Healing through Preaching:
Recovery for Red Oaks Baptist Church

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Department of Christian Leadership and Church Ministries

by

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT
The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry thesis, *Healing Through Preaching: Recovery for Red Oaks Baptist Church*, is to address the need for healing Red Oaks Baptist Church’s members through a coordinated preaching and counseling ministry. Research shows there is a lack of information available on how to preach to a church after a traumatic event such as a church split or revitalization effort. The literature available addresses church problems that may have led a specific situation but does not help the pastor use the preaching of scripture to lead the church in recovery and to use God’s word to help counsel a congregation using Scripture. In the instance of Red Oaks Baptist Church, the pastor applied Psalm 107 in a four–week sermon series to help provide healing to the congregation that suffered from a church split. The researcher conducted surveys and interviews to gauge the recovery and spiritual growth of the congregation. The research also sought to understand how other pastors derive their sermon material to see if there is a correlation between counseling and preaching. Works from Harry Emerson Fosdick and Jay Adams show a correlation between preaching and counseling that is invaluable to the preacher and ultimately beneficial to the church members. The congregation reported, that overall, the sermon series did provide closure to the loss experienced from the church split.

*Keywords:* Preaching, Biblical Counseling, Suffering, Revitalization, Practical Theology, Sermon exegesis, Psalm 107
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Chapter 1: Introduction

A pastor fulfills many roles while carrying out the duties of the office. A pastor or elder is called to lead the people. Paul gives insight into the expectations of the leaders and encourages the Thessalonian church to “appreciate those…who are over you in the Lord and admonish you.”¹ “The Greek verb, proistemi translated as ‘those who are over you’ means to ‘stand before’ and suggests the responsibility of leadership: ‘pastoral care,’ with ’the primary senses of both ‘to lead’ and ‘to care for.’”² Paul uses the same word to instruct the church at Rome and when giving final instructions to Timothy. The elder is expected to lead and to care for his church. One way to provide care is to instruct or admonish the people.

The English word “admonish” usually has a negative connotation with it with synonyms such as rebuke or reprimand, but the “Greek verb noutheteo literally means ‘to put in mind,’ and so it carries the idea of serious, systematic instruction, often (though not necessarily limited to) involving warning and correction when someone has erred: ‘practical counsel and guidance’”³ One way to carry out the admonishment or instruction, especially to the majority of the congregation at one time is by preaching God’s Word. Paul charges Timothy to “Preach the Word…to reprove, rebuke, and exhort” the congregation.⁴ “Preaching God’s Word is closely connected to the idea that Scripture is inspired by God.”⁵ The preacher must believe “God has

¹ 1 Thess 5:12. All Bible verses quoted from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.


³ Picirilli, I Thessalonians, 85.


⁵ Greidanus, The Modern Preacher, 1.
spoken through His word and that His words remain powerful, and without this historic revelation of God, there can be no ministry of the Word.” chapel explains “preaching that is true to Scripture converts, convicts, and conforms the spirits of men and women because it presents the instrument of divine compulsion, not because preachers have any transforming power in themselves.” a christ–centered preacher derives his power from God and not his own ego.

John Broadus understood the power of preaching and by extension, the power of a preacher and how people can become stirred up to follow the orator. Preaching offers a platform for people to influence followers. The preacher is the one who stands before the congregation. He explains the “Roman Emperor Julian, commonly called the Apostate, directed the pagan philosophers to preach every week as the Christians did.” Julian did this in order to sway followers away from Christianity by adopting the tactics of its worst enemy and return Rome to a more Hellenistic way of life. The propensity to follow people who are charismatic and speak well has had disastrous effects, such as the case of the Jonestown Incident or the Branch Davidian cult.

Leaders influence the direction of the organization and more importantly, they can affect the people in the organization. There are detrimental impacts when leaders fall. People look to

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leaders to get the organization moving and growing, but what happens when the followers no longer trust the leader? The military calls this a loss of confidence in the leader’s ability and removes commanders or other leaders for this type of offense.\(^{11}\) The circumstances may be varied, but it all has the same result. However, the military does not have the market cornered on poor leaders. Leaders of varying aptitude exist in all avenues of life, from businesses to families, or sports teams and churches. The impact the leaders can have is dependent on many factors and all leaders assume responsibility for their organization and people. However, for a pastor, there is more at stake than productivity or profits; “pastors assume a huge responsibility when they accept the unequaled task of exhorting and reproving on Christ’s behalf (Titus 1:9).”\(^{12}\)

The Bible gives clear guidelines on qualities of an overseer as one “who must be above reproach…self–controlled, [and] respectable…”\(^{13}\) Pastors, or overseers, may start off meeting the qualifications for the office, but may fall to the wayside and drift from God's will and lead people astray. Paul warns Timothy to ensure the men “who aspire to the office an overseer …desire a noble work.”\(^{14}\) Two high–profile megachurch pastors have also resigned or been fired in the past two years for allegations of sexual misconduct and allegations of misuse of church funds and bullying leadership techniques.\(^{15}\) These mega pastors are on a larger stage, but that does not mean pastors in smaller churches are not exhibiting some of the same traits.

\(^{11}\) There has been a recent string of military leaders relieved of duty. A quick internet search will reveal dozens of articles. Here is the most recent article dated August 15, 2019. https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/08/15/army-installation-management-commander-relieved-due-to-loss-of-confidence/


\(^{13}\) 1 Tim. 3:2.

\(^{14}\) 1 Tim. 3:1

\(^{15}\) The two pastors in question are Bill Hybels and James MacDonald. Their cases are not in the discussion and are not being judged in this project. Instead, their situations show the wake of devastation that is left in the churches they once led. For information on James Macdonald see the article:
Broodus explains that to excel at being a preacher, one must also excel at the pastoral work that goes hand in hand with preaching. He says “pastoral work is of immense importance, and all preachers should be diligent in performing it. But it cannot take the place of preaching.”

The pastor is there to take care of the people in his flock. But what happens when the shepherd becomes more like a wolf and must be driven away? What happens to the people left in the church when these leaders leave under less-than-ideal situations? How do a leader's mistakes impact the ministry of proclaiming the Good News of God's Kingdom? How can a new leader help the congregation forgive and move on, so they become whole again and fulfill the Great Commission? This situation is not new, and the scenario is currently playing out in Santa Barbara County, California.

**Ministry Context**

**History**

Red Oaks Baptist Church is a small Southern Baptist Convention congregation is in Santa Maria, California.17 Santa Maria’s population is approximately 107,356 people and is 74 percent Hispanic and 26 percent Non-Hispanic.18 The church is in a neighborhood of about 400 homes and is near the outskirts of the city. The name Red Oaks signifies the tree that is ubiquitous in the Santa Maria area and it is the wood of choice in the area's renowned Santa Maria–style barbeque. The moniker itself is a change that occurred in early 2018 from the name Clark Avenue Southern

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17 Red Oaks Baptist Church will be abbreviated as ROBC in the thesis. The Southern Baptist Convention will be abbreviated as SBC.

Baptist Church for two reasons: 1) the church is no longer on Clark Avenue, and 2) the name Clark Avenue has history attached to it, and not all of it was good history.

The church had a few good pastors, and the location was once used as an incubator for the Filipino Southern Baptist church and the Korean Southern Baptist church in the city. However, Clark Avenue had a negative reputation which caused some of the problems. One pastor divorced his wife, then married the church secretary and left the church. Another pastor divorced his wife and exchanged wives with another couple in the congregation. The pastors are not the only ones to blame. At one point, the deacon board went against the bylaws and informed the pastor that his services were no longer needed. It was not until another church member saw the now–fired pastor and said how the church missed him. It was then that the rest the church found out the true circumstances behind his disappearance. Over time, the overseers who were called to lead the church fell away. Only one pastor was left, and the congregation eventually dwindled to about 16 members and a few regular visitors in 2013. This situation set the stage for the next leader to take over with little initial resistance.

The most recent pastor, that caused the split, was a church planter from Southern California that came to Santa Maria and asked the Clark Avenue church to sponsor him and help plant a new church. Eventually, the church planter suggested to the 16–member church to sponsor him in his efforts. The church, excited about new possibilities said yes and a hasty merger was conducted. Promises were made to keep the church congregationally led and adhere

19 This church history was told to the current pastor by the previous director of missions and some of the current members of the church.

to Southern Baptist Convention principles, but the by–laws were as far from the Southern Baptist Convention as one could get. The bylaws were not accessible to the congregation, but it was later discovered that the bylaws were written in such a way to allow the pastor to do as he wished and was not accountable to the church members. The betrayal, which Maxwell defines as “one party in a relationship acting in a way that favors his own interests at the other party’s expense,” was the final straw for many of the church members.21

After learning more about the true intentions of the new pastor and seeing that their church was no longer their church, twelve members left the church and began meeting in someone’s home. The Central Coast Baptist Association stepped in to help. In the spring of 2015, Clark Avenue Church called a new pastor to lead them through the revitalizing process.

In short, the process took approximately two and a half years to reach a legal resolution concerning the property. The old Clark Avenue church property was sold and split 64/36 and allowed Red Oaks Baptist Church to purchase a new property in 2018. The church’s twelve members remained faithful throughout the process and grew close from the ordeal. Two of the original twelve members died about a year after the church started meeting in the new location. Growth has been slow, but the church has added a few new members and has had some regular visitors in attendance.

**Research Questions about the Ministry Context**

What objects, people, and events carry meanings linking the congregation to the ideals of the group?

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21 Paul C. Maxwell, “Betrayal Trauma and Covenant: Theologically Understanding Abuse Trauma and Traumatically Reforming Theological Understanding,” *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 19, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 245.
The most recent events from the merger and split have shaped the congregation. The building and property became a symbol, and perhaps at times an idol to them. A previous Director of Missions who was significant in helping the church through the initial phases to reestablish the church after the twelve members left CASBC continued to carry influence for them.

Events such as potlucks hold meaning toward the idea of unity and family for the church members. The events themselves demonstrate the need and importance of a family atmosphere. They showed tremendous faith between 2014 and 2017 and continue to do so despite being replanted into a different neighborhood.

What are the church’s social characteristics? Is it a congregation, several congregations or something else?

The church acts as a unit that has been through a traumatic experience. They move mostly as one body and mind, but it sometimes is to the exclusion of new people coming in. The church is cautious and wary of people who may have an agenda. The family feeling of the church can feel like a closed circle that people must take a long time to break into. Especially if a person seems different.

In some respects, the situation with the last church planter/pastor was almost like the church was placed into a stasis, where everyone was frozen while they endured the hardship. The Church members were hopeful or for a time that they would win back the original property, which was more akin to denial of the reality of the situation.22 This may be normal considering the trauma and the people just want to return to some stability in their church life, but they had it

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stolen from them.\textsuperscript{23} Now that the hardship is over, it is business as usual with minor changes. The pause was necessary because the new building required major repairs after minimal caretaking for at least twenty years. Metaphorically, the church building, and the church people are now going through the same process of being built.

What is the geographical and demographical information that is helpful?

Red Oaks Baptist Church’s demographic is 86 percent Anglo and 14 percent Hispanic, which is almost the exact opposite of the surrounding area’s cultural makeup mentioned above. Many people in the surrounding neighborhood are minimally bilingual or speak only Spanish, whereas only one person in the congregation speaks Spanish fluently. The area around the church is a mixture of urban population and rural field workers. This fact limits some interactions that could otherwise be fruitful evangelism efforts.

The current pastor has been in the church since 2014. He began providing pulpit supply preaching for six months until the church officially called him in the spring of 2015. He has been in the church for most of the legal proceedings, along with the purchasing and remodeling of the property. He has helped them through some of the difficult times of loss of friends and family members and is trusted by the congregation.

The pastor is bi–vocational, which limits the time that he can attend to the people, but the congregation is sensitive to this limitation and respects his time. However, the pastor spends as much time as possible before and after the Sunday morning worship service where some informal counseling and listening take place. The church also holds Bible study every two weeks, and more time is spent getting to know each other and conduct informal counseling.

\textsuperscript{23} Sandra D. Wilson, \textit{Hurt People Hurt People: Hope and Healing for Yourself and Your Relationships} (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 2001), 49.
Several members have sought his counsel on several occasions, and they trust his judgment on most things.

The pastor listens and learns from others’ life experiences as he is about 15–20 years younger than most of the church members. Before becoming a pastor, he was in the United States Air Force, where he learned and honed his leadership and counseling skills. He also performed instructor duties that helped develop his gift of teaching. He values the inputs from the congregation members. The pastor takes the responsibility and calling as an overseer seriously and sees the way to heal broken people is through God’s powerful Word.

What ritual is most predictable and central to the congregation’s culture?

Sunday Morning worship is the most predictable event, and it is the most central action that the church partakes in during the week. Everyone’s busy schedules take up much of the weekly activities, which dictates the church to gather primarily on the weekends. The women’s Bible study group would be the second most predictable event because it is a place that the women come together to learn and share things. Occasionally during Bible study sessions, the topic of the church planter/pastor is dredged up and derails the study time. Rehashing the past occurs less and less over time but happens frequent enough to make the pastor think the congregation still harbors some resentment and anger.

**Problem Statement**

The problem that his project will address is ROBC has not completely healed from the loss of friends and the betrayal from the previous pastor. In 2014, Red Oaks Baptist Church needed revitalization and subsequently suffered through the betrayal by a new pastor, a failed hostile merger between two churches and endured a lengthy legal battle for the church property.
As a result of the court case, the church lost its original property but was rewarded with proceeds that enabled the purchase of a new property.

While the loss of the building healed more readily, the effects of the toxic pastor and loss of friends from the failed merger linger. The congregation moved on to a degree, but bitterness and preoccupation are evident from time to time, indicating that the healing process is still taking place. The church’s new pastor is left to lead the church in the revitalization and healing efforts.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry thesis is to address the need for healing Red Oaks Baptist Church’s adult members through a coordinated preaching and counseling ministry. Paul instructs Timothy and Titus the ability to preach and teach sound doctrine to reprove, rebuke and exhort with complete patience and teaching.”24 Paul’s and Peter’s letters preach and give advice to the missives’ various recipients. The Apostles’ advice extends to and applies to the present-day New Testament church.25 The letters serve as an example to the current pastors on how to effectively use God’s Word to help bring about healing.

In the present day, Harry Emerson Fosdick and Jay Adams link preaching and counseling as part of a public and private ministry.26 Fosdick seems to be the modern-day progenitor of pastoral preaching. In the 1950’s and 1960s, the idea of the two practices working in concert to address a person’s day-to-day problems was part of the whole ministry that a pastor

24 Paul charges Timothy with this responsibility in 2 Tim. 4:1–2 and charges Titus with a similar responsibility in Titus 1:9 and 2:1.

25 This concept, along with examples form the Old Testament, will be examined more thoroughly in the Theological Foundations section of Chapter 2.

performed. MacLennan states “preaching to be vital, must grow out of continuous association with human beings” and the consulting room is at “once a clinic and laboratory where creative sermons are born.” The researcher recognizes the fine line that exists between preaching and counseling and will take steps to protect the counselees’ privacy.

Current revitalization literature primarily deals with internal problems or actions that can be addressed and eventually fixed to put the church on an upward trajectory of Christian maturity and eventual growth in numbers. Traditional counseling books predominantly deal with individual issues, but do not address corporate suffering. Homiletics literature largely deals with corporate growth, but not necessarily healing. Secular leadership theory is the closest to pinpointing the situation like ROBC’s but addresses the problem from a management standpoint. A small number of dissertations have been written on preaching during a crisis, but very few works help the pastor healing the congregation using a combination of preaching and counseling.

**Assumptions**

Basic assumptions are important to set the expectations at the close of the research period. The first assumption is that not everyone will become fully healed at the end of the focused counseling period. Another assumption is that people have other trauma in their lives that may need to be addressed but will be outside the purview of this project. The pastor will take note of any other counseling needs and schedule subsequent counseling sessions with the member or suggest a more professional counselor to address those issues. It is also assumed that

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not every individual was affected in the same way and may not require counselling. Other individuals may not wish to participate or receive counseling.

The church is financially stable from the money from the settlement, but a large portion of that is reserved for building renovations. If the church does not grow, this stability could disappear. The organizational structure is a congregationally governed Baptist church. The pastor is working to transition to a biblical eldership, while still retaining the democratic process of congregational rule. It is assumed that everyone in the study is a born–again Christian, but they may not be a Southern Baptist. This is important to note because there may be slight theological differences, but those should not interfere with Biblical counseling.

**Definitions**

Throughout the study, certain terms will be used and as such the definition of the words is key to understanding how the words or phrases are used in this specific context.

**Biblical Inerrancy**—Biblical Inerrancy is integral to the counselor and counsel believing and accepting the authority and sufficiency of scripture to enact change that during the biblical counseling process.as set forth by Adams.\(^{30}\) Inerrancy is defined by paragraph I, “Scriptures” in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, as the “perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.”\(^{31}\) The paragraph coincides with the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy point 4, as stated, the Bible “being wholly and verbally God–given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in


creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in
its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.”

