I guess practice will make it better, but I don't know that I will ever get over it." The issue of time was not specifically addressed in the modules; however, it could be a strong addition to a training program of this type. Out of the twelve participants, seven mentioned time with three having a positive relationship and feeling confident about time management, whereas 4 showed concern about time being a weakness in their preaching and/or teaching.

Inexperience

In the context of this project, participants who mentioned inexperience used the word to mean they felt insecure about their credentials and ability to preach/teach. This lack of confidence directly relates to self-efficacy and was thus an area of great concern and concentration during the mini-conference. Formal education did not have a protective effect on participants' perceptions of their own inexperience as was theorized. Participants ranging from all education levels had feelings of inexperience that were expressed during the first and second conferences. During the second conference, Participant 1 made the statement, "I guess now I'm certified to be up there in front of people and they have to take me seriously, right?" Though this was said in jest, there is some truth to this. As a result of the mini-conference, Participant 1 felt that they had received some sort of credential which gave them more confidence in their preaching/teaching abilities. Participant 5 discussed her inexperience as a worry that she did not have specific instruction and training in Christian education and felt that others could do a better job. The statement made by Participant 5 during the first conference was, "I don't know

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everything about the topics I teach about. I'm sure there are other people who could do a much better job than I do. I just volunteered to do it [teach Sunday School] because no one else was willing to. I never took a Christian class when I was working on my degree." This sentiment seemed to be felt in one way or another among many of the participants. Five out of the twelve participants made a statement during the first or second conference that related to feelings of inexperience. Allowing participants to have more room to grow and offering training such as this one to boost their self-efficacy and make them feel that they have credentials to preach/teach would help many Christian educators from having feelings of inexperience, which often leads to feelings of inadequacy.

<center>Confidence</center>

Confidence was assessed in both of the self-score rubrics, and was discussed in both interviews. In the interviews, confidence was one of the few categories that was mentioned by all participants. Eleven of the twelve participants mentioned that their confidence was not as strong as they would like it to be. This was consistent with the rubric self-reporting, which only had one participant who scored themselves as a level 4 (the highest) on both message deliveries. One of the twelve stated that he always appears confident, even when he is not, so he does not view it as an area that needs improvement. The others expressed a general concern regarding how confident they appeared. Multiple participants specifically noted that their confidence is situational, and they feel more confident in familiar environments. In the second interview, seven of the twelve participants reported an increase in confidence. On the self-score rubric, nine of the twelve showed growth. This discrepancy implies that seven of the participants have higher self-efficacy in regard to confidence. However, two believe they appear more confident but do not feel more confident.

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Further studies could explore the link between confidence and their perception of the Holy Spirit; also, further studies could evaluate if confidence is often a blind spot in a person's self-perception.

<center>Feedback</center>

Feedback was another topic that was not mentioned much, but is an important area nonetheless. During the first interview, three of the twelve participants mentioned feedback and focused on it being a positive tool that can help the individual improve. All three of the participants seemed to possess a positive connotation with feedback; Participant 10 stated: "The problem that I have with feedback is that it only happens when things are going poorly; other than that it is 'great job,' I want the good, bad, and ugly." The three who addressed feedback during the first interview were all professional clergy. During the second interview cycle, six of the twelve mentioned feedback. Participant 2 stated that she did not feel comfortable providing feedback to her pastor prior to the training but now felt empowered to do so. This shift was an unintended result of the study—some participants became less intimidated when offering positive and constructive feedback to their pastors. Participant 12 stated: "… I have decided to be more vulnerable and encourage feedback from a trusted group in my church. It has only been two weeks, but it is going great." The action to form a team for delivery feedback suggests that the participant is demonstrating an increase in confidence/self-efficacy since he is willing to be vulnerable and encourage feedback. This also shows that the program inspired the participant to put desires into action by seeking effective feedback.

<center>Not Knowing Expectations</center>

Several participants who served as guest teachers and preachers showed concern about not knowing expectations in both the first and second interviews, whereas the established preacher did not express concerns regarding expectations. Specifically, five of the twelve

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participants mentioned concern about not knowing expectations. Participant four summarized the conversations well when he said: "I was a guest speaker at a church when the pastor was away. I preached for 30 minutes… after I finished, I was told that I should have only preached for 20 minutes and I messed up their plans." Oftentimes, churches are unaware that their expectations are out of the norm and do not communicate these expectations well. The expectations churches possess are situational. While this training did not focus on understanding expectations, since this is such a situational area, increased self-efficacy will help Christian educators better prepare for and handle times when they have not met unspoken expectations.