**Church Replant**—A situation “where an external entity, usually another church, takes over a
new church and starts it anew.”

**Church Revitalize**—A situation in which a “church attempting to move toward greater health
by making changes from within.”

**Counseling**—"A conversation where one party with questions, problems, and trouble seeks
assistance from someone they believe has answers, solutions, and help.”

**Expository Preaching**—The last phrase that requires defining for this research project is
expository preaching. This phrase has enjoyed a revival of sorts, but the phrase itself has several
working definitions. For this project’s goals, Stephen, and David Olford’s explanation works
best. They state,

> Expository preaching is the Spirit–empowered explanation and proclamation
> of the text of God's Word with due regard to the historical, contextual,
> grammatical, and doctrinal significance of the given passage, with the specific
> object of invoking a Christ–transforming response.

![](https://app.wordsearchbible.com)

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November 24, 2019).

34 Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry*

35 Stephen Olford, & David Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group,
2009), 69. (Retrieved from https://app.wordsearchbible.com.)
Expository preaching guides the preacher to the structure and explanation of the text, maintaining the authority and inerrancy of the text itself. This aspect of expository preaching coincides with the Biblical counseling that is based on God’s authoritative word.\textsuperscript{36}

**Healing**—Unlike a physical cut, that scabs over and closes in a relative short amount of time, emotional and spiritual healing is more difficult to see or determine when it is finished. Benner defines healing as “efforts to help someone overcome an impairment and move toward wholeness.”\textsuperscript{37} This research project is working toward overcoming any impairment caused by the events at ROBC are only one part of the whole person and must be managed as such.

**Nouthetic Counseling**—Also referred to as “nouthetic confrontation,” this counseling approach was introduced by Jay Adams. Adams defines “Nouthetic confrontation, in its biblical usage, aims at straightening out the individual by changing his patterns of behavior to conform to biblical standards.”\textsuperscript{38} Adams posits that nouthetic counseling consist of three elements, the problem, the solution via verbal correction (speaking and teaching), and the motive behind the activity that the correction is intended to benefit the counselee.\textsuperscript{39}

**Project Method**—This method of sermon construction and preaching as counseling was developed by Harry Emerson Fosdick. He felt that expository preaching and topical preaching fell short in its goal to reach people and keep the interest of the people and the preachers. Also, if one person had a problem in life, then surely that problem was “multiplied by the number of


\textsuperscript{37} Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 15.

\textsuperscript{38} Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resources Library, 1986), 46.

\textsuperscript{39} Adams, *Competent to Counsel* 49.
listeners to every sermon.”\textsuperscript{40} The method entails being familiar with the congregation and selecting passages and creating sermons to meet the needs of the people. Fosdick says, “‘We need more sermons that try to face people’s real problems with them, to answer their questions…and interpret their experiences sympathetic, wise, and understanding cooperation.’”\textsuperscript{41} This method is sometimes referred to as pastoral preaching, but is viewed in a negative light when it delves too deeply into modern psychological approaches (e.g. Rogers, Freud, or Mowrer) instead of relying on Biblical authority, which is in direct contradiction to the nouthetic counseling approach.\textsuperscript{42}

**Resilience**—Positive psychology or personality theory defines as “grit or conscientious perseverance.”\textsuperscript{43} Those associated with ROBC clearly demonstrated this grit and perseverance, but Nelson applies the term resilience as it relates to redemption as the “God–given capacity of will to live forward through trauma and pain, opening oneself to a future healing. It is not healing; it is a stopgap moment—a necessary one—that allows for a personal regrouping and stability, such that a fuller, richer redemption can happen.”\textsuperscript{44} The apostle Paul may be the best Biblical example of resilience; specifically, when he tells the Philippian church, “what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel” (Phil 1:12).

**Strategic Pastoral Counseling**—Benner defines Strategic Pastoral Counseling as “a brief structured counseling approach that is explicitly Christian and that appropriates the insights of

\textsuperscript{40} Edmund H. Linn, *Preaching as Counseling*, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1966), 15.

\textsuperscript{41} Linn, *Preaching as Counseling*, 13.


\textsuperscript{44} Nelson, *Loss and Trauma*, 308.
contemporary counseling theory without sacrificing the resources of pastoral ministry.” It is strategic in the fact that it is focused on its subject and the time is limited to a short time frame sufficient to overcome the impairment.

Limitations

One limitation for this research is the size of the population itself. To mitigate this factor, the sample will consist of Red Oaks Baptist Church members, several people who were involved in bringing in the church planting pastor that caused the rift at the church, and other pastors who preach over fifty percent of a calendar year. A second limitation is the efficacy of a one-size-fits-all approach to remedying the problem. Stringer notes that although theories exist, such as behavioral theorists, social theorists, and Marxist-oriented theorists all have ideas on what cause groups to function in a certain way, all of them largely focus on one set of factors, which is an incomplete way to look at a complex society.

Delimitations

The researcher cannot make anyone involved with the church and its split participate in the counseling portion. The lack of data this may affect the results but may prove that the people have not moved on as far as they may be able to. Another delimitation is the fact that some people in the study have moved from the local area. This will prohibit or limit some face-to-face counseling. This can be mitigated by utilizing telephone or video teleconferencing software, such as Skype.

45 Benner, Strategic Pastoral Counseling, 47.
Thesis Statement

Biblical Pastoral Preaching, in coordination with counseling sessions on the topic of healing can help the congregation of Red Oaks Baptist Church recover from a legacy of bad leadership and the loss of friends incurred during the initial split of the church. To start, it is important to conduct a literature review know what research or theories already exist in the field.
Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

The first section of this chapter is a literature review that will look at four distinct types of literature that a pastor may need to research to lead a church like Red Oak Baptist church’s situation. The second section of this chapter will discuss the Theological Foundations of the project. The chapter’s third section the theoretical foundations of the project will compare Harry Emerson Fosdick’s Project method of preaching with Jay Adams’ nouthetic counseling and preaching. It is important to conduct a focused literature review to see how other authors and pastors have to say about churches in similar situations to ROBC.

Literature Review

Much of the literature for the four areas: revitalization, preaching, counseling, and pastoral ministry. Each area is integral to a reviving a congregation, but the literature treats these subjects as separate items as opposed to developing a holistic approach. This study seeks to combine the relevant aspects of these areas to help Red Oaks Baptist church to move forward. Homiletics studies should encourage the preacher to look toward the audience and how to select and construct sermons to help the people through any tragedy. If the people are not completely healed from the tragedy, then the work of revitalization cannot move forward, and the church may spiral down toward death again. If the church is to be rebuilt it needs to be resurrected by God’s Word.

Revitalization

It is no secret that American churches are in decline today; roughly 80% of churches in America need revitalization. Many factors are contributing to this decline; some are external

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reasons. According to a Barna Study, fifty five percent of Americans are classified as
unchurched.\textsuperscript{48} Fewer Americans are not attending church or considering themselves Christians.
Some other people are joining other religions or cults.\textsuperscript{49} There seems to be no end to the
literature offering ideas and tips on how to evaluate a church and make the appropriate fixes for
the problem. Some of the leaders in the field of church revitalization are Thom Rainer, Mark
Clifton, Brian Croft, and Tom Cheyney. Many of the authors conduct similar research, so the
results become blurred or almost redundant once a person has read a shelf’s worth of books.
Revitalization books consist of two types: the first type is a compilation of research, based on
many churches and the author(s) identify commonalities or causes of church decline, and then
suggest remedies to the reader. The second type of books are in the form of personal stories of
how a pastor (or team of pastors) revived a church. This is the ordeal they went through; it is
personal, and it gives the reader a sense of what it takes to lead a church back from near death. It
is a story more than statistics.

Each type of book is important; the first type gives a wider view of many churches and
offers good advice and helps the pastor diagnose the illness. The second type encourages and
warns the pastor of what to expect and gives a realistic view of the revitalization process. Some
authors write books with a focus on church replanting, while others concentrate on church
revitalizing. The terms have their nuances but can be used somewhat interchangeably. It is good
to examine the literature that covers a wide array of information and churches from a research–
based mindset.


\textsuperscript{49} Malphurs and Penfold, \textit{Re: Vision}, 23.
Research–Based Books

Thom Rainer points out that roughly 150,000 churches exhibit symptoms of sickness; Red Oaks Baptist church is one of these churches.\(^{50}\) There are many reasons churches are dying; some are unwilling to change with the neighborhood and others have an inward focus of the church that neglects or ignores new people.\(^{51}\) The church may have also lost its vision or may not have the money or time to care for its aging facilities.\(^{52}\) Pertaining to this study, only one chapter is directly linked to the pastor and that is in terms of how long a pastor stays at a church can have direct effects on the church. Rainer studied pastoral tenure for two decades and made an interesting observation; on average churches did not start to experience the “fruit and harvest” of their labors until 6–10 years after the revitalization effort begins.\(^{53}\) Rainer and other researchers agree that what Alvin Reid summarizes, “revitalization is a process more than an event.”\(^{54}\)

Another book that uses a medical analogy, Caner and Brunson’s, *Why Churches Die: Diagnosing Lethal Poisons in the Body of Christ*, “endeavors to diagnose 12 of the most debilitating diseases in the body of Christ.”\(^{55}\) Written from the perspective of a combined 50 years’ worth of pastoral experience the authors explain events that frustrated the two pastors and also frustrates other pastors in similar way.\(^{56}\) Caner and Brunson put forth the Biblical model of

\(^{50}\) Thom Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville: B&H, 2014), 87.


\(^{52}\) Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live?* (Nashville: B&H, 2015), 75. Rainer also points out that obsession over the facilities is a sign of sickness in a church.


how a church should and can act; being generous, (Acts) being a model church (Thessalonians) studying God’s word (Bereans, Acts 17:10–12), and helping each other in times of need (Philippi).  

According to Caner and Brunson, the problems that cause a church’s death can be derived from not being a Biblical church. Many of the topics deal with spiritual or interpersonal relationships. Only one chapter deals with preaching or hearing God’s word and that is in the church’s ability or inability “to digest the deeper things of God” and the churches that were in decline were the ones that “could only handle the very rudimentary issues of Christianity.” The authors’ encourage the pastor reading the book, like Paul encourages Timothy “to preach the Word,” and preach it well. “The process of teaching these Christians is slow, but it is possible. Across our nation, there are testimonies of churches that have learned to relish in the Word and have developed great ministries based on truth and meat.” In Alvin Reid’s program, RE:Vitalize, he also encourages the pastor to ensure the congregation receives a steady diet of meat and not just milk. Evidence demonstrates “rapidly growing churches across the U.S. have been marked by pastors who preach sermons verse by verse, focusing on Jesus and His gospel.”

Other revitalization authors focus on leaders and leadership and may offer the “right” personality type to lead a revitalization. The idea of the importance of a pastor’s temperament

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60 Reid, RE: Vitalize, Kindle Edition, p. 31
may play into how one leads the church through a revitalization process and possibly avoid becoming a toxic leader. Some books address the need for the pastor to stay at the affected church for a long period of time to help stabilize the church but caution the pastor against hubris and losing sight of his own spiritual growth, lest he become disconnected from God and his congregation. Managing change is another leadership topic often discussed in the revitalization literature. The pastor is given several tools how to unfreeze and refreeze the congregation’s paradigms. Some excellent leadership material can be found in the business world, but the pastor should take care to not apply too many business applications to the church world, where volunteers are different from employees.

Mark Clifton and the North American Mission Board see the need for specific help for the potential revitalizer or replanter. Clifton has come up with a list of eight essential characteristics of a church replanter. The revitalizer is in a similar situation and should have the same characteristics, such as vision, patience, resilience and be resourceful. Many of the characteristics pertain to the pastoral ministry function of an overseer. This idea follow’s Paul’s example of his love for the churches and its members that Paul showed his churches through his

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62 Malphus and Penfold, Re: Vison, 176.

63 David Paul Tripp, Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015). 43. Again, Rainer has done considerable work in this area and points out that tenure length is one possible indicator of church health.

64 Jeff Iorg, Leading Major Change in Your Ministry. (Nashville: B&H 2018). See also Rainer, Who Moved My Pulpit?

65 The definitions of the two words are discussed in the “Definitions” section of Chapter 1.

preaching and how he cared for the churches he interacted with or founded to ensure each congregation lived and grew to maturity.\(^{67}\)

Many of the revitalization and replanting books help the pastor diagnose the situations that are causing a church’s decline. The pastor in this scenario must function like Timothy and Paul. First, he must act like Timothy; assess the church and take the news about the church to Paul for his advice. Then the pastor must act like Paul to use the teachings of God's word to encourage, exhort, and correct the church’s path to the one of righteousness and adherence to the Christlike nature on which they were founded. This approach should have a profound effect on the elect as well as the lost hearing the Gospel message.

**Experienced Based**

These are all very important topics to address and use in a revitalization effort but as a preacher, preaching the efficacy of God’s word and power should be more in the forefront in any church rebuilding effort. In his book *For a New Generation: A Practical Guide for Revitalizing Your Church*, Lee Kricher lays out a two–year strategy that he used at his church that illustrates the importance of preaching in the revitalization process. He encourages pastors to “focus multiple weekend messages on a need and reason to adjust shift the mindset or approach of the church members.”\(^{68}\) Each stage of the plan focuses on a slightly different aspect of change.

Another experienced–based revitalization book is *Reclaiming Glory* by Mark Clifton which details his revitalization effort at the Wornall Road Baptist Church in Kansas City,

\(^{67}\) James Thompson, *Preaching like Paul: Homiletical Wisdom for Today*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 41. This is a main premise of Thompson’s book. The ideas from his book will be examined more thoroughly in the Preaching section of the Literature review. Thompson states “if we carefully read Paul’s letters, we discover the Pauline model for a preaching ministry that progresses from evangelistic witness to pastoral care.”

Missouri. Clifton derives six imperatives for a pastor leading a church replanting or revitalization effort. All six of the strategies are applicable to ROBC’s situation, but again, none of the efforts focus on preaching as a way to heal the church from the immediate problem, but Clifton does come up with one imperative to love the existing members because the pastor is “called to pastor the whole church,” not just the new people that eventually come to the church.69 Loving the whole church, no matter the circumstance, is a key to continued growth. The Apostle Paul demonstrated that he loved the churches he planted and showed that love via his epistles that make up the New Testament. Paul used his letters to communicate develop the churches’ corporate identity as well as “discuss major theological themes that will guide the community in its development.”70

During the sermon preparation, the preacher is essentially writing his own letter to his church, based on the scriptures. He can model Paul’s writings, by being thankful for the church, encouraging the church, including theology for the scenario being addressed (i.e., Christology in the Colossians letter, or Eschatology in the Thessalonians letters), giving Biblical advice to address the scenario (application) and giving a doxology. This structure brings God’s Word to the forefront of pastoral ministry. However, preaching is the vehicle that delivers God’s word.

Preaching

Broadus stated, “Preaching is characteristic of Christianity.”71 The proclamation of the Good News is propagated from the pulpit. Jesus preached everywhere he went and some


70 Thompson, Preaching like Paul, 66.

71 Broadus, A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons, 2.
sermons, like the Sermon on the Mount have been recorded in the Gospels. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached a message from Joel in Acts and as he began his preaching “Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.’” 72 The letter of Hebrews is “itself a first–century sermon.” 73 Allen considers it a text driven sermon of an exposition of Psalm 110. 74 Preaching has continued through church history and has moved and motivated millions of people to become Christians. But how does one continue to preach and how can a preacher develop a sermon that is faithful to the original author’s intent?

Preaching books, like church revitalization books, can be divided into two broad topics. Some are written to address hermeneutics and others address homiletics. Both aspects are important for the preacher writing sermons to his church. Hermeneutics deals “with the principles people use to describe what something means, to comprehend what a message is endeavoring to communicate.” 75 Homiletics on the other hand “arises out of hermeneutics.” 76 How one interprets the Bible, will determine how the sermon is constructed. “Lloyd Perry defines homiletics as “the science of sermon construction. It is the systematic setting forth of the body of laws and principles on which all art must rest.” 77 Both subjects are considered an art and

72 Acts 2:14
74 Allen, Hebrews, 12.
a science and must be practiced improving the pastor’s skills. Interpreting the text is the first step in writing a sermon and so it is important to have a good understanding of hermeneutics.

**Hermeneutics**

In seminary, future pastors learn how to interpret the Bible, so they understand what the Bible says and how to communicate the message to the modern–day audience. Some of the textbooks they may come across are Klein’s *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* or Duvall and Hays’ *Grasping God’s Word*. The emphasis in these and other books is understanding the context and culture in which the book or letter was written, the audience and the author’s background and the theological principle the author was communicating and how that principle applies to the modern–day audience. The preacher must also understand the biblical genres and how the language used in the type of book (i.e., literal, or figurative) affects the meaning or how the passage was and is to be understood.

Grant Osborne takes the preacher through a more advanced method in his book *The Hermeneutical Spiral* and encourages the preacher to look at grammar, semantics, and syntax as well as the context and background. An important aspect that Osborne explains on is the rhetorical patterns in the text. “*Collection relations* (Nida, “repetition”; Liefeld, “continuity”) connect ideas or events on the basis of some common point of agreement.” Looking for the cause and effect or problem solution in a narrative passage, or the details given or omitted for a particular story. Osborne points out all these literary devices are important, and the preacher should be aware of what the authors was doing to communicate the message to the audience.

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Identifying what the author wrote about helps to draw out or exegete, the meaning of the text instead of reading into (perform eisegesis) “a text what one wants it to mean.”

Corley explains properly applying the grammatical–historical approach, one must be familiar with the words and definitions “as they were intended by the original author and how those definitions may have changed over time.” Corley, et. al, instructs the preacher to be familiar with the different types of exegesis used through church history; from how the Jews interpreted their texts, to how the Church Fathers examined the Scriptures with allegorical method, Jerusalem could refer to the literal city in Palestine or, allegorically, to the church to the reformers and their techniques to return the church to “a plain scriptural meaning” and ensure everyone could read the Bible in their own language. The postmodern era challenges the preacher to interpret the text faithfully, holding to a high view of Biblical Authority, while remaining objective to anchor the preacher and the congregation in the stability of God’s word, yet also understanding the subjectivity that occurs in Scripture to allow “for vitality and flexibility and rules out legalistic and insensitive pseudo–orthodoxy.”

But what method or methods should a preacher, who wants to be faithful to God’s word and demonstrate that God’s word has meaning for many situations in the believer’s life, use to select and write sermons? To present preachers with “a robust discussion on the theological/hermeneutical approaches to preaching.” Gibson and Kim have produced a book that

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80 Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 57.


looks at four of the leading hermeneutical methods in use today. The editors asked four of the leading experts in hermeneutics and homiletics to explain their methods and allowed for critiques from the remaining pastors. Chapell espouses the Redemptive–Historical method, which relies heavily on Vos’s analyses of Biblical theology. Chapell builds on the work of Vos, Clowney, and Greidanus to preserve the unity of Scripture during the exegesis of a text. Clowney states “The development of biblical theology is redemptive–historical.” Chapell closes his chapter with an encouragement to preachers to “make God’s redemptive work integral to the sermon” and the sermon should instruct the people to “look to God alone for their security and comfort.”

Another method outlined in Homiletics and Hermeneutics is Kuruvilla’s Christoiconic or the Pericopal theology method, which instructs the preacher to examine how the text points the audience to becoming more in the image of Christ, by “elucidating what that specific text affirms about God and his relationship with humankind.” “Kuruvilla’s image of the ‘the world in front of the text’ provides a hopeful response to the text and what life should be in the Kingdom of God.” Using this method can help the preacher to examine Scripture in order to motivate the hearer, to become more Christ–like. However, to Chapell’s point, the Pericopal method can give the preacher the tendency to only look at one story and perhaps miss the overarching link that

85 Gibson and Kim, Homiletics and Hermeneutics, xiii. The other two views mentioned in the book, Theocentric View and Law/Gospel View, do not fit for the preaching/counseling method or the nuances are superfluous to the Biblical Theological method employed by the researcher for this project. The Theocentric View seems redundant to Biblical Theology because that inherently wraps in God’s story. The editors explain the Law/Gospel lens may limit the preacher because those topics do not always easily lend themselves to every text and may be “too rigid to allow Scripture to speak for itself.” (Gibson and Kim, Homiletics and Hermeneutics, 161).


87 Gibson and Kim, Homiletics and Hermeneutics, 29.

88 Gibson and Kim, Homiletics and Hermeneutics, 57.

89 Gibson and Kim, Homiletics and Hermeneutics, 159.
would otherwise be brought out using a method more in line with Biblical Theology. Both hermeneutic systems have their high points, but they fall somewhat short for the purpose of the project, to preach God’s Word and have the congregation be comforted by His Word.

Goldsworthy’s Christo-Centered Biblical Theology hermeneutical method combines the redemptive–historical aspect along with the idea that humans are made in the image of God. The redemptive nature of the Bible is one of the main themes of Biblical theology. Goldsworthy states “Biblical theology is the study of how every text in the Bible relates to every other text in the Bible. It is the study of the matrix of divine revelation. At the heart of the gospel is the person of Jesus Christ; he is the word of God come in the flesh. The nature of the gospel is such that it demands that it be at the centre of the biblical message.”

The Biblical theology hermeneutic is not new even though the name may be recent. The name Biblical theology was a way to differentiate itself from the field of Dogmatic or Systematic Theology. Bates posits that Paul used a Christocentric hermeneutic, but also starts off with his use of “according to the scriptures” in 1 Corinthians 15 as a protocreed show that the Scriptures were about Jesus. Luke 24:13–49 also recounts Jesus’ own conversation with two travelers on the Road to Emmaus where Jesus explains the Scriptures testify about Christ. Luke explains “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Luke and Paul’s hermeneutic was Christ centered across the entire

90 Goldsworthy, Christ-Centered Biblical Theology, Kindle Loc. 808.


92 Luke 24:27
Scriptures. They wrote to explain the new Hermeneutical key to unlocking what the church now calls the Old Testament.

Chou explains the other Gospel writers picked up on the continuation or fulfillment of the writings of the prophets and viewed “Christ’s life as the culmination the story line formulated by the Prophets.”93 When placed in comparison to Old Testament events, such as Jesus’ resurrection occurring on the first day of the week alluding to the first day of Creation in Genesis, the gospel writers “use the resurrection to advance the redemptive–historical narrative of Scripture.”94 The entire New Testament portrays the ending of Redemptive History story that is a continuation of what the prophets of the Old Testament started. The hope that the preacher brings from the Scriptures is that God is the same and that he fulfilled promises form the Old Testament and he will fulfill the promises, that were recounted or expanded on (i.e., the Eschatological events began in Daniel and furthered in Revelation) and He redeemed not only Israel, but the elect Church as well. Keeping to a Christ–Centered Biblical Theology is established and now the preacher must decide the best method to deliver the information. As Osborne states, “The hermeneutical process culminates not in the results of exegesis (centering on the original meaning of the text) but in the homiletical process (centering on the significance of the Word for the life of the Christian today).”95 The preacher must now decide on a preferred Homiletical method.


94 Chou, The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers, 158.

95 Osborne, The Hermeneutical Spiral, 440.
Homiletics

Using Perry’s definition for homiletics given above, there is no shortage of books that help a pastor, new or experienced improve his craft by learning how to structure a sermon. The two competing homiletical methods today are the Expository sermon and the Narrative sermon. McDill has his 12–step process to take the preacher from a text to a full sermon. Shaddix encourages pastors to develop passion driven sermons that edifies believers and glorifies God. Preachers are encouraged to not just pass on bible knowledge, but also help people grow in their Christian lives. Mark Dever states that preaching is the most important aspect “biblically necessary for building the church.”

Other preaching books make a similar case that the proper preaching and teaching God’s word is the core tenant of the church’s calling. While getting the preaching correct, there is little said about using God’s word in developing sermons for times of need and rebuilding. A Biblical book like Nehemiah may seem to lend itself to preaching about rebuilding a church, but there are usually more issues that must be repaired before the church can be truly rebuilt beyond the physical realm. Reformers and Puritans “talked about experimental or experiential Christianity” that sought to “explain how things ought to go in the Christian Life.”

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states that this type of “preaching must target the spiritual maturity and condition of the audience” even though the audience is made of many different people. Experiential preaching is applicable in Red Oaks situation and may be made easier because they all experienced the same situation.

Adams instructs the pastor to analyze the congregation, either informally or formally to select the proper books that address the problems and situations experienced by the congregation to select the Biblical book that is most applicable to the audience.102 Kim encourages the preacher to develop the cultural intelligence to better exegete the audience to develop sermons that can make the most impact. If the pastor does not understand his audience, there is a danger of losing that audience.103 Getting to know people you are preaching to is a part of the pastoral ministry that Broadus was talking about. In the case of Red Oaks Baptist Church and many other churches, the people do not need a theological lecture; they need healing, and it must be a key topic in the preaching. One of the best ways to get to know the congregation is through counseling.

Counseling

Counseling books, like preaching books, largely teach systems. Benner’s *Short–Term Focused Counseling*, Kollar’s, *Solution–Focused Pastoral Counseling* or the Nouthetic counselling that Jay Adams emphasizes, each has its strengths and weaknesses. Each preacher must find the style or method that works for the preacher, each system can help the pastoral counselor find the style that works for the situation or person (both the counsellor and

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Seminary introduces pastors to the tools, and it is up to the pastor on which tool to use for a given situation. The amount of counseling literature is staggering, and it is too numerous to be covered here. The counseling should be conducted with the Bible as the starting point.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Fosdick and Adams link counseling and preaching together and they are both important functions of pastoral ministry. Fosdick may have been one of the first modern-day pastors to make the connection of preaching and counseling. In an article, he states “any preacher who in his sermons speaks to the real conditions of his people, is bound to be sought out by individuals, wanting his intimate advice.” Counseling as something done behind closed doors between the pastor and one congregant or client.

Counseling entails talking to people and working through their problems. Listening to the issues of the day and sifting and sorting to get to the root of the problem. However, as Fosdick points out, that for all the drudgery of the counseling room, the miracle witnessed and the victory gained over a problem is the reminder that “the Gospel works.” Adams agrees that the goal of counseling is Biblical change, even though it may be difficult and long to see those changes happen.

Counseling people through the suffering is an important role for the pastor. Luther had a biblical view of people’s suffering while considering God’s sovereignty. He says, “God is acting

104 See Capps’ Pastoral Counseling and Preaching for a more in-depth treatment of the subject.


106 Adams. Preaching with Purpose, 37.

107 Fosdick, “Personal Counseling”, 12.

through history, in our personal circumstances and in the whole of creation, in deeply secret and veiled ways which at times seem strange, dark and even disturbing.”\textsuperscript{109} Using the Bible to show the people some of God’s ways can be accomplished from the pulpit as well as the counseling room. One of the most important ideas to illustrate from the Bible is that humans “are, by nature in rebellion against God” and sometimes people suffer because of the actions of others.\textsuperscript{110}

Since Red Oaks experienced the trauma together, it would be wise to heal together and be counseled, at least on some levels, together. Some people may require individual attention since people process loss and tragedy and forgiveness in different ways, but the healing of a community led by the pastor should be an effective way and follows a biblical model in both the Old and New Testaments. This is particularly important in addressing why God allowed the situation to bring the destructive leader into power in the first place.

Pastoral Ministry

Preaching and Counseling are integral to a pastor’s role, but there are other skills that the pastor must be aware of and hone. However, possessing all these skills as one person is nearly impossible and is most likely that a plurality of elders in a congregation is necessary so the church body possesses these skills and not just rely on one person. “A pastor is to be a humble steward of a great and theological heritage.”\textsuperscript{111} Being a steward requires leadership, as 1 Peter 5:1–3 instructs “\textsuperscript{1} So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as

\textsuperscript{109} Stephen Pietsch, "Luther's Theology of Suffering and Pastoral Care." \textit{Lutheran Theological Journal} 51, no. 2 (08, 2017): 103.

\textsuperscript{110} Pietsch, “Luther’s Theology,” 103.

\textsuperscript{111} MacArthur, \textit{Pastoral Ministry}, 8.
God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”

**Leadership**

The art and science of leadership is studied by many people from the business world, to sports, and combat, amongst other fields. One of the main jobs of a pastor or an elder is to lead the church. 112 However, in many seminaries, leadership training is very minimal unless the pastor specifically selects a leadership emphasis in his degree plan. Some people may not know if they are good or bad leaders until it is too late. It takes effort and time to cultivate what is referred to as soft skills, of leading people.

While ineffective leaders can be addressed or recognized, often times there are what current literature refers to as “Toxic Leadership” which can cause psychological stress on the followers, may take longer to recognize because it is less about leadership ability and more about intention that “spreads undetected like a poison.”113 Secular literature seeks to address the consequences that stem from bad leadership and help the organization recover from the unhealthy situation that has now created an unhealthy organization. 114 Biblical examples of poor leaders include King Ahab, King Manasseh, King Amon and to an extent, David’s predecessor, King Saul. The nation of Israel suffered under the poor leadership of the kings and the nation received God’s wrath because of it. Like the nation of Israel, the church is not just an organization, but it is an organism made up of people that need to heal from the emotional strain.

112 See 1 Tim 3:1–8 and Titus 1:7–10, for biblical qualifications of an elder or overseer.


of subpar leaders. Recovering as quickly as possible helps the church resume the Great Commission of reaching the lost and making disciples.

**Pastoral Care**

Another important aspect of being an overseer is pastoral care. This is in part a counseling ministry, but it is also being around the congregation in good times and bad times, at births and deaths and everything in between. Experiencing the ups and downs of life with the people who are under the pastor’s care. This care oftentimes begins as a praying for each of the individuals in their flock. Paul emulated the pastoral tasks through all his letters, and they were “written for a pastoral purpose.”\(^{115}\) He received and responded to the news from the churches that he thought of as his children. Thompson points out that Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church to commend and encourage the church.

**Theological Foundations**

Any ministry endeavor must ground itself in the Bible to have theological foundations. The project centers around preaching to the congregation and counseling the people who need healing from a traumatic event. Biblically, several books and people come to mind that fit the situation that ROBC is in. In this time of a small exodus from the land that ROBC knew, the church was compelled to follow God and more from their former home and go to a new land. This section will look at Moses’ role as a prophet–teacher in Deuteronomy, Josiah’s reinstitution of God’s word in 2 Kings 22 and Jesus’ mission of preaching and healing in Luke 4. The project relies heavily on the exegetical preaching to help the people see the Bible has the answers to the problem that needs addressing. Moses is the first Biblical example of preaching God’s Word.

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\(^{115}\) Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul*, 89.
Deuteronomy: Moses Preaches to Israel

As the nation of Israel stands on the shores of the Jordan river, waiting to enter the Promised Land, “Moses spoke to the people of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him in commandment to them” (Deut. 1:3). Moses did not give the people a motivational speech or his own thoughts on how long it took to get to the destination. Instead, the writer tells the reader “Moses undertook to explain this law” (Deut. 1:5). Moses gives a series of sermons to prepare the people for the undertaking of entering, not only a new land, but God’s covenant.116 The ESV translates the word Hebrew word be’er as “explain,” but the semantic range of the word can be translated as “expound” or ‘set forth in detail.’117 Moses’ actions in Deuteronomy matches the very working definition of expository preaching explained earlier in chapter 1.

Moses explains the law or Hebrew word torah. Although most English translations translate this word as “law”, the more accurate word would be either “teaching” or “instruction.”118 The connotation of “teaching” or “instruction” is more in line with how the Bible is not just list of statutes or a set of rules, but Deuteronomy connotes “teachings that must be taught, studied and pondered.”119 The root word that torah is derived, gives “the sense of stretching out the finger, or the hand, to point out a route.”120 The instructions are so important to


117 Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy =: [Devarim]: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 1st ed., The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 5. The NASB agrees with the JPS and translates he word as expounds. The KJV translates the word as “declare”, which

118 ESV, NASB, KJV, CSB, NIV, and NRSV all use “law”. Tigay and the JPS translate Torah with the more accurate word, “teaching.”

119 Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 5.

God, that He has Moses instruct the Nation of Israel to gather together and listen to the reading of the entire *torah* every seven years (Deut. 31:10–13). The command is issued in addition to Deuteronomy 6:6–9 which states,

> “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

God places the utmost importance on His word and the expounding and preaching of it to His people on a regular basis. Moses is the example that preachers should follow; to explain God’s Word as you are led by God to do so. Christian preachers have much more to explain to the congregations because the history of the Old Testament is lost to the modern-day Christian and also the preacher must show how the Torah “performs a preparatory function in light of the revelatory work of Christ.”

121 The entire book of Deuteronomy is a series of sermons that exposit God’s Word as it was given at Mount Sinai, covering the Ten Commandments and the remainder of the covenant between God and His people.

122 Unfortunately, the nation of Israel, which includes both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms failed to follow the command to obey God’s teachings and follow the directions of the prophets that came after Moses. The history books of 1–2 Kings, and 1–2 Chronicles recount tales of the ebb and flow leaders and how some kings led the people either toward God or and other Kings led people away from Him. Fortunately, there are times of reform and restoral for

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the people when they return to God’s word. One of the major reformers is King Josiah, whose story is recounted in 2 Kings 22.