<p align="center">Eye Contact</p>

Eye contact was mentioned in some variation or another by all twelve participants. Three out of the 12 participants referred to eye contact by asking the researcher for affirmation that they used appropriate eye contact in their message recording. As a representative example, Participant 1's question was, "Well, do you think I looked up enough and made people feel welcomed?" A variation of this question was asked by all three participants. One participant expressed that they "know" they use enough eye contact, whereas the remaining eight participants stated that they would like to/need to work on their eye contact when preaching/teaching. One participant mentioned that he fears he might overuse eye contact because he once had a person leave their church, citing that the pastor "looked at me too much" when preaching on difficult topics. During the second interview, the participants responded more favorably to the discussion surrounding eye contact. Participant 5 explained that she was unaware of how much rehearsal can improve eye contact. The participant stated, "In my second message, I practiced before delivering it. I didn't have to look at my notes as much so I could pay attention to the people that were there." The conversations from the first and second

interviews are consistent with the results from the first and second message recording self-score rubric.

Hand/Body Movement

Hand and body movement were mentioned by only three of the twelve participants during the first interview but increased to ten of the twelve participants in the second interview. In the first interview, Participants 4 and 11 expressed their worry about appearing "awkward" during message delivery. Participant 4 specifically noted his large stature and general clumsiness being something that could hinder audience reception. By the second interview, Participant 4 mentioned that it may have been a confidence issue, rather than lack of ability. Just because the participant perceived himself as awkward, does not mean that others did, nor does it mean that it interfered with the message. Participant 11 expressed a desire to embrace her unique personality traits that may appear awkward. Both of these responses suggest a raised self-efficacy as a result of the intervention. Participant 7, however, stated, "I didn't think about it [hand/body movement] much before. Now I can't get it off my mind. I think I do it fine but might need to work on it some more." Although this quote does not show a direct correlation to self-efficacy, it does demonstrate a growth mindset, which in time, should increase self-efficacy. These results are consistent with the survey and self-scored rubrics. The survey question, "I feel restricted in my movement," when inverted, shows growth. This means that after the intervention, participants felt less restricted in their movement when delivering a message. Additionally, the self-score rubric also showed growth in body language from the first message recording to the second. However, body language was scored the lowest on both the first and second messages, with the second message showing growth. This leaves the researcher to hypothesize that specialized training in body movement should be prioritized, as it is an area where confidence is low.

Standing

Although standing would traditionally be categorized with body movement, in this intervention, the researcher found concerns due to physical limitations that hinder the ability to stand for an extended period of time. Participants 3 and 9 addressed concerns with mobility issues and the effects the physical limitation has on their confidence as Christian educators. During the first interview, Participant 9 stated, "I would love to move around more and that's what the preacher before me did. But I lose my balance and have to lean on the pulpit. It's embarrassing." Participant 3 echoed these concerns but was worried about judgment from the congregation because of the medical condition. During the second interview, Participant 9 stated, "…why be embarrassed by who I am? Moses had a stutter; I have a limp." Participant 3 acknowledged that there is no shame in sitting down when delivering a message, and if they are comfortable, the delivery will be better. These statements suggest that specialized training can improve confidence even if their medical condition is permanent. Further studies could specifically explore the impact of physical disabilities on both confidence and perception.

Vocal Tone and Projection

Women were more likely to mention vocal tone and projection during the first and second interviews than men. During the first interview, Participant 5 expressed concern with being heard because her voice is normally softer, going on to state, "…the main preacher has a loud and roaring voice. I sound like a mouse." A total of seven participants shared concerns about the power of their voice and the ability to be heard. Only one of the seven expressed concern of being loud whereas the rest were worried they were too quiet. Participant 2 specifically mentioned that they believed a microphone would make them look weak in comparison to the preacher who normally did not need a microphone in the small sanctuary.

During the second interview, Participant 5 stated, "I have a different type [of] voice and that's okay." These thoughts were echoed by Participant 2 who stated that they should do whatever it takes to get the message across, even if it means using a microphone. The participant who was initially concerned about his voice being loud reported a desire to practice vocal control. Overall, the interviews suggest that specialized training does improve self-efficacy in relation to vocal usage.