2 Kings 22: Josiah Restores God’s Word

King Manasseh and his successor son Amon both “did evil in the sight of the Lord” for most of their reigns (2 Kgs 21). The people were led astray and needed reform to get back to live according to God’s ways. Perhaps the people expected Josiah, Amon’s son to be like his father and grandfather. The author tells the reader Josiah “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left” (2 Kgs 22:2). “The corresponding verses in 2 Chronicles 34:3 says Josiah ‘began to seek the God of his father David’ in the eighth year of his rule.”123 Over the course of his rule, Josiah removes the high places and other idols setup by his ancestors and orders the restoration of the Temple. During the rebuilding, a priest finds the book of the Law, and reads it to Josiah. “When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes” (2 Kgs 22:11).

Josiah had already focused on making some reforms, but was convicted all the more when he heard God’s instructions and teachings, “Josiah carries out, step by step, the fundamental principles of Deuteronomy.”124 What Josiah carries out is more than remodeling the temple to restore it to its former glory; Josiah focus the people on God “plus an emphasis on covenant keeping and covenant renewal.”125 The central idea was to have the people return to God and reject other idols or other ways to live life. Furthermore, Josiah knows or learns that the book of Law is one of “learning and remembering and remembering and not forgetting” and the

124 House, 1, 2 Kings, 383.
125 House, 1, 2 Kings, 383.
return to worshipping God not only focuses the people, but also helps “reestablishes the cultural memory and national identity.”

The pastor must act like Josiah and help ROBC reclaim the church’s memory and identity to reestablishing the church itself and the people in the church. The church must learn and remember that they are children and servants of God and their identity comes from their relationship and response to His word. When they do so, the church and the people can begin to heal.

Luke 4: Jesus Preaches and Heals

The Israelites’ identity was that of God’s people; a people who were waiting for the foretold Messiah. Each of the Gospel writers used the Old Testament to prove that Jesus was the foretold Messiah and the Son of God. The Apostles used the Old Testament per its original intent proven true by the evidence of Jesus’ ministry to write the New Testament. “Luke in fact referred to these things in his prologue as “the things that have been fulfilled among us” (Luke 1:1). In no other Gospel, not even in Matthew, do we find so many references and allusions to how the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures.

Luke records the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee starting in Luke 4:14–15 when Jesus “taught in their synagogues.” In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus reads Isaiah 61:1–2:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,


because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

When he hands the scroll back to the attendant,
Jesus says to them “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). The Scripture reading and fulfillment provides two clues as to what Jesus’ mission is on Earth, to proclaim and to restore. The word used for “proclaim” is kerusso. The NIV translates this as “preach” and can be interchanged with kerygma. Here, Jesus is making God’s Word known, but unlike other prophets who were only “announcers of Yahweh’s word, Jesus is God’s word. He is proclaiming freedom and God’s favor. Jesus is bringing the message of hope and salvation to God’s people. But as the Gospel writers point out, Jesus is not only the messenger of help and healing, but he is also the message. He is the one that has authority to restore with his words.

Jesus says he will “free the captives, recovering eyesight to the blind and free the oppressed.” All these statements connote restoring something lost. What is more, the original language speaks to pardoning or cancelling debts. Luke uses the same word in Luke 1:77, 3:3, 24:47 and in Acts 2:38 and 5:31. The power of God’s word can heal and Luke records Jesus performing many healings in chapter 4:31–43. Jesus casts out several demons and heals the sick. Some people in the crowd ask “What is this word? For with authority and power he commands

129 The phrase “proclaim the good news” in verse 18, is one Greek word, evangelisasthai, which is akin to herald or proclaim a message. Stein “assigns kerusso and evangelizo are essentially synonyms.”


the unclean spirits, and they come out!” (Luke 4:36). “The miracles that reveal the coming of
God’s kingdom also reveal that the kingdom is here because its King (1:32–33) has come.”132
Jesus has the power to heal because he is God. God is the only one that can heal the people of
ROBC and so the foundation of the church health rests on the people’s reliance on God. The
people in and around the church can likewise be amazed at God’s power when the people stand
back and watch Him exercise his authority.

Luke 4 shows the reader how Jesus met people where they were at, both literally and
figuratively and provided the help they needed, sometimes unknowingly. This research project
will attempt to follow Jesus’ model to develop the theoretical foundations to use God’s word in
bringing the healing to the people who need it most. The centrality of Jesus and conforming the
congregation to Biblical standards will form the theoretical foundation for this project.133

**Theoretical Foundations**

The problem that ROBC faces is one primarily of a Biblical nature. The situation can be
traced to sin, and the missteps of leaders that were placed in positions of trust. The people
followed to a point, but many of them left the church over the years of poor spiritual leadership.
Because of this reason Biblical counseling can be accomplished in a variety of forms. Nouthetic
counseling, will form the basis of the preaching and counseling that will take place during this
project. This system considers the sufficiency of the scriptures and the imperative that teaching is
“part of the sacred process of change” that Moses, Josiah, and Jesus instruct in the scriptures.134


133 Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 46.

Adams goes onto state that Paul conducted both public teaching ministry along with the “confrontation of individuals.”\textsuperscript{135} 

The scripture is sufficient to counsel, but sometimes the concepts can be better explained with modern terms. Crabb explains “some portion of psychology offers ideas and concepts which do not contradict the Christian position.”\textsuperscript{136} Crabb calls his position “Spoiling the Egyptians” which comes from the Exodus story of when Moses and the Israelites left Egypt, they took from (spoiled) the Egyptians to sustain them on the escape journey.\textsuperscript{137} In the context of the research approach, it is no different than applying pedagogical methods to enhance the teaching and preaching than it is to incorporate certain aspects of psychology that has been researched and explained a bit more thoroughly than just a concept or Biblical allusion.

The preaching that will take place to reinforce the teaching of the Bible and the lessons that can apply to the whole group. The expository nature does not preclude from doing a topical series, but the certain epistles or Biblical narratives are applicable to ROBC’s situation to preach through a section of a book or an entire letter to illustrate lessons of forgiveness, moving on, and God’s sovereignty. This approach helps demonstrate the authority of God’s word as well. It is important to listen to comprehend the situation’s full context and apply the correct scripture to the problem.\textsuperscript{138} Preaching is central, but not the only pastoral task, but in recent years, preaching and counseling have become separate events.\textsuperscript{139} The project will seek to further the reconnection

\textsuperscript{135} Adams, Competent to Counsel, Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{136} Larry Crabb, Effective Biblical Counseling (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2013), 51.
\textsuperscript{137} Crabb, Effective Biblical Counseling, 47.
\textsuperscript{139} Thompson, Preaching like Paul, 85.
of the preaching and pastoral ministry (of which counseling is a part of) by employing methods gleaned from the research already conducted in the literature review section above. Harry Emerson Fosdick and Jay Adams are two of the leading authorities on combining preaching and counseling. This section will compare the methods of these two men and then explain the method this research project will employ.

Harry Emerson Fosdick

Harry Emerson Fosdick was the first Baptist professor at Union Theological Seminary and worked there for thirty-eight years. He grew to prominence as a lecturer and a preacher in Presbyterian circles and was liberal or modern in his views, (and deemed a heretic by many conservatives). He eventually settled at Park Avenue Baptist Church, in New York city in 1926. With his preaching style and inclusive ideals, the church grew quickly. Fosdick retired from public ministry in 1946. Fosdick’s influence was far reaching; partly due to his ministry’s location in New York, teaching at or lecturing at many universities and seminaries, his public radio show, and his prolific writings throughout his professional life.

During his time in ministry, Fosdick pioneered the combination of preaching and counseling and brought it to the forefront in the 20th century. His method’s impetus was his unhappiness with expository and topical preaching. Expository preaching “gave unwarranted importance to the Biblical passage instead of to the business of living” and the topical sermon,

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Fosdick assessed, turned the sermon into a lecture.\textsuperscript{144} Changing from the traditional preaching methods also allowed the pastor to keep the sermon development fresh and reignite the fire in the pulpit. “A disenchanted preacher cannot provoke his hearers.”\textsuperscript{145}

An encounter with a young man seeking personal counseling inspired Fosdick to look beyond the counseling room and into the pews, to realize that if one person needed counseling, surely others could benefit from similar advice.\textsuperscript{146} Fosdick surmised that the “preacher’s task is to create in the listener whatever he is preaching about.” Linn explains Fosdick’s theory further, “by apply[ing] the principles of personal counseling to preaching, the counseling sermon becomes no less a technique for the transformation of persons.”\textsuperscript{147} It seems that the encounter with people in the counseling room also changed the preacher, as Fosdick explains, “Such experiences in the consultation room—indubitable experiences of sometimes almost incredible regeneration—must have a profound effect when the counselor steps into the pulpit”\textsuperscript{148} Fosdick’s observation, wrought from experience reminds the pastor that he is being changed by the people he shepherds as much as they may be learning from him.

In his article, Fosdick asserts that performing the pastoral tasks give insight and clarity into the formal education that many preachers receive in seminary. Theory is one thing; practicality is altogether another. The preacher should be attuned to his congregation and the goings on when faced with a situation that affects several people. Fosdick’s familiarity and

\textsuperscript{144} Linn, \textit{Preaching as Counseling}, 12.
\textsuperscript{145} Linn, \textit{Preaching as Counseling}, 14.
\textsuperscript{146} Linn, \textit{Preaching as Counseling}, 15.
\textsuperscript{147} Linn, \textit{Preaching as Counseling}, 16.
\textsuperscript{148} Fosdick, “Personal Counseling”, 12.
analysis of his congregation seems to emulate Paul in his pastoral ministry. Each of Paul’s letters is a response to a problem or problems that each congregation experienced. By way of example, Paul tells the Corinthian church, “Your restoration is what we pray for. For this reason, I write these things while I am away from you” (2 Cor. 13:9-10). If we take Paul’s epistles as sermon, we see Paul’s emotions and concern for each church. Paul inserted theology as it was needed to provide care for his churches when he wrote his letters. For Fosdick, “The sermon is not to be a dogmatic monologue but a creative, co-operative dialogue that actually brings to pass within the congregation what it communicates.” Both pastors were concerned with addressing questions and problems in the congregation.

Thompson illustrates that Paul used the “eschatological horizon” to instruct the church at Thessalonica. Paul deals with the immediacy of their fears the church missed the Parousia and explains the events that must precede the Lord’s Second Coming. Paul’s “instructions indicate both the activity of God in sanctification and the community’s responsibility for conduct that is the embodiment of Sanctification.” Paul explains the theory and how the theory applies to the life of a believer. Fosdick tried to achieve a similar outcome with his preaching.

Fosdick understands the risks of his own method. If a pastor counsels people that have a very specific problem, then that may distort his focus and the preaching may be aimed at a very specific but not prevalent problem. The preachers’ “insight must run beyond his individual experience in the consultation room. His scope, like the Bible’s should include all human life,

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149 Thompson, *Preaching like Paul*, 87.


151 Thompson, *Preaching like Paul*, 87.

152 Thompson, *Preaching like Paul*, 91.
personal and social, and the whole message of the gospel.”

Fosdick says, “a measure of a sermon is how many people request a private consultation after the sermon” but, he goes on to state, that this was “a generation ago, before the development of personal counseling clinics.”

Fosdick’s method as explained to Edmund Linn, focuses on the Gospel and its effectiveness for transforming lives. “The one objective of the sermon is to lift such a person and after examining it for all of its worst and best aspects, to solve it by bringing the saving truth and power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to throw light upon it.” Fosdick’s sermon ideas came from his counseling sessions, and personal correspondence he received, which perhaps may have violated his own warning that was stated above, although his scope of problems to examine may have been larger than the average pastor. Fosdick’s method of combining counseling and preaching reached many, and Fosdick tried to reach people by starting his sermon topics “where they are in their thinking.”

Jay Adams

Like Fosdick, Jay Adams assessed the state of preaching in determined there was a critical need for a change in the field of preaching and wanted to create a textbook that would

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154 Fosdick, “Personal Counseling”, 15. This coincides with Thompson’s assessment of the demarcation of preaching and pastoral tasks and indicates that the separation had begun early in the 20th century.

155 It is important to note that Fosdick eschewed many of the orthodox beliefs or what he called Fundamentalism such as the virgin birth, the return of Christ and the wrath of God as being only a metaphor. Tim Challies provides a concise explanation of in his Blog post “The False Teachers: Harry Emerson Fosdick.” https://www.challies.com/articles/the-false-teachers-harry-emerson-fosdick/. See also Robert Miller Moats biography Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet, New York: Oxford Press, 1985. The differences of Fosdick and Adams will be discussed further below in the project.

156 Linn, Preaching as Counseling, 19.


help remedy the problem.\textsuperscript{159} While most of Adams’ books pertain to Christian counseling, he also preaches and delves into homiletics, and pastoral theology. He understands that the average pastor may not have received a sufficient education when it comes to learning and applying fundamental homiletical principles, but also moving away from some of the tendencies or bad habits that have worked their way into preaching in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{160}

Adams asserts sermons should be preached with the purpose of life transforming experience instead of a classroom lecture.\textsuperscript{161} Adams’ method is broken down into five participants or elements of preaching: “Content, in the form of a Biblical message, a preacher, an occasion, listeners, and the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the important element in powerful and purposeful preaching. Adams defines pastoral preaching as “teaching to observe” or “edificational preaching.”\textsuperscript{162} Edification is building up so the preacher is building up is congregation or individual.\textsuperscript{163} The construction of the church requires each brick to be sound and preaching should work to mold each believer into the brick. As each person grows in faith, they strengthen the congregation.

The preacher should use God’s word to build up and feed the congregation. Adams explains that it is [the congregation’s] needs, failures, opportunities, etc.” that makes the preacher select a passage to derive the weekly message.\textsuperscript{164} By listening to and learning about the

\textsuperscript{159} Adams, \textit{Preaching with a Purpose}, x.
\textsuperscript{160} Adams, \textit{Preaching with a Purpose}, xiii.
\textsuperscript{161} Adams, \textit{Preaching with a Purpose}, 2.
\textsuperscript{162} Adams, \textit{Preaching with a Purpose}, 6.
\textsuperscript{163} Adams, \textit{Preaching with a Purpose}, 13.
\textsuperscript{164} Adams, \textit{Preaching with a Purpose}, 21.
congregation, the preacher can assess and address the needs of the church under his care. He can do this by means of counseling or formal and informal contact.\(^\text{165}\) Adams encourages the preacher to counsel and pay attention to habits, patterns, and common problems. Adams refers to Paul’s “two–pronged ministry of the Word” by preaching publicly and in houses.\(^\text{166}\) Again, everything the preacher does to organize and write the sermon “must further the Holy Spirit’s intention of the passage.”\(^\text{167}\) The preacher must spend time with commentaries, his flock, and the Holy Spirit to prepare an effective message.\(^\text{168}\)

**Comparison of the Methods**

The largest difference between Fosdick and Adams is that the former is theologically liberal, and the latter is theologically conservative. Fosdick was deemed a heretic (to which he proudly admitted) because he “denied the infallibility of the scriptures,” and the fundamental orthodox doctrines such as the virgin birth and the deity of Christ.\(^\text{169}\) Adams, on the other hand believes the “Bible is holy, able, inspired by God, and profitable” for counseling and preaching.\(^\text{170}\) To accomplish anything, counseling and preaching are dependent on the Scriptures, because they are “ministries of the Word.”\(^\text{171}\)

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\(^{165}\) Adams, *Preaching with a Purpose*, 34.

\(^{166}\) Adams, *Preaching with a Purpose*, 37.

\(^{167}\) Adams, *Preaching with a Purpose*, 27.

\(^{168}\) Adams, *Preaching with a Purpose*, 38.

\(^{169}\) Milioni, “The Concept of Self,” 2.


Both men hold to a high view of preaching and wanted to change people by their sermons. Fosdick preached “no one person is ever beyond the reach of the correcting, healing, and consoling power of this Gospel.”\textsuperscript{172} Throughout his sermons, he would emphasize the need for a person to change.\textsuperscript{173} In a sermon titled “Belief in Immortality,” Fosdick says “Immortality is not a future matter simply, as so many people make it. It concerns what you are now. As you sit here this Easter Morning, are you a clever combination of atoms only or are you an abiding character? What are you know? That makes a difference.”\textsuperscript{174} Fosdick puts the question to the hearer; “do you believe you are a scientific definition of man or the Biblical definition of a man?” Similarly, Adams states “the most fundamental purpose of preaching is to obey Jesus and follow his example.”\textsuperscript{175} Both of these ideas require change to turn away from the what the word has to offer and look toward God’s word.

However, Adams and Fosdick differ in recognizing the impetus that effects change men and women. Adams places a large amount of emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the change affected in a person’s life. He calls the Holy Spirit the “most essential element of preaching.”\textsuperscript{176} Fosdick seems to rely on his own rhetorical skills, the mention of the gospel, and the use of psychological means to change people. In his own work “As I see Religion, Fosdick asserted that religion is not a system of theology, but as an individual psychological experience

\textsuperscript{172} Linn, \textit{Preaching as Counseling}, 19.