Sermon Delivery Method

During the first interview, five of the twelve participants expressed a level of concern with their sermon delivery method. Specifically, the concerns centered around the use of manuscripts, outlines, and other forms of notes. Some of these concerns are addressed in the above section on eye contact; however, the format and existence of an outline or manuscript is what is discussed in this section. Two participants desired to have a full manuscript to read from, two participants desired to have an abbreviated notes page that was in an outline format, and one participant desired to let "the Holy Spirit lead" and not write down anything or rehearse anything before delivering a message. Participant 1 stated, "I don't know how preachers do it without any notes. I get up there and forget what I was gonna say." This fear was echoed in three additional participants' responses. During the second interview, the four participants who preferred a manuscript or outline, all desired to have an outline that they had rehearsed from, with two participants no longer desiring a full transcript. Participant 2 specifically stated, "…the outline's good so I don't ramble, but I don't want to be scripted. If I mess up some, I need to be okay with it; it shows I'm human." The participant who initially did not want any notes still feels that notes are not needed. This suggests that the study could have addressed the omnichronic and omnipresent role of the Holy Spirit and that preparation does not show a lack of faith in God. It

is appropriate to prepare with the Holy Spirit instead of "winging it;" however, this topic may have drifted too far into content/theology which was not the purpose of this ecumenical study. The two participants who shifted from a manuscript to an outline suggests that their self-efficacy has increased, and that they are willing to be more vulnerable in an attempt to provide a more authentic delivery.

<div align="center">Energy</div>

Only three of twelve participants mentioned their energy level, either as being something of concern or something they feel they do well. Participant 3 mentioned that she feels that her energy can come off as too strong for some people. This participant presented to the researcher as a bubbly person with much enthusiasm and excitement for life. The participant's concerns were that people would not take the participant seriously and listen to the message she was delivering if her full personality and energy level came through. After the second message recording, the participant explained that she felt more confident in letting her personality shine through and "…let 'em see my crazy." Though it was said in jest, the participant's concerns that the audience would not view the message as being valid because of how the energy level came across was valid. The participant needed to learn when to use inflections and vocal tone in her delivery to make a stronger impact. Much growth was shown in this area for this participant between the first and second message recordings. The other two participants worried that their energy level seemed low and would "…put people to sleep." One of the participants disclosed a health condition that can affect her energy level, especially in the mornings. After conversation and questioning about the condition and ways the participant copes with the condition, the participant came to the conclusion that getting up an hour earlier on Sunday mornings and starting the morning with a devotion and coffee would better prepare her for the morning and

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would make her more alert and ready to preach. The participant stated that she felt it was not possible to follow all of the information she found online to increase her energy level; however, she felt that one hour earlier with coffee and a devotion would put her perspective in the right place and cause her to feel more confident and alert when preaching on Sunday mornings. Energy level is something that many Christian educators forget to take into account when preparing their message for the week. If a message comes across to an audience as "boring" or "dull," they will not be as engaged and will not grasp the content well. Additionally, the Christian educator will likely be able to sense the nonverbal cues that he is not engaged and will worry that the content of the message was bad or that he does not have the ability to engage an audience. Christian educators should strive to ensure they are well-rested and excited about what they are doing. Whether preaching or teaching, passion shows through, often viewed as energy level in secular culture. A person's energy is contagious, and the audience feeds off it. Sharing the Gospel is often referred to as "sharing the Good News." If we genuinely believe the news is "good," we should be excited to tell others about it.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this DMIN thesis was to provide Christian educators with specific training in message delivery. By providing training, Christian educators will be better equipped to deliver their message. This training focused on delivery, rather than message development. The intention of the training was not to evaluate the audience's reception of the material, but to impact the presenter's self-efficacy in his delivery of the message. An intervention was designed that focused on providing training and coaching regarding public speaking skills. Twelve participants were recruited for this study. The study consisted of a pre-survey, submission of a message, a first interview (that included self-scoring on a rubric), the training modules, submission of a second message, a second interview (that included self-scoring on a rubric), and a post-survey. This study differs from previous studies as its participants were recruited from multiple ministry settings, whereas most Doctor of Ministry thesis projects focus on a specific local congregation. The results of this project indicate that specialized training that focuses on delivery does increase the self-efficacy of Christian educators.