\textsuperscript{173} Milioni, “The Concept of Self,” 44.

\textsuperscript{174} Harry Emerson Fosdick and David Pultz, \textit{A Preaching Ministry: Twenty–One Sermons Preached by Harry Emerson Fosdick at the First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York, 1918–1925} (New York: The Church, 2000). Kindle Loc 4316.

\textsuperscript{175} Adams, \textit{Preaching with a Purpose}, 18.

\textsuperscript{176} Adams, \textit{Preaching with a Purpose}, 7.
to be enjoyed.” Adams remains God–centered and Fosdick is man–centered. A preacher should be skilled in speaking, but the rhetorical tricks and gimmicks should be avoided. Adams points out, “Paul did not care about praise for his speaking skills,” but was concerned about making the Gospel message as clear as possible for his audience and that change that Paul was preaching about was set on the proper theological foundation. Adams’ dependence on the Holy Spirit in preaching and counseling coincides with the Puritan’s concept that the preacher and the hearer must be “totally dependent on the Holy Spirit in everything they say and do.”

The way to get the counselee or congregation to see a Biblically based decision is to use the Bible and get people to not just read it but to study the Bible. In his sermon on Jonah titled “The Purpose of Jonah,” Adams instructs the audience, to help a counselee see God and His providence amid the problem they are currently experiencing; there is hope in and through this problem because God is there. In another sermon, “You and These Times,” based on Hebrews 10:23-25, Adams returns to the idea of Hope which he defines as “an assurance and anticipation of things yet to come because God has promised it.” In both sermons, he quotes Romans 8, specifically verses 18-30. For the counselor/preacher who wants to point people who are suffering through some situation, we learn three things: 1) the suffering is not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed to us” (v. 18); 2) the Spirit helps us in our weakness, (v. 22)

178 Adams, Preaching with a Purpose, 9.
179 Beeke, Reformed Preaching, 156.
which corresponds to Adams’ idea of how the Holy Spirit is the impetus for change in our lives and; 3) all things God works for the good of those who love Him” (v. 28). And this Biblically based message in preaching or counseling can be convicting and helpful for the person going through a particular situation.

Thompson points out that Fosdick’s method has been influential in the twentieth century in developing how people preach but cautions that Fosdick’s version of pastoral preaching is problematic because first and foremost, relies on more modern therapeutic or psychological understanding, rather than being rooted in the Bible.182 This is not surprising given Fosdick’s lower view of Scripture but still wanting to provide comfort. Thompson goes on to say that Fosdick’s approach “never confronts the listener with words of judgment; nor does it offer guidance on the concrete demands of the Christian life.”183

Without preaching and counseling from God’s word as one coherent story, we lose portions of our humanity and what it means to be made and remade in God’s image. Adam’s points out that for divine change to take place, a person must be convicted of their wrongs before God.184 Adams opens his series on Colossians, “The letter to the Colossians is about How Christ affects your life and how you view or understand Christ makes the difference.”185 Fosdick and Adams wanted a person to reach a decision based on their preaching or sermons, but Adams’ emphasizes the importance that they reach a Biblically based decision.

182 Thompson, Preaching Like Paul, 88.
183 Thompson, Preaching Like Paul, 88.
184 Adams, How to Help People Change, 112.
Jesus used Scripture to “convict His people because He cares,” not to make them feel bad. Jesus’ own words to each of the seven churches in Revelation were meant to bring about a change in their conduct as a church. In Revelation 3:19, Jesus explains to the Church at Laodicea “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.” The Greek word elegcho, rendered “reprove” in most English translations means “to scrutinize or examine carefully, bring to light, expose or to convict or convince someone of something. Jesus also wants people to change but He uses Scripture’s standards to move the people from the place they are today to the place where he wants them to be tomorrow, so they keep God’s Word. Jesus taught The Holy Spirit, as the comforter and counselor will continue to convict people, using God’s Word. Any under shepherd should strive to emulate Jesus and His methods with regards to the efficacy of God’s word. A preacher’s ministry stems from Jesus’ ministry.

This chapter has demonstrated there are many parts to the ministries that a pastor and preacher must carry out. An effective sermon must be equal parts sound biblical hermeneutics that seek to understand the author’s intent and constructing the sermon using a method that guides listener through the scripture. MacDill’s 12–Step Method is the most effective way, overall, to construct consistent sermons that exposit the scripture. Pulling in other ideas to include narrative functions in the sermon are also ways to engage the audience in hearing and understanding the sermon.

186 Adams, How to Help People Change, 113.
188 Adam, Speaking God’s Word, 48.
189 Adam, Speaking God’s Word, 48.
190 Adam, Speaking God’s Word, 48.
However, preaching is only one aspect of ministry and a pastor must shepherd his people with care and oversee the congregation, (both converted and unconverted peoples). The pastor must work to reform the congregation. Puritan Richard Baxter quoting Acts 20 commanded the overseer “must take heed to all the flock and to this end it is necessary that [he] should know every person that belongeth to our charge.”\textsuperscript{191} Adams clarifies Baxter’s meaning by explaining that Baxter emphasized oversight of individual members directly and not just preaching or counseling them as a group.\textsuperscript{192}

We must understand the individuals because they make up the whole. People make up the church. As Fosdick and Adams came to realize, the counseling of individuals helps in giving counsel to the group, because if a few people have similar problems or life circumstances and need counseling, then chances are that other people in the congregation are experience ad in need of the same advice or Biblical reasoning. It is important though that the advice come from God’s word and to man’s understanding of God’s word or psychology. Taking all these factors into account helps the researcher construct a thorough method to combine preaching and counseling to help his congregation heal and move on to the next step of being made in the Image of God. The next chapter will be the fruit of this chapter’s material.

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\textsuperscript{192} Adam, \textit{Speaking God’s Word}, 67.
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Chapter 3: Methodology

Intervention Design

The solution to healing Red Oaks Baptist Church is using the Word of God through preaching and counseling. The purpose of this intervention is to prove that combining preaching and counseling can be efficacious in bringing healing to both the corporate church body and the individual church member. There are many tasks that need to happen before or during the intervention to make this successful. The tasks to be undertaken are:

1. Pray for the project and the participants (daily)
2. Obtain buy-in from the participants
3. Create and obtain consent forms
4. Create a survey asking the members if the preaching sessions helped them grow and heal from the problem
5. Schedule and conduct an initial group counseling session to explain the process of the project
6. Schedule individual counseling sessions (at least two sessions per person, one before the series starts and one after the series is over)
7. Preach a four–week sermon series from Psalm 107
8. Conduct a closing group counseling session
9. Analyze the research—listen to and transcribe the recordings

The participants are the adults affected by the situation of the pastors who tried to assume control of the church and congregation. This group consists of church members, associational leaders, and anyone else affected by the problem that ROBC faced.

Preaching

The preaching sessions will take place during the regular Sunday morning service, held at 10:30 AM, at 3600 Pinewood Road, Santa Maria California. During the four–week series, Psalm 107 will be taught to remind the church and the people affected by the trauma have been “redeemed by God from the power of the foe” (Ps. 107:2, CSB). Spurgeon describes the psalm as one that “celebrates providential deliverances, and therefore may be sung by any man whose life has been preserved in time of danger; yet, under cover of this, it mainly magnifies the Lord...
for spiritual blessings.” The Psalm highlights God’s faithful lovingkindness and how ROBC traversed through its own Exodus–like journey on the road to recovery.

Each sermon will have a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation that contains notes and highlights. Bulletins are handed out each Sunday with a sermon outline that coincides with the presentation. The bulletin allows the member to take notes. An integral part of the intervention is “sermons are not just imparting information. They should be custom built to change lives. We don’t want to fill their heads; we want the proclamation of the Word to grip their souls and motivate them to conform to the will of God.”

Exegesis of Psalm 107

The sermons will be based on the exegesis that appears in the next section but expanded to make full sermons. The exegesis here employs a Canonical Approach, as put forth by Brevard Childs and R.W.L Moberly and deals primarily with the final form of the text. B.W. Anderson, appealing to the work of H. Frei, argues that “The beginning and end of exegesis is the text itself—not something beyond it” The outline below is for the entire series. Each Roman Numeral point will become one sermon. The sermons can be found in the appendix section.

Preliminary Sermon Outline for Psalm 107


194 York and Decker, Preaching with Bold Assurance, 11.

195 The exegesis here employs a Canonical Approach, as put forth by the likes of Brevard Childs and R.W.L Moberly and deals primarily with the final form of the text. This exegesis does not address many textual and linguistic issues or theories that may be present in the text or derived from specific texts (i.e. Masoretic Text or the LXX). If the ideas or major issues come up in the research, they will be mentioned to make a salient point, but much of those types of arguments are beyond the purview of this project.

God Brings You Out from Where you Are

I. God Brings You Out of the Spiritual Desert (1–9) 197
   a. God Will Direct You back to Him (1–3)
   b. God Will Satisfy Your Thirst (4–6)
   c. God Will Satisfy Your Hunger (7–9)

II. God Brings You Out of Spiritual Darkness (10–22) 198
   a. God Will lead you out of Prison (10–16)
   b. God Will lead you out of Destruction (17–22)

III. God Brings You out of the Spiritual Storm (23–32) 199
   a. God Places You on the Ship (23–24)
   b. God Raises the Storms (25–28)
   c. God Calms the Storms (29–32)

IV. God Brings You into Spiritual Blessing (33–43) 200
   a. God Will Punish the Evil (33–34)
   b. God Will Reward the Faithful (35–36)
   c. God Will bring low the Haughty (39–40)
   d. God Will Bless the Poor (41–43)

197 This Roman Numeral is Sermon # 1 in Appendix A
198 This Roman Numeral is Sermon # 2 in Appendix A
199 This Roman Numeral is Sermon # 3 in Appendix A
200 This Roman Numeral is Sermon # 4 in Appendix A
Overall Structure and Themes

Psalm 107 is the first psalm of the fifth book of Psalms.201 The psalm is one of thanksgiving, but it also closes a “group of Psalms of praise, namely Psalms 103–107, that share a theme of thankfulness.”202 Zenger separates the Psalm into four parts: 1) a Hymnic exhortation (vv 1–3); 2) the four–strophe exhortation for thanksgiving (vv 4–32); 3) a hymnic poem based on God’s work in nature and history (vv 33–41); and 4) an exhortation to the wise (vv 42–43).203

For the second part, “each strophe describes an anonymous group of people suffering from a different hardship.”204 The thanksgiving psalm is a response to answered lament. In addition, there is a close connection between hymns and thanksgivings.205 The groups are encouraged and remember to give thanks to God, who has delivered them from their calamity. DeClaisse–Walford posits that vv 32–42 was not part of the original psalm but added to the psalm at some later point.206

Although there is no specific group of people given, which makes it general enough to be inclusive of almost any group or even an individual. Kartje “takes the plights and situations” described in each strophe to be symbolic, although people in every time have experienced one or


more of those situations.207 “Pilgrims from every part of the world are gathered” under the
banner of giving thanks to the Almighty God and “their experiences are woven into a
recollection of the Israelites’ wilderness wanderings.”208 What sustains the pilgrims in their
travels and tribulations is God’s enduring faithfulness or what the Hebrews use, the word *Hesed.*

*Hesed*

Verses 8, 15, 21, and 31 each act as a refrain to separate the four divisions in the Psalm.209
And along with verse one, each verse points the reader or hearer to God’s *hesed.* English
translators have selected different definitions of the word. The NASB translates *hesed* as loving
kindness, while the CSB uses faithful love and the ESV translates the word as steadfast love. The
KJV renders the word as mercy, as does Dahood in his commentary. Alter translates *hesed*
simply as kindness.210

The word has a plethora of meanings and can be used in multiple contexts. The main
meaning of the word comes down to God’s love. But the word is used to describe God’s
coovenant love that he shows his people and the psalm “then a summons the listener to praise him
for his covenant love and to give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful
deeds for men”211 HALOT gives the glosses of *joint obligation, lasting loyalty, faithfulness,*

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metaphorical in their presentation.


2009), Kindle Location 7145.

211 Allan Harman, *Psalms: A Mentor Commentary,* vol. 1–2, Mentor Commentaries (Ross–shire, Great
Britain: Mentor, 2011), 773.
favor, abounding faithfulness, godly action or achievements, and proof of mercy. Some translators have chosen to not translate hesed, and instead treat the word as a loan word brought into English from Hebrew.

The Psalmist encourages the audience to give thanks for God’s faithfulness and steadfastness. God has proven Himself by taking care of His covenant people and the psalmist seems confident that God will continue to do so. Eichrodt explains “there was a strong living conviction in Israel that Yahweh’s kindness and readiness to succor was something which could be expected of Him in view of his having established this covenant relationship.” Vriezen links God’s faithful love to His truthfulness and link of his character makes “Yahweh the reliable God” which influences God’s covenants with man.

The idea of the Covenant relationship and hesed, made possible because of God’s Character, stems from Exodus 34:6–8. Moberly states that while Christians largely focus on the “I AM” statement of Exodus 3:14, the Jewish religion gives “prime weight” to God’s 13 virtues that He gives to Moses in Exodus 34:6–7. J. Carl Laney observes that even though these attributes are regarded as “foundational statements about God” by the original writers and


216 Cf. Gordon R Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993. Books and articles have been written about the significance of God’s covenant relationship. It is beyond the scope of this project to expound on all of it. Clark gives a succinct synopsis of the definitive research into the use of the word or concept of Hesed.

“these attributes are repeated many times in the Old Testament (Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Pss. 103:8, 17; 145:8; Jer. 32:18–19; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2), but strangely this passage has received little attention from systematic theologians.” Covenants are the “‘architectural structure’” that the Biblical narrative is built on and are necessary to properly “discern the message of the Bible and hence God’s self-disclosure which centers on and culminates in Christ.  

After the Golden calf episode in Exodus 32, God’s reveals Himself in a theophany to Moses on Mount Sinai and in a kind of delayed response, answers Moses the “simple yet highly significant assertion ‘I am the Lord’” as well as the I AM statement at the burning bush. The covenant is established between God and His people in the book of Exodus and reestablished in the book of Deuteronomy before they cross over into the Promised Land, as understood by the statement “I will take you for my people and I will be your God.” This formula is an expansion of the covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis 17:7, where God promises Abraham a people.  

*Hesed* can be used to describe two party’s expectations in a covenant or contractual relationship, however it is done so sparingly in the Hebrew Bible. However, the use of the Word *hesed* indicates that this is a characteristic of God rather than human beings; rooted in the

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218 J. Carl Laney, “God’s Self–Revelation in Exodus 34:6–8.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (Jan–Mar 2001): 36. In his article he mentions that L. Berkhof, M. Erickson, or W. Gruden barely mention these verses other than perhaps as proof texts for categories in their respective Systematic Theologies. Like Erickson, J. Feinberg in *None Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 336, only mentions Ex. 34 when he discusses God’s goodness or “His ability to be or do good” and his mercy in verse 7.


divine nature” expressed for the first time on Mount Sinai.222 At the conclusion of his study, Clark points out that *hesed* cannot be “adequately translated into many languages” but he explains “*hesed* is an emotion that leads to an activity beneficial to the recipient” and that Yahweh expects his people to act like Him even though they are not capable of matching God’s *hesed.*223 But it is this very concept of unmatchable and wonderful *hesed* is what the psalmist wants the people to give thanks for. The second main theme of the psalm is Deliverance and Redemption.

**Deliverance and Redemption**

The Psalter’s Fourth book encouraged the exiled Israelites to remember their ancestors’ time of the wilderness wanderings when they were literally following God for their salvation.224 Book Five starts off with the same encouragement and call to remember the times God delivered them from danger or difficulties that exist in the world. Like the theme of giving thanks to God for His *hesed,* verses 6, 13, 19, and 28 serve as another refrain to remind them of how Yahweh delivered the people through the different situations. Each verse says, “Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress.” It is important to note that in “on the first and fourth occasions, the deliverance is described using different verbs (in v. 6, ‘he delivered them’ [*yatstsîlêm*]; in v. 28, ‘he brought them out’ [*yôtsîʾêm*]). In verses 13 and 19 the same verb is used: ‘he saved them’ (*yôshîʿêm*).225 All of these Hebrew verbs indicate the delivery

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or salvation, but many English translations render the phrase the same way: “He delivered them.” Dahood explains that the “psalmist eschews monotony by varying the final word of the refrain.”\footnote{Dahood, \textit{Psalms III}, 84.} In the very least, the English versions standardized statements emphasize the deliverance that God provided His people and knowing the Hebrew language has many poetic forms or words for the salvation. DeClaisse–Walford posits “the repetition of words in the vignettes provide further evidence that the psalm may have been used in a liturgical setting.”\footnote{DeClaisse–Walford, et al., \textit{The Book of Psalms}, 618.}

In any case, Yahweh is the deliverer, and He is the subject of the Psalm. The LORD is the deliverer; God is the one able to save or remove his people from any kind of danger or disaster. Psalm 107’s opening lines call the people from all directions to worship and praise God for the redemption “from the hand of the adversary” (107:2) that only He could have provided. And if the author wrote the Psalm after the conclusion of the Babylonian Exile, the people would have cause to rejoice and remember their deliverance.\footnote{DeClaisse–Walford, et al., \textit{The Book of Psalms}, 618.}

The theme of deliverance takes the Israelites back to the time of Moses, when his or her people were enslaved and were facing hardship to say the least. Even though they were Blessed by God; God led Joseph and His family to settle in Egypt and over the course of 40 years the Hebrews grew in number. However, Mackay explains “that blessing became the source of their enemies’ hostility and rancor, leading to the enslavement of the Israelites.”\footnote{John L. Mackay, \textit{Exodus}, Mentor Commentaries (Fearn, Ross–shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2001), 28. Exodus 1:8–14.} This animosity that the Egyptian Pharaoh felt toward the Hebrews led to genocide. But God’s blessing was upon
Moses, who made a way the future prophet, to not only survive the genocide, but to be raised in Pharaoh’s household.