Comparison to Existing Research

Research in this area is limited and seems to be limited mainly to secular studies. The studies mentioned in the review of literature regarding message delivery training are consistent with the results of this action thesis. Previous studies did have a broader focus with a more specific audience, meaning they focused on content and delivery but were limited to a denominational or church affiliation. The ecumenical nature of this project did explore new territory; however, the end results suggest that message delivery training alone can improve self-efficacy even without a heavy focus on doctrine and content. From a secular standpoint, this study also aligns with previous studies that have been conducted in basic undergraduate

communication courses. This study went beyond what is typical in a standard college speech class; however, the results are still consistent with the previous research.

Lessons Learned

The principal researcher learned many lessons over the course of this action research project. It was confirmed that both laity and clergy have a strong desire to be effective vessels of the Gospel. The twelve participants in this study were passionate about serving the church and desired to do their best. They were willing to sacrifice their time and energy in hopes of gaining a stronger skillset regarding their ability to preach and teach the Gospel.

The principal researcher also came to the realization of how abundant the description of metacommunication is in the Old and New Testaments. However, the metacommunication in the Bible is often overlooked and ignored by scholars. The Apostle Paul states: "Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character, so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good (2 Tim 3:16-17)." By viewing the Bible as "God inspired" and "God breathed," as other translations say, it is important that Christian educators value all parts of Scripture, which would include descriptions of metacommunication. This means that the metacommunication found in the Bible is intentional and inspired by God, making it useful for teaching and training so that Christians are better empowered to do what is "good" which, in this case, is being an effective deliverer of the Gospel and confident in who they are as servants of God. This action research thesis has challenged the principal researcher to question why the metacommunication of the Bible is often overlooked by scholars. This has increased the principal researcher's awareness of the intentionality in which the narratives of the Bible are presented. Metacommunication mattered in the Bible and it matters now.

Additionally, the principal researcher discovered that many churches are not equipped with the proper resources to address delivery-related concerns. In many congregations, the head teacher is also the senior pastor. It is not unheard of for a pastor to be required to have theological education; however, the theological education provided most likely does not necessarily include skills of delivery. Also, seminaries do not spend much time on developing disciples. This has created a church that has a desire to do great things but lacks pastors who are empowered to lead the churches in great things. Seminaries exist to nurture and train clergy and then deploy them to local congregations. During this action research project, the principal researcher realized that seminaries may possibly have a disconnect from the needs of the local church. Delivery is essential to message reception; it is the job of seminaries to assist in training clergy who are confident in how they deliver the Gospel. It is also the job of seminaries to train pastors in how to develop discipleship programs that mentor and guide other Christian educators as they work to effectively present the Gospel.

Churches are equipped to deal with self-efficacy. Churches have the ability to offer feedback, remind people of their divine worth, and function as a seminary for the lay person. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit has allowed churches to empower others. The problem is, many churches do not claim and proclaim the power. The twelve participants in this study came from a variety of churches, yet many possessed low self-efficacy when it came to their ability to deliver a message. Although mentioned above, churches do not have all the skills needed to bridge this gap; they do possess the presence of the Holy Spirit which can open up hearts and minds in a way that empowers effective and confident Christian educators. In order to move forward in a positive direction, churches need to create a culture of feedback. Feedback need not be only positive or negative and result in improvement. Feedback must be healthy, ongoing, and honest,

which does not focus on positivity or negativity, but instead focuses on the purpose of building up the recipient and improving his skills. The self-efficacy of a spiritually-mature Christian educator requires honest and holistic feedback in order to thrive.

One additional lesson learned by the principal researcher is that ministry coaches are effective, and more are needed. Ministry coaching has historically been reserved for vocational ministers. Even among vocational ministers, having a ministry coach is rare. The model is biblical, as seen with Paul and Timothy; however, up until recently, the ministry coach model had been minimized in the modern church. Ministry coaches do not always have the answer; however, they are on a journey of discovery with the person they are coaching. Multiple participants expressed how encouraging it was to have a ministry coach walk beside them as they desired to become more effective. Churches need ministry coaches and it would be nice if more churches would invest in ministry coach training. In an ideal situation, the ministry coach resides outside of the local congregation. This may hinder small congregations with limited resources; however, with modern technology, ministry coaching is possible. The technological integration into ministry coaching was not initially within the scope of this action research project; however, COVID-19 led the principal researcher to evaluate effective ministry coaching in a digital world. It was discovered that geography and social distancing was only a mild barrier, and that ministry coaching is still worth the investment of time and money. This investment could have an eternal impact on the Kingdom of God and could lead to a great revival with more effective churches reaching more people for the cause of Christ.