Exodus Chapter 6 is pivotal in the story of the Hebrews for the extension or renewing of the Abrahamic covenant to the Hebrews in Egypt. And with this covenant renewal is the promise of salvation. Childs explains the covenant is emphasized by God’s self-revelation of His name Yahweh, in which “the divine name is encompassed the whole redemptive power of God.”

The use of Yahweh is an important link to the Exodus narrative, God’s people, and Psalm 107, that may be overlooked in many English translations. Many of the translations use LORD to indicate the original language use of Yahweh, but as Martens points out, that translation technique “does not convey the force of a personal name.” Erickson reveals in Hebrew culture, “names were chosen very carefully and with attention to its significance and considered the name an embodiment of the person bearing it.”

Eichrodt points out, “although God uses other names to describe himself, the use of Yahweh is far more extensive and may well be an allusion to the promise, that God is near at hand and mighty to control.”

To reiterate His control of the Hebrew’s situation, God instructs Moses, “6 Say therefore to the people of Israel ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. 7 I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from

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231 Martens, God’s Design, 15.


under the burdens of the Egyptians” (Ex. 6:6-7). The use of the divine name throughout Exodus, and in Psalm 107 indicates “not so much the unchangeableness of His essential Being, as much as it points the hearer/reader to the unchangeableness of His relation to His people.”

The promise of deliverance and redemption is not only for the Exodus account to be remembered every year at Passover. Instead, the Israelites were consistently delivered in the time of the Judges and two conquering and exiles at the hands of the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Martens asks, “‘Were the foreign gods more powerful that Yahweh after all?’” But of course, depending on the dating of the Psalm, it was quite probably composed to celebrate the Israelites return to the promised land after the Babylonian exile. Harman hypothesizes the psalm “may even be from the time of Nehemiah.” The provenance may explain why Psalm 107 is the beginning of Book Five of the Psalter. Psalms 103–106 is considered one group of psalms that may have been written before the end of the Exile to encourage the people to pray to Yahweh that they would be delivered. Zenger makes strong connections between Psalm 106 and Psalm 107. The former written most likely during the exile and the latter after the return of the Israelites. The psalmist constructed the hymn to have the Israelites, living in a post–exilic world, readily identify with their Hebrew ancestors from Exodus, that were brought out of the desert and into the Promised land.


235 DeClaisse–Walford, et al., The Book of Psalms. 615.

236 Harman, Psalms, 774.

237 DeClaisse–Walford, et al., The Book of Psalms. 615.

238 Zenger, Psalm 107. 103.
**Exposition**

God brings you out of the spiritual desert (1–9)

Verses one through three are considered the prologue declaring that the people should to thank or give thanks to Yahweh, for He is Good” (v. 1). As mentioned above, this is thought to be a liturgical “song to be sung by Yahweh’s Redeemed.” But the people should not just be thankful; they should tell the others. The ESV and KJV render the Hebrew word as “Say so.” Dahood renders the phrase simply “tell,” which coincides with the NIV. What do the people have to be thankful for and proclaim to others? The knowledge that Yahweh’s hesed endures forever. This verse along with verse 43, form the inclusion that God’s hesed makes the redemption of the people possible. The statements of God’s Character are derived from the longstanding Sinai theology, as mentioned above. This seems to be a reminder of the past and a call to others to recall who Yahweh is and what he is capable of.

Verses two and three encourage the redeemed to proclaim that Yahweh, the redeemer has provided deliverance from calamities. Zenger puts forth the use of the repeated word of redeem, ga’al, which can mean to “release or redeem, freeing a family member who is in need or enslaved” illustrates the relationship of God and His people and is used as almost shorthand to describe the covenantal relationship instituted at Sinai. And Ashdown explains the concept as “Yahweh belongs to Israel: nonetheless, Israel belongs to her Redeemer.” The redeemer title

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has intertextuality that stems all the way to the Prophet Isaiah and links the redeemer” all the way back to creation itself.\textsuperscript{244} The title of Redeemer sets Yahweh apart from other gods. Isaiah records God’s words in 44:6–8

> “Thus, says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. 7 Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. 8 Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.’”

It is clear from the statement in Isaiah and others in the entire Bible, Yahweh is unique in His ability and status and the redeemed are given a special place among the nations as His people. Isaiah 44:8 coincides with Psalm 107 God’s own words declares that God’s people are witnesses to the fact that God is a unique and He has saved them.\textsuperscript{245} God calls these witnesses back to him. Verse three may continue the Isaiah connection by gathering His people from the four cardinal points; “from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.” Zenger surmises the cardinal directions may serve to indicate the metaphor of “all directions,” but also to indicate the reach of God’s power and what is essentially His Empire, with the borders “according to Isa 45:1–8, ‘from the rising of the sun to its setting’ (Isa 45:6).”\textsuperscript{246} Both the

\textsuperscript{244} Zenger, \textit{Psalm 107}, 104. Cf. Von Rad in \textit{Old Testament Theology Vol 1} points out, that Isaiah sees a saving event in creation itself and “that God not only created the world, but He created Israel too.” Gerhard von Rad, \textit{Old Testament Theology} (Edinburgh, 1970), 137.


\textsuperscript{246} Zenger, \textit{Psalm 107}, 104.
Assyrian and Babylonia empires descended from the North, and “psalm 107:3 thus emphasizes that Yahweh delivers his ‘redeemed ones’ from the evil power ‘of the north.”’

The English translations use “South” as the last cardinal direction, to perhaps set the borders on the world, but the Hebrew text has the word for “from the sea” instead of “south.” Harman explains “the same phrase occurs in Isaiah 49:12, ‘from north and from the sea’ (mitstsâfôn ûmiyyâm) which suggests that emendation is unnecessary.” Dahood points out that the sea may be pointing to the southern sea or the Gulf of Aqabah. Again there is a deeper meaning in the text to the Jewish audience; the sea played an integral part in Israel’s escape from the Egyptians. In any case, the metaphoric meaning of the people being called home is the more important idea for a dispersed across an empire like Babylon.

Verses four through nine make up the first strophe for the four rescue scenarios: the desert wanderers. As discussed above, verses six and eight are refrains, to be sung by the people in their time of need and then rejoice in their rescue. Verse four and five set the picture of a person or a group of people lost in the desert wasteland. Although the psalm is most likely fiction, or at least not tied to any specific event, being lost in the desert was is a very real threat to the Israelites. “Few travelers in the Ancient near East dared any attempt to traverse the bleak terrain between Palestine and Mesopotamia.” For anyone who has lived in or visited a desert region knows the hopelessness that stems from seeing the continuous the sea of brown sand.

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247 Zenger, Psalm 107, 104.

248 Harman, Psalms, 775. Zenger also calls attention to Isa 43:1–7 and 51:9–11 for references to

249 Dahood, Psalms III, 81.

250 DeClaisse–Walford, et al., The Book of Psalms, 622.
Surrounded by dunes, rocks, and small scrub brush with nothing to orient the traveler, let alone find food and water. It can be a dire situation.

The psalmist echoes this dire struggle in verse five, with the people or person suffering from lack of food and water to the point that their “innermost being is faint.” Dahood explains that this phrasing alludes to Exodus 16:3 and 17:3 describing their hunger and thirst in the Sinai Peninsula. The people have “no way” or road to travel leading to an inhabited place and so lose hope as their life force leaves them. They have nothing to do left but to cry out to the Yahweh in their trouble (v. 6) and God answers them and “delivered them” or more accurately “saved them” from their troubles.

The psalmist explains how God saved the people. He led them or more literally, the verb darak, renders as “God marched them” or more accurately “to cause to walk.” Anyone who has spent time in the military and commanded or marched a unit, such a flight (as it is known in the Air Force) or company knows that group listens to and abides by the commander’s commands. The person in charge of the flight controls the cadence of the march by counting, “left, right, left, right” and directs the unit on which way to go on the road, by a series of precise instructions. The author also closes the inclusio started in verse 4 where the people had “no way” or path and now God marched them by “straight way” or path leading them out of the wilderness to a town or inhabited pace that contains shops or a market to obtain food and drink. The town represents having the necessary shelter, food, and water for survival.253

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251 Dahood, Psalms III, 82.
252 HALOT, 231.
253 Harman, Psalms, 776.
Being led on the straight path has larger theological implications than just recounting that “God led them on the correct road to a town.” The word for “way” or “path” is found throughout the Wisdom literature. Psalm 1 talks about the way of the righteous and the wicked. Proverb 1:15 encourages the son to “not walk in the way of sinners.” Looking to Zenger’s analysis again, he says “The psalm thus evokes here the model of successful versus unsuccessful life as a consequence of walking or not walking in the right path of the commandments or the Torah, a theme developed in many ways in wisdom and Torah theology (cf. Psalms 1; 119, especially 119:176, as well as Prov 4:10–19; 7:25–27; 14:12; 16:25; 21:16).” Proverb 2:8 reminds the hearer that God gives wisdom and “watches over the ways of His saints.” Being wise by obeying God also falls in line with the end of psalm 107 that says, “whoever is wise let him attend to these things.”

Verses eight and nine bring the reader to the second refrain to “Give thanks to Yahweh for his hesed...because he satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul.” God is the bread and water of life because he is the God of life. The statement in verse 9 is also stating that God is “worthy of our praise because he has truly satisfied the thirsting and the hungering of the wanderers.” The Christian aspect of the psalm and these verses is Jesus proclaims that he is the bread and the living water. And he tells the woman at the well that he provides a water that will permanently quench her longing.

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254 Although this topic could be another paper in and of itself, it is important to note that according to the analysis, the Hebrew word for “way,” derek) comes up in all but five Proverb chapters (the word is not used in chapters 17, 18, 24, 25, and 27).

255 Zenger, Psalm 107, 105.

256 DeClaisse–Walford, et al., The Book of Psalms, 622.

257 John 4:1–42.
God brings you out of the darkness (10–22)\textsuperscript{258}

Verses 10–16 and 17–22 are the second and third vignettes of the people who need rescued from their situation. The former group is said to be imprisoned and the latter group is suffering from is spiritual sickness. For the purposes of the Sermon series, these two groups are similar enough to create one coherent sermon for these two situations. Thematically, the two stories are tied together by disobedience.\textsuperscript{259} Verses 11 and 17 tell the reader the people are in their respective predicament due to their rebellious nature (v 11) or because of their misdeeds (v 17). Taking the commonality one step further, the refrain verses 13 and 19 are grammatically the same, even using the same verb for saving them.

DeClaisse–Walford links the westerly direction to the location of the group mentioned in verse 10–16 to the setting of the sun, where darkness occurs, and “the sun dies every night.”\textsuperscript{260} Alter looks to a more “concrete image of a dark, windowless dungeon–like place of captivity.”\textsuperscript{261} Without electricity, prisoners most likely spent time alone in the dark, and that time can be spent thinking how the prisoner ended up there. Verse 11 gives us the answer, “it is the consequence of disobedience to God.”\textsuperscript{262} The people disobeyed God’s words or commands. The Hebrew word used is \textit{imre} or ‘\textit{emer}. By their failure or willingness to disregard the words from God that would lead them to freedom, they found themselves imprisoned, put away from God. For the exiled

\textsuperscript{258} For the purposes of the Sermon Series, I have combined what most commentators recognize vv. 10–22 as sections two (10–16, Rescue from Prison) and three (vv 17–22, Rescue from Sheol or Sickness) of the rescue vignettes. I have classified these ideas under the banner of Spiritual Darkness.

\textsuperscript{259} Zenger, \textit{Psalm 107}, 105.


\textsuperscript{261} Alter, \textit{Book of Psalms}, Kindle Location 7154.

\textsuperscript{262} Zenger, \textit{Psalm 107}, 105.
people, this prison is a foreign land and the people cried for help (v 13).\(^{263}\) The psalm is a coming to grips with what caused the Israelites situation, and the realization brings about, in their readiness to be saved. Verses 14–16 illustrates God “bringing them out” of their darkness, their prison and he broke their chains, and doors of iron and bronze that held them in the prison.

Like the intertextuality of the first strophe to the prophet Isaiah, Zenger and Jarrick link Psalm 107’s second strophe to the book of Job, particularly through the phrase “darkness and shadow of death.”\(^{264}\) Job wishes for death in chapter 10:21–22, and Job says he must go to die in “the land of darkness and deep shadow, the land of gloom and like thick darkness.” Job is convinced he is going to the land of the dead, never to return, and the psalmist expresses a similar idea, that their prison is inescapable. But the good news for Job and the Israelites in the vignette is that God rescues them. The refrain of verse 15 calls them to be thankful for his hesed, despite the people not obeying His words.

Verse 17–22 also talks about people’s foolishness in their disobedience causing illness and bringing them to the gates of death. Jarrick links this section to the northerly direction given in verses 1–3.\(^{265}\) Regardless of the direction, the people listed are called fools through their sinful ways or transgressions. Again, this implies the fools did not obey God’s word, which contrasts to the wise who follow God’s direction. Some translations render the Hebrew word ‘awal as sick or

\(^{263}\) Harman, Psalms, 776.

\(^{264}\) Zenger, Psalm 107, 106.

\(^{265}\) I tend to disagree with the consensus that the cardinal directions are linked in order with the vignettes. If the imprisonment is seen to be taken to foreign lands (i.e. Assyria and Babylon), this would be from the North. See Jarrick’s commentary in “The Four Corners of Psalm 107” for vv. 17–22. Jarrick quotes several verses in Jeremiah and Ezekiel with regards to destruction coming from the North. I believe the directions were given to encompass all of God’s word and the extent of His power and reach. However, this discussion is beyond the scope of this project.
as Dahood renders the word, *enfeebled*. Sickness was often associated with foolishness or sin and both conditions were attributed to God enacting punishment for both.

Verse 18 says the foolish were unable to eat and they were close to death. Given the figurative nature of the Psalms and the Bible in general, it is possible that this passage could be an allusion to the word of God sustaining the people, but the transgressions resulting in a sickness because of the foolishness now turns away even the most delectable literal food. Being too weak to save or feed themselves, they cry out to Yahweh for salvation (v 19). Their way led them to the gates of death.

The link between verses 11 and 18 is shown in verse 20, “He sent out His word (*dabar*) and healed them. The Hebrew concept of *dabar* or word is akin to the Greek *logos*. Much like *Yahweh* or *hesed*, the word *dabar*, implies much more than just God speaking to save them It is the fact that he can save with his *dabar*. God’s *dabar* implies that that it is a “function of a conscious and moral personality.”

*Dabar* is the majestic word of command, sublime, meaningful, creative or destructive. He saves His people because it is part of His nature. And this nature is not just something that a person can live off, like food, (see Deut. 8:3 or Matt 4:4) but His very *dabar* produce life. Genesis 1–2 demonstrate this, with God speaking everything into existence. Boman points out that our translation of *dabar* is somewhat inadequate because in English, the use of word “removes the deed within it.” but in Hebrew it is a reality as we see

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here, God’s “effective *dabar*” heals the sick or perhaps more aptly, makes the foolish wise, which delivers them from their destruction. As Boman posits, “*dabar* is Yahweh as he is recognizable to mortal man.”

Genesis 15 is an integral chapter in Israelite history with regards to God’s word. God establishes and clarifies His covenant with Abraham. “After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.’” Abram receives the word (*dabar*) of Yahweh and God’s word/deed makes this covenant with Abram and establishes the promise of offspring (the people) and their land. Verse four reiterates, “Behold, the Word of the Lord came to [Abram].” These two instances are the only times the phrase “the word of the lord” appear in Genesis, “but it is widely found in the Old Testament.”

God also details that the Egyptian period detailed at the end of Genesis and the book of Exodus. God delivered on His promises; He made good on his *dabar*. God dispels Abram’s doubt, expressed in v. 8, by, as Von Rad explains, “giving a very real assurance by orchestrating the covenant ceremony that, in the ancient near east, guaranteed the greatest contractual security” between two parties.