Recommendations for Ministry Leaders

Ministry leaders have the spiritual obligation to be engaged in a process of continuous education and to create an environment of lifelong learning for all who are involved in their ministry setting. This is a task that most churches consider to be a serious responsibility and possess the have the intention of doing it well. Many churches do a great job of training people in their respective theology, and also making sure that they understand the components of being a Christian disciple within that denominational context, but they struggle when it comes to the practical aspect of developing confidence and skill among the ones who deliver the messages.

This particular study would have been more effective if it had focused on either preaching and teaching from the service/gathering perspective or on small groups and Sunday school teaching. The majority of the interviews and data collected related back to the preaching aspect with very little data coming forward about how people feel in a small group setting or other ministry settings, which leads to the assumption that it would have been more effective as a separate study. Both preaching and teaching have significant roles in the ministry of the church. However, the practical aspects of preaching in front of a congregation is significantly different from leading a Sunday School class. It would be beneficial for ministry leaders to offer training but to separate preaching and teaching lessons. This would also allow for the differentiation of content in order to better meet the needs of the participants. For example, in a class that focused on Sunday School message delivery, there is no need to emphasize projection in the same way since a Sunday School room is typically significantly smaller than a sanctuary.

Content is essential but requires effective delivery, and churches have the responsibility to bridge that gap. It is evident from this study that experience does not eliminate the possibility of public speaking anxiety among Christian educators. In this study, most Christian educators,

even veterans who have served churches for a large number of years and have preached many times, have some level of public speaking anxiety, and a targeted intervention had the ability to help reduce that anxiety and improve their self-efficacy. It is unlikely (and beyond the scope of this research) to assume that enough training would eliminate public speaking anxiety and maximize self-efficacy, and this should not be the goal. The goal should be for ministry leaders to promote practices and trainings that reduce public speaking anxiety.

In order to be a more effective missional outpost of the Gospel, churches need to provide training that can bridge the gap between the theological knowledge and the practical delivery of messages. Disciples are devoted students of Christ, but after the resurrection, disciples were called to become educators of the Gospel. Churches have the biblical mandate to go beyond traditional discipleship, which teaches theology. Churches should strive to also equip the disciples to become passionate Christian educators who are confident in their abilities to share the Gospel. The purpose of the church is not only worship and teaching but also preparing people to effectively teach the message in the church and in the world beyond. Lead pastors have the unique responsibility and privilege of vision-casting in their congregation. It is recommended that pastors and other ministry leaders of congregations work toward a vision that is inclusive of the biblical mandate of discipleship which includes bridging the gap between theology and practice.

The results of this study should be adaptable to other ministry settings. This particular study was designed with the purpose of being ecumenical and with the intention of equipping twelve different Christian educators, each originating from a unique ministry setting. Due to the versatility of the project, it is reasonable to believe that it could easily fit in another ministry setting, whether it be a coaching/consulting organization, denominational resource, or in the

local church. There are minimal modifications that could be made, and the curriculum could include doctrinal/theological perspective for developing self-efficacy. Also, it would be possible for some of the curriculum to be tailored to fit the situational context of the specific ministry setting. It is recommended, however, that ministry leaders do not allow a training program such as this to minimize the importance of delivery and self-efficacy. The programs which existed prior to this research primarily focused on doctrinal theological perspectives. Although it is believed that this could be incorporated into those programs, the focus should still be delivery and self-efficacy.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Future Studies</div>

Moving forward, this research has great potential to be built upon during future studies. The emphasis on delivery in Christian education has often been minimized or overlooked. One area for future research, as stated above, would be to conduct a similar study that evaluated preaching separately from the teaching aspect found in a Sunday School or small group setting. This would provide more significant results, as it was difficult to keep participants focused or to tailor the material to the needs of a diverse group.

As explored in the lessons learned section, metacommunication, although abundant in the Bible, is an often-overlooked discipline in Christianity. The study of metacommunication has been limited to communication theorists. Since metacommunication appears so frequently in Scripture, further research could explore metacommunication from a biblical perspective and possibly produce a commentary that analyzes kinetic movement and tone as used in Scripture. The Bible is theologically rich in content; this content includes metacommunication which should be analyzed for its theological significance.