One more example about the importance of God’s words comes from Joshua 23:14–15.

14 “Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed. 15 It shall come about that just as all the good words which the Lord your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the Lord will bring upon you all the threats, until

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He has destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you.”

Again, we see God speaking to the people and He compares His good word with His bad word. The good word is most definitely a reference to the Sinai covenant and the promise of the Land. Here we see how God differentiates between how His words can be used. The good words are blessings, and the bad words refer to the covenantal curses, and the focus of this address in Joshua squarely upon Deuteronomy 28:15–68. The audience of Psalm 107 are the recipients of the covenant both as the offspring and the land dwellers. And they are also the recipients of the good and bad words that God promised. The post exilic Israelites are the dealing with the reinstatement of the covenant that was foretold in Jeremiah 29:10 “For thus says the Lord, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.’” There are many more examples in the Bible of God using His words to act. God’s word is important in fulfilling his covenant with his people and sustaining His people through his words and deeds and this is demonstrated in the Psalm’s refrain.

Returning to Psalm 107, verse 21 echoes the overall theme of thanksgiving for the people but verse 22 deviates from the other refrains. The verse calls for the people to offer “sacrifices of thanksgiving.” This is an interesting tie into the idea of food because when “thank sacrifices

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274 New American Standard Bible (NASB) translation.


277 McAffee, The Good Word, 401. The NASB is used here again, the NASB stays true to translating or emphasizing the dabar as word and not thing as the ESV translates some instances.
were offered to God, the priests and the worshippers shared in a communal meal of gratitude for God’s goodness.”²⁷⁸ This festival nature would be the exact opposite feeling of someone who is too sick to eat.²⁷⁹ The people can rejoice and be alive as they are with other people who made it out of the same predicament. After bringing people out of a spiritual darkness, the next section is about God bringing people out of a spiritual storm.

God brings you out of the spiritual storm (23–32)

The fourth narrative is the longest section of the stories, covering ten verses and describes the crisis–situation in more detail.²⁸⁰ In an abrupt turn from the compass’ cardinal directions, the focus turns to the sea. The Israelites are largely a non–seafaring people and as Jarrick illuminates, “seem to have a distrust of the sea.”²⁸¹ However the Canaanites, or Phoenicians were renowned for the seafaring abilities.²⁸² Water does play an important part in the Exodus escape, with God holding back the waters of the sea or the Jordan on their journey toward and into the promised land, but the Hebrew story remains predominantly on dry land, For the people, the sea was something to be feared, but the sea is also under God’s control.

The story in the psalm although not given to any one event per se, has similarities with the tale of the prophet Jonah. The intertextuality seems fairly evident when one reads the stories side by side. Verse 23–25 describes the sailors doing great business on the sea and how God commanded the storm which made even experienced sailors cry out to God in their distress.²⁸³ In

²⁷⁹ Zenger, Psalm 107, 107.
²⁸⁰ Zenger, Psalm 107, 107.
²⁸¹ Jarrick, The Four Corners, 279.
²⁸² Dahood, Psalms III, 86. Dahood references several other works that corroborate the Bronze Age seafaring economy.

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a few sentences, the psalmist describes the first chapter of Jonah very succinctly. After being thrown overboard, Jonah begins his psalm, “I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me” (Jonah 2:2). The dating of the book of Jonah is difficult, with scholars dating the book on either side of the Babylonian exile, so it is unclear of which author borrowed which story to create the other. Research “suggests that a final editing or composing of Jonah took place during the exilic, but more likely during the postexilic.”

The earliest date would be the time of Jonah’s ministry, which 2 Kgs 14:25 places in the first half of the eighth century. However, the fact is that the psalm and the prophet share similarities.

The overall message of this strophe and the book of Jonah is the providential control that God exercises over His natural world. The sea may be fitting illustration. If the Hebrews were aware of the unpredictability of the Sea and its raw power to destroy one of man’s greatest technological inventions and their sailing skills, the ship, they should ultimately fear the creator and controller of the sea. Jonah being rescued in the mouth of the fish, “promises to pay vows and make sacrifices as marks of gratitude.” Likewise, the sailors are “brought to their desired

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haven,” (v. 30), express thanks for God’s hesed and wondrous works and exalt God. The four stories have now ended and so the psalmist takes the audience to the conclusion or application. God brings you into spiritual blessings (33–43)

The last section of the Psalm “proclaims God can provide the people with all of their needs” and punishes the evil (33–34) while rewarding the just (35–36). Although some commentators think that the last section was added later, the description in the hymn praise God for his bounty and the links to the preceding verses demonstrates the coherence of the entire psalm. As the psalmist is giving a conclusion to the song or a final verse to the stories, he calls the Israelites back to God’s sovereignty. There are times in Israel’s History that God closed the skies and there was no rain. The Bible is rife with examples of God controlling the environment to bring about change in His people. In the time of Elijah in 1 Kings chapters 17–18, God has Elijah declare a drought.

I Kings 17 1–4 says: “Now Elijah the Tishbite, from the Gilead settlers, said to Ahab, “As the Lord God of Israel lives, in whose presence I stand, there will be no dew or rain during these years except by my command!”

2 Then the word of the Lord came to him: 3 “Leave here, turn eastward, and hide at the Wadi Cherith where it enters the Jordan. 4 You are to drink from the wadi. I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.”

5 So he proceeded to do what the Lord commanded. Elijah left and lived at the Wadi Cherith where it enters the Jordan. 6 The ravens kept bringing him bread and meat in the morning and in the evening, and he would drink from the wadi. 7 After a while, the wadi dried up because there had been no rain in the land.

In verses 33–36, the Psalmist mirrors, or paraphrases Isaiah 41:18–20

17 The poor and the needy seek water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. I will answer them. I am the Lord, the God of Israel. I will not abandon them.

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290 Dahood, Psalms III, 89.
18 I will open rivers on the barren heights, and springs in the middle of the plains.
I will turn the desert into a pool and dry land into springs.
19 I will plant cedar, acacia, myrtle, and olive trees in the wilderness.
I will put juniper, elm, and cypress trees together in the desert.
20 so that all may see and know, consider, and understand, that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it.

The London Baptist confession of 1689, Chapter 5, Paragraph 5 states:

““The perfectly wise, righteous, and gracious God often allows his own children for a time to experience a variety of temptations and the sinfulness of their own He hearts. He does this to chastise them for their former sins or to make them aware of the hidden strength of the corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts so that they may be humbled. He also does this to lead them to a closer and more constant dependence on him to sustain them, to make them more cautious about all future circumstances that may lead to sin, and for other just and holy purposes. So, whatever happens to any of His elect happens by His appointment, for His glory and for their good.”

And when God decides to turn the land into a desert or into pools, God sovereignly chooses to do so for a reason. He is either providing for his people where there is otherwise nothing there or he is chastening His people. He uses famines and droughts to correct his people.

For verse 37–40, God blesses the Faithful when they respond to His word. The story of Joseph is a good reminder of how a faithful person can respond and act in times of persecution and contempt. Joseph replies to his brothers, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring this present result, to preserve many people (Gen 50:20).” The psalmist reminds the people that even though they experience trials, God uses them to bring them rewards for being faithful and obedient.

Puritan John Flavel says, “All providences are overruled and ordered for good, according to that blessed promise (Rom. 8:28); not only things that are good in themselves, as ordinances, graces, duties and mercies, but things that are evil in themselves, as temptations, afflictions, and

even sins and corruptions, shall turn in the issue to their advantage and benefit…out of the worst of evils God can work good to His people.”

The Psalm closes with the verse “Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord.” The wise do not need to learn from the experience of pain but learn from the teachings of others. In the stories the psalmist said, “the ones who were fools suffered for their sinful way” (v 17), The good news is that the people learned from their sin and turned to God and cried out for help. Angel distills what the psalmist says, “wise people utilize their suffering as a religious opportunity for introspection and repentance, whereas fools do not.” Sometimes are suffering is self–induced and to lessen those times, we should be wise and “attend to these things” of God and His instructions. But there are things like the sea, that are out of our control no matter how skilled we are. In all cases, we know that God is in control of all things. And in all these things we give thanks to the One who made us and delivered us or brought us out of the situation because of His hesed.

The conclusion ties all four vignettes together and demonstrates that no matter which situation you find yourself in, God is in command and he will provide for your needs. There is an overarching truth that comes out of each story. The people were foolish and got themselves into their troubles or distress. And God was the only one that could save them. The psalmist is encouraging the congregation to sing to the Lord in thanksgiving in bring them through the situation in their lives. The Psalmist is in a way using the Psalm to offer counsel to the people


Application

Psalm 107 provides several applications. First, the reader gets a sense of spirituality and the overall Biblical theology of the Psalm. Peter Adam expounds, “God speaks, and his words create and sustain life and blessing, and establish relationships. We hear, believe and obey God, receive that life and blessing, and are brought into relationship with God.”294 The Psalm is about the restoration of a people that suffered. And through that suffering we learn about God.

The Puritans clarified that God’s chastening of the believer springs not from “vindictive justice” but from “fatherly mercy.” Beeke clarifies, when God brings adversity into our lives as discipline for sin, He does this not to satisfy His justice but as a “rebuke and caution, to bring us to mourn for sin committed, and to beware of the like.”295 In our suffering we see our true nature and God’s exceedingly abundant hesed that he exercises as a father. Thomas Watson posits “God's chastening is not to destroy—but to reform.”296

Beeke points out the “grand reason” all things work together for the good of the saints is “the near and dear interest which God has in His people.”297 Thomas Watson reinforces God’s covenant promise to His people, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Jer. 32:38). “By virtue of this compact,” Watson wrote, “all things do, and must, work for good to them…. This word, ‘Thy God,’ is the sweetest word in the Bible, it implies the best relations: and it is


295 Beeke, Thriving in Grace, Kindle Loc. 2453.


297 Beeke, Thriving in Grace, Kindle Loc. 2453.
impossible there should be these relations between God and His people, and everything not work for their good.”

Conclusion

“Book Five of the Psalter leads readers and hearers from the despair of exile to the celebration of a new life in the land” the Sovereign God has provided them.\footnote{DeClaisse–Walford, et al., \textit{The Book of Psalms}, 616.} The Psalm, even though it is understood to be based on fictional events (that is, the rescue narratives described in the four strophes are not based on any specific historical situations) events, is an invitation to the world to join in the praise of Yahweh’s saving actions toward His people.\footnote{Zenger, \textit{Psalm 107}, 102.} The psalm also works on two levels. “On the one hand, they are about the rescue of individuals in different situations, and, on the other hand, they are about the restoration of Israel. Zenger concludes “when Israel is restored as Yahweh’s people, that is a blessing for individuals.”\footnote{Zenger, \textit{Psalm 107}, 105.}

Counseling through Interviewing

The counseling or interview sessions can take place at the church location listed above or at people’s homes if they feel more comfortable in that setting. To protect himself, the researcher will be accompanied by his wife if he is counseling anyone from the opposite sex. The researcher will minister out of the Bible and rely on the word of God as the basis for the standard and authority to which the interviewee should submit to.\footnote{Adams, \textit{How to Help People Change}, 47.} No special handouts or materials will be necessary for the counseling sessions.

\footnote{DeClaisse–Walford, et al., \textit{The Book of Psalms}, 616.}
\footnote{Zenger, \textit{Psalm 107}, 102.}
\footnote{Zenger, \textit{Psalm 107}, 105.}
\footnote{Adams, \textit{How to Help People Change}, 47.}
The researcher can interview in the evenings, or perhaps during the day if his secular work schedule allows it. Each of the sessions will last approximately an hour to be conscious of the participants’ time and to keep the session focused on the problem at hand. Appropriate time will be allotted if a person requires counseling outside of the project topic. The researcher will ask a series of guiding questions to keep the conversation moving, but the session is not bound to only those questions.

Each session will be recorded via the researcher’s iPhone and then transcribed to a Microsoft Word document. The recording device will be placed in between the interviewer and interviewee during the sessions. The recording will start when the counselee is ready to start the session and be turned off at the end of the session. The researcher will also keep notes via a notebook to capture any key thoughts or revelations that come about during the sessions. All the observations and descriptions will produce the qualitative data that will be analyzed by the researcher. The interviewee will be able to review the transcripts for accuracy before they are used for the results are used for that data.

**Implementation of the Intervention Design**

To properly analyze the data for the results of the intervention, it is important to define what constitutes change after the intervention is enacted. As Adams states, “The power, the wisdom, and the strength are all from the Spirit, but the action is to be taken by the counselor and the counselee.”302 The criteria for change are Biblically based and Christ–centered transformation. The fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22–23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self–control; against such things there is no law.”

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Many of these attributes can be seen in Psalm 107 from God’s perspective and experienced by His people. Each member does not have to equally demonstrate each trait but should exhibit a better understanding that these fruits should be present in their lives. One more criterion that will be included is forgiveness. The members should demonstrate biblical forgiveness toward the people who wronged them, including any person within the church that may have committed wrongs during the events that led to the situation occurring. “Spiritual formation involves members of the body maturing together toward Christlikeness.”\(^{303}\) A survey will be given to the participants at the conclusion of the sermon series. The survey would poll the participants to rate if the preaching series helped them move through the problem and if they have more evidence of the fruits of the Spirit in their daily lives. The intervention methods can be properly evaluated by analyzing the data and using Christ’s instructions of trusting Him and bearing the fruit of the Spirit as the standard.

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Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the results found from the project. The chapter will present findings from the surveys and interviews by presenting the questions and the rationale behind the questions. The results and their possible implications to the project will be discussed as well. The chapter will conclude with an assessment of the methodology and what the researcher did well and what could have been improved. First, a recap of the researcher’s methodology

Surveys and Results

The project focused on two different groups: Pastors and those who were affected by the church split. The first group was given a survey and the second group was asked to participate in a four-week sermon series, an interview with the researcher during the first two weeks of the sermon series and then a follow-up survey conducted after the fourth sermon in the series. The follow-up survey is a deviation from the original method of conducting two interviews with each participant. The reason for the change is two-fold: an automated survey streamlines the data collection process, for the researcher and the participant and the automated survey allows for specific data points for the questions asked. The pastor survey results will be discussed first.

Results of The Pastor Survey

The pastor survey, conducted via Google Forms, consisted of nine questions asking about how pastors select their preaching material, if they perceive a connection between preaching and counseling, and if they offer counseling services. The survey had 161 anonymous respondents polled from several Facebook groups that the researcher is a part of. No other demographics were collected. However, the groups that were polled were heavily Southern Baptist, and
bivocational. The first question was the qualifying question for the survey if they preached more than 50% of the year, hence the 100% result.

The second question was to gauge how preachers approach delivering God’s word, either preaching through a book or large section of a book or a Topical approach. It is interesting to note that almost 83% of the pastors surveyed preach through a book. Without further questioning, it does seem to infer that preachers teach God’s word and the topics as they present themselves in the text versus systematically pointing out all the proof texts of a particular topic such as marriage, love, or money.
The third question supplements the second question with more data points as to how the preacher selects a particular book or topic. This was a check box question and answer with the selections listed in the order on Figure Three below: Current Events (11.8%); Random Selection (24.8%); Goes with a Specific Bible Study (9.9%); Take Requests from the Congregation (5%); Responding to the Needs of the Congregation (57.8%); A Focused Theme (i.e., mission trip, evangelism, or building fund) (16.8%), and Other. In the results data, these choices represent the choices, even though the labels have been removed or reduced from of the bar chart. In the “other” category it seems that prayer is the most common method of selecting a book, but it was worded in several different ways by the respondents. In hindsight, prayer should have been an option for the question.
Question four reported that almost 9 out of 10 pastors offer counseling. Question five recorded the types of services or counseling offered in their churches.
5. If you answered yes to number four, what type of counseling do you provide?

The question was open ended to allow the participant to include multiple or specific examples of their counseling ministry. Most respondents offer marriage or premarital counseling, grief counseling, spiritual counseling. Some pastors stated they do crisis counseling but gave no other details what constitutes a crisis or if they follow short–term focused counseling that may be like Benner’s approach. Some defined their counseling as Pastoral and two stated they perform Nouthetic or Biblical (ACBC Certified) counselors. These responses seem to coincide with question number nine that if the pastors affirmed, they received counseling classes seemed more apt to offer counseling services.

Question six also corresponds to Question 4, which is an interesting answer. As one respondent points out in his comment on question nine, the question could have been worded better to clarify. I in no way meant to imply that the counselor should use the specific events or people’s stories as fodder for the sermon illustrations. Rather, following the lead of Fosdick and Adams, I was interested to note if the pastors picked up on trends in the congregation. For
instance, if many married couples brought up a pornography problem, it may be a good time to discuss that in a biblical way to the congregation at large because it may be a deeper problem than the people seeking out counseling. The topics would have to be dealt with appropriately, but some things are dealt with better by using specifics than just saying generically “everyone is committing sins” in a sermon.