Additionally, it could be beneficial to research the practicality of requiring metacommunication to be taught in the seminary homiletics course. This would have to occur in conjunction with or after the recommendation in the paragraph above. Many Master of Divinity programs only require one to two preaching courses. The format utilized in the majority of these classes focuses on content instead of delivery. The Academy could do a much better job of training delivery methods if research demonstrated a need. A well-researched intervention that focused on delivery as a component of the seminary classroom could create a ripple effect that would better empower Christian educators and increase self-efficacy. In order for this intervention to be successful, there would have to be a theological understanding of metacommunication and an honest acknowledgement of the struggles of seminary-trained ministry leaders regarding message delivery.

Furthermore, the relation between the Holy Spirit and self-efficacy was beyond the scope of this project but could be an interesting area of research for the future. Holy Spirit empowerment or the belief that one is empowered could have a direct correlation to self-efficacy. If a preacher/teacher sincerely believes that the Holy Spirit is speaking through him, he may become more confident in his delivery style. A research study of this type would most likely not fit the limited scope of a Doctor of Ministry thesis; however, could be an excellent topic for a practical or possibly systematic theologian.

Another area of future research could be an evaluation of the pulpit as an artifact of preaching. In the post-Christendom world, the traditional churches and the traditional delivery style have less prominence than they once did. The problem is that many churches are clinging to the use of a pulpit. Does the pulpit effect the reception of a message? Does the pulpit assist or harm delivery? Is the pulpit still needed and/or effective? Of course, the answers to these

questions will most likely be contextual; however, the questions could be an effective area for a Doctor of Ministry candidate to study.

When this study began, the world had not yet been exposed to COVID-19. This pandemic has greatly altered the way preaching and teaching occurs within the local church. Although digital preaching has become more regular over the past two decades, it has now established itself as an essential method of Gospel delivery. Doctoral students could potentially compare the effects of digital preaching versus more traditional methods. This area seems to be an emerging field, having a significant lack of scholarly resources to assist the local church in their digital ministry endeavors. In addition to the increased demand for digital preaching, many congregations have chosen or been required to hold services outside. On the surface, outdoor services may seem similar to the open-air preaching of the past. Open-air preaching was an evangelistic tool that developed out of necessity, just as modern outside services now appear to be. The difference is the modern outdoor service does not seem to be rooted in evangelism. Further study could determine if this accurate and could also aid in evaluating the importance of physical structures for Christian services.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Christian educators deserve to be in an environment that encourages growth. They also deserve to be in an environment that acknowledges the work and passion that is put forward in the preparation and delivery of messages. They deserve to have mentors, ministry coaches, and congregants who want them to succeed in ministry. Ministry leaders deserve the freedom to grow and feel confident in doing so.

The local church is the most efficient place for the developing and nurturing of disciples. The Church has a 2000-year history of worshiping God by equipping saints for ministry, serving

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people in need, and serving as a vessel for the proclamation of the word through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ's Holy Church is a beautiful living being that has seen many changes in methodology but has remained strong and loyal to the Lord. As ministry leaders serve this great body of believers, it is important that they are able to proceed with confidence and strength. This comes from learning from, and praying for, one another, and being authentic siblings of faith to one another. Specialized training in message delivery is one tool that can increase the connection and reception of the local church as it works diligently to be a presence of Christ in a lost world.

Closing Prayer

Almighty and loving God, please bless ministry leaders as they work hard to be effective messengers of the Gospel. Give them self-efficacy that is not rooted in their power, but your great power. Use your spirit to guide their voice, tone, and movement in a way that magnifies your glory. In the name of the wonderful and true savior Jesus, Amen.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval

<table>
<tr><td style="background-color:#595959"></td><td style="background-color:#595959">Date: 8-16-2020</td></tr>
</table>

IRB #: IRB-FY19-20-227
Title: Self-Efficacy Among Christian Educators
Creation Date: 3-16-2020
End Date:
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Jonathan Tolbert
Review Board: Research Ethics Office
Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	Exempt - Limited IRB

Key Study Contacts

Member	William Curtis	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	
Member	Jonathan Tolbert	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	
Member	Jonathan Tolbert	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	