6. If you answered yes to question 4, do you use the topics that may come up frequently as material for a sermon or sermon series (protecting the anonymity of course)

143 responses

- 76.9% Yes
- 23.1% No

Figure 5 Pastor Survey—Using Counseling as Preaching Topics

Question seven results encourage the researcher that most of the pastors (53%) affirm that there is a connection and many more (40%) at least think there may be a correlation between counseling and preaching. Only 7% of those asked, think there is no relationship between preaching and counseling. Apart from two people, those in the 7% do offer counseling and most select their preaching material by responding to the needs of the congregation, current events, or prayer.

One follow-up question I would like to ask everyone in the survey is what methods do they employ (i.e., how do they take the temperature of the congregation) to determine what the
needs are? I posit that it is by the post–Sunday service discussions, which is a type of counseling in and of itself.

![Pie chart showing the responses to the question: Do you believe there is a connection between preaching and counseling?

- Yes: 52.8%
- No: 40.4%
- Maybe: 6.8%

Figure 6 Pastor Survey—Connection between Preaching and Counseling

Question eight was straightforward to determine if the pastors were familiar with pastors who were known for their counseling ministries.

![Bar chart showing the familiarity with pastors:

- Jay Adams: 57 (35.6%)
- Donald Capps: 15 (9.4%)
- Harry Fosdick: 51 (31.9%)
- No: 82 (51.2%)

Figure 7 Pastor Survey—Familiarity with Pastor/Counselors

91
The last question was to gauge if and what kind of counseling training the pastors received. The question/answer was a yes or no with a choice of “other” for people to fill in what kind of or how much counseling training the pastors received. The charts appear twice to illustrate the types of responses referenced on the Pie chart via the different colors.

9. Have you had any formal counseling classes through college, seminary, or professional organizations such as the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC)?
161 responses

- Yes 25.5%
- No 67.1%
- Other
  - My answer to this question is "yes," h...
  - Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief
  - Books
  - Pastoral Care and Counseling Practic...
  - Prepare Enrich

Figure 8 Pastor Survey—Formal Counseling Training Among Participants #1

9. Have you had any formal counseling classes through college, seminary, or professional organizations such as the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC)?
161 responses

- I have a MS in Rehabilitation Counseling
- Some
- I am currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Trauma & Resiliency
- Just one class. Ministry of pastoral care. We covered a unit on counseling.
- Yes. I've had counseling classes at the bachelor, masters, and doctoral level of my education. #7 is a terrible question...

Figure 9 Pastor Survey—Formal Counseling Training Among Participants #2
This survey was to see where a group of pastors stood with regards to biblical preaching and biblical counseling. The second, and more important section of the project was directed at those affected by the church split. Could preaching provide healing? The results of the interviews and sermon series is detailed in the next section.

Congregational Healing through Preaching

The second and more important portion of this project is to attempt to bring healing or closure to the Red Oaks Baptist Church congregation with a combination of preaching and counseling. The preaching portion is taken care of with a four–part series from Psalm 107. The counseling portion comes from interviewing the participants and asking them about the issues surrounding the church split. The definition of counseling presented in chapter 1 explains that counseling “is a conversation where one party, with questions of problems, seeks assistance from someone they believe has answers or solutions.”304 The interview questions below are the ones asked to the participants. Since this was done qualitatively, the results will highlight similarities, anomalies, or other items of interest in the responses that helped influence the sermon series.

The first survey was done via individual interviews. Most were church members or regular attenders at the time of the incident. One respondent was an assistant Director of Missions for Great Commission Association during the events. The association was integral in helping the legal portion of the church split. The people all provide different viewpoints, and the results demonstrate that the effects are not limited to the local church but had also impacted the church association and the California Baptist Convention. Since the responses were more personal in nature and contained names of some of the other parties involved in the church split, the researcher has consolidated their responses and pointed out either common threads or

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answers. Some direct quotes will be used if the quote is poignant or succinct in making the point of the question.

1. Please state how the split between Clark Avenue Southern Baptist Church (CASBC) and Central Coast Church (CCC) affected you?

The overall theme or answer from this question is one of trust. The people who were affected all lost some level of trust of some leaders or pastors. Many of the things that were promised did not materialize which led to much of the mistrust and feelings of deception. A few of the members left Clark Avenue church for a few months. However, they did not stop attending church altogether. One respondent stated that it was like watching a divorce, with the two churches as the parents and the congregation were the children. Other words used by the respondents was devastated, hurtful or a deep sense of loss.

2. How much time was lost dealing with the situation?

The entire situation took approximately two and a half years to resolve with Biblical church–to–church resolution attempts all the way to the state convention level before legal recourse became the only option. The word frustrating came up a lot for the participants.

3. Did you lose friends?

Everyone affirmed they lost some friends in this whole process. Other people, who were not a part of this study because there was no way to contact them, began leaving at the first signs of any kind of trouble. However, one other theme that many of the people attest to is that their current friendships with people in the church are stronger than they were before. This is good news, and it shows what a crucible will do a group of people when they are tested.

4. Did the split cause you to question your judgment?

The responses here were interesting. There were 5 “No”, 3 “Yes” and 1 “Maybe” inputs. The question is relevant for determining how long people waited to see the outcome of the situation
and how early they should have reacted. One person said that he questioned his actions based on trusting the new pastor so quickly. Another person pointed out that her mother, who attended church there off and on during the situation, picked up on the pastor possibly not being on the up and up. The Assistant DOM pointed out that “the split was perhaps the best possible outcome considering the irreversible damage done to the church.”

5. Did the split cause you to question God or your faith?

This question received interesting answers from the respondents. 5 people responded with a no they did not question God, one person stated they did question their faith though even though they did not question God. Another person stated that the situation leads to a stronger reliance on God because man is fallible.

One other participant stated that it is not always a bad thing to question God because you may find the right answer as to why something is happening, i.e., have God plan revealed for that specific person or situation. One other person, who was not attending church at the time, but was married to one person who was and so was close to the situation, stated he felt God working on him for a long time and this situation was the thread that sewed everything together.” About a year or so after everything began, he became an official member of the church.

6. Do you think the Bible is able to give you counsel/answers during tough times?

This question garnered a 100% yes from the participants. Many of them expressed healthy and regular Bible readings throughout their lives. One respondent stated, “the preaching helped explain the Bible in a way and she is glad she stuck it out with CASBC.” One respondent said that his personal bible study time increased during the few weeks between leaving the church and coming back to CASBC. For one–person prayer for the church increased and another said after the situation, the poignancy of their daily Bible readings increased.
Post Sermon Series Survey and Results

The following results are from the post sermon series survey. The researcher’s comments precede the results shown for each question. The researcher opted to change the approach for the second survey and instead of conducting a second round of interviews, the participants could complete the survey on their own via Google Forms. This provides the researcher data points to capture and allows the participants a chance to answer the survey in their own time.

This first question was a result of the data from the first survey. It was evident that the church had mature believers. This was a necessary demographic because the researcher surmises that the situation could have turned out differently if the church were made up of less mature people.

How long have you been a Christian?
9 responses

Figure 10 Post Sermon Series Survey Results—Christian Maturity in Congregation

The second question directly relates to the effectiveness of the sermon series. The answer was a binary Yes/No, with only one person expressing in the negative. Unfortunately for the researcher did not include a short answer to the question to garner answers as to why they selected yes or no.
Do you think the pastor’s preaching on the topic of suffering and God’s plan helped you through this situation?

9 responses

- **Yes**: 88.9%
- **No**: 11.1%

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**Figure 11 Post Sermon Series Survey Results—Effectiveness of Preaching**

This question was and result of some of the other topics that were discussed throughout in the first interview. This is a way for the preacher to understand the felt needs of the people to select preaching material. Chapter 5 will discuss how the preacher should use this information. This question was an optional question in the survey.

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Are there any other sermon topics related to this situation you feel would help you (ex. trust, loss, etc)?

8 responses

- Discernment: 1 (12.5%)
- Forgiveness is required even when...: 2 (25%)
- I would like sermons on all of the following: 1 (12.5%)
- Prayer, Repentance, Restoring...: 1 (12.5%)
- Topics as you see fit: 1 (12.5%)

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**Figure 12 Post Sermon Series Survey Results—Other Potential Sermon Series Topics**
The next question was a short answer input, and the responses are the participants own words. This was for what Fosdick called measuring the effectiveness of the sermon, particularly the “delayed response” after having four weeks to digest and learn about Psalm 107.305

Why do you think the sermon series did or did not help you? 9 responses

—Just reinforced my belief to forgive others no matter how bad a situation you feel was put on you...God always has a reason
—I thought it was great, and I felt like the message was relatable to my life.

—I feel like it concentrated on keeping the faith and not doubting the Lord. So much was about, how we can create our own conflict trying to just have faith, and if we just realize that God is in total control, then we might not be so likely to distrust that or fight it.
—It is a good reminder of Who God is and how He is present with us in midst of trouble, storms, and failures. It also helped the church to review our commitment to His Word and His Will. We should realize and admit that we do not have control and that we need to prayerfully depend on the One who is in control over the trouble waters.
—I believe God put me in this church to help with the rebuilding process and get my life back on track.

—Reinforcement of God's plan is always helpful.

—God's faithfulness remains even when we do not deserve it

—It was helpful as it provided hope

This question gets to one of the points of the project; God’s word is sufficient to heal you. The sermon series did not focus on the idea of God’s word as much as God himself healing. Looking back, the claim of God’s word as a healing tool was not made explicit. This question could have been worded slightly different to ask the question to line up with the intent of the series. Chapter 5 will examine the idea of the sufficiency of scripture further.

305 Linn, Preaching as Counseling, 26.
The below question was a little vague as to what “this concept” meant. The researcher intended the concept to be God’s word and sovereignty to apply to your life. It seems to have been understood in that way judging by the results. The question had a scale of 1–5 to allow the participants more leeway measure their change. A one was “there is no change, I have always used the Bible when I have a need” and a 5 was “the sermon series has completely changed my mind on how I view and use the Bible.” Given the age and maturity of the congregation it stands
to reason that the scores are what they are.

The next question (Figure 15) was another scaled question to allow for the participants input on a numerical scale. The answers were 1–5 again with one being there was no change at all and five was a Very noticeable increase in my understanding of God. Even though the two respondents evaluated their growth as only a “2”, the researcher would like to follow–up with them to see why they selected that reason and how to improve on the teachings.
The next question deals with the church recovery and is the crux of the project problem of bringing healing to Red Oaks Baptist Church. The outcome will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5, but it is important to note that almost 90% of the people affirmed that the church has healed from this experience. The question could have been a little more specific, but given the context of the survey, the researcher felt it was understood that the question was asking with regards to the church split.

![Pie chart showing survey results for church recovery]

Figure 16 Post Sermon Series Survey Results—Has the Church Recovered?

This question gauges forgiveness and goes into the aspect of healing. To improve the question and responses the researcher could have included responses that gave a little more leeway because as one participant said afterward, while they have forgiven the other parties, there are caveats to the forgiveness. However, this could be misconstrued with forgetting what happened with forgiving people for what happened. They are two different situations. However, Hebrews 8:12 says that God “will be merciful toward their iniquities, and [He] will remember their sins no more.” This statement echoes Isaiah 43:25. Acts 3:19 calls people to Repent therefore and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out.” If God can forget our sins, then we should also forget others sins against us.
The next question is encouraging in that it seems that the sermon series was effective to get the congregation to view the problems in life as God ordained and thus for a purpose, whether it is a correction or to advance God’s overall plan.

The question below (Figure 19) was to determine if the interview or informal counseling was as effective as the sermon series may appear to be. This question was optional for the...
survey. The purpose of the question was to draw a link between the connection of the offices of preaching and counseling.

Figure 19 Post Sermon Series Survey Results—Did Discussing the Topic help?

The next question was to help the researcher evaluate his consistency in the sermon effectiveness. The scale was a “1” of Not Helpful to a “5” Extremely Helpful. The results again are to help the preacher improve on certain aspects and continue to do certain aspects of sermon production that prove helpful.
The last question in the survey dealt with highlights or feedback for the sermon series. This was to see what the audience heard in the sermon series. This is good feedback for the preacher to ensure that the people are hearing what the message is and how they are interpreting the message being proclaimed during a given sermon series. This question was a short-answer type of question, hence the reason it is not an image like many of the other questions pulled directly from the survey. It has been placed in different font to offset the questions/responses form the researcher’s comments. The participants responses are below as they were received and only changed for proper grammar and spelling.

**What, if anything, stood out to you throughout the sermon series?** 9 responses

—We should always remember why we are Christians; we are brothers and sisters no matter what befalls us
—That it was applicable to having faith in God and to still have faith even in tough times.
—All the things that God can do for you, as he gives you daily challenges to remind you that only with him can you have spiritual blessing and be faithful.
—Every church will go through some kinds of storm. Some generated by outside forces, and some by internal sin issues. As His Bride, we must be diligent in loving and protecting and serving the church. We cannot be careless about what we do and what we do not do as a church. Sin of disobedience or sin of
complacency, or sin of just trying to maintain status quo is a grave sin that will attract much storm; internal and external. We must be proactive about doing God's will and restoring prayer–dependency and life of worship that becomes attractive to even non–believers. We must be the church that loves and serves in the Name of Jesus so that Worship can happen in peoples' lives.

—God is always in control, no matter what

—God is always in control.

—The battle of following God even when we think we are tight. We so easily deceive each other and follow the crowd

—Hearing about God's faithfulness time and time again instilled hope in me

The last question was setup as a long answer format and came from some of the recurring interview comments that the people wish they could have or would have acted earlier while the situation was unfolding. The researcher wanted to capture lessons learned for the potential warning signs that other may help other churches avoid a similar situation from befalling them altogether. The font has been changed to separate the question/responses from the researcher’s comments.

**What measures could have been taken to prevent the situation from happening or could prevent this from happening to another church? 8 responses**

—More up–front communication, more honesty with each other, do not ever allow hate in your church between ANYONE. If you see hate get together right away and stop that hate, we listened to others and for a time got away from listening to God.

—Being more aware that this situation could happen.

—I think I would ask more questions, take better documentation, seek wisdom from other resources. I feel like we were totally unprepared for this. We kept the suspicions at bay for a long time, because we wanted to have faith, and then we really did not have good, reliable help right away, and it took us awhile to figure out what to do, and of course by then the Baptist Headquarters was onto this, and bigger guns came in to help. But a lot of time and a lot of damage occurred way before this took place, and I think a lot of people got hurt, either emotionally and or financially before the dust settled.

—Church (I mean every member) must be willing to work hard and pray and depend on God to restore His church; not expect or want someone or some church or some pastor or church planter with plans to do the work.

—I was not a member of the church in question during this sad time, but very aware of the situation, make no snap decisions, stick to original by–laws, discuss the circumstance's thoroughly, and do not pressure anyone to decide. Beware of a silver tongue salesman type A personality. Know and understand what documents you are signing under all circumstances.

—Bylaw provisions that help prevent hostile takeovers. Training for church leaders on early recognition of predatory individuals and proper preventive actions to take before they can harm the flock.
—Be willing to ask the tough questions and not except partial answers or deflections.

Chapter Summary

One of the best outcomes of the interview process was getting to know the participants a little better. There were shared hurts and pains, but also joy as they told their stories. It was interesting to learn their conversion stories and their Christian life. The situation also made the Psalm sermon series more applicable because they were exiled for a time, but God led them to a different, better place. This may have made it easier to find the Psalm easier to apply to their lives. Peter Adam points out that this is one of the difficulties of the modern day, that people have been conditioned “to be skeptical of anything that cannot see or prove for themselves.”306 It is as if God provided a very impactful, life changing Biblical illustration in the people’s lives. The question remains, have the questions asked in previous chapters been answered and was the preaching able to bring healing to Red Oaks Baptist Church. The next chapter will review the data and make conclusions and recommendations for further studies.

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306 Adam, Speaking God’s Word, 167.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Project Conclusions

Healing Through Preaching for Red Oaks

The intent of the project was to address healing in Red Oaks Baptist Church from the Church split. The most important measurement is, did the series provide healing for the church? The answer as given by the participants is a “Yes,” the project helped heal the church. As the researcher explained to the participants though, this wound, like any other wound, may be healed but there are scars and scar tissue that is aggravated from time to time. Healing takes time.

Realistically, the sermon series did not miraculously heal the people, but it took place over the past several years of similar preaching from the same pastor. For the researcher, this project was a way to verify that the church was helped and healed enough to move on to the next phase of recovery. There is more work to accomplish in the way of discipleship for the Kingdom.

One finding that was somewhat unexpected of the questions was how to recognize and deal with a would-be ne’er do well pastor who may have ulterior motives other than growing the church for God’s glory. Many people felt somewhat guilty for speaking up sooner or recognizing the signs earlier. To give the people credit, they acted as soon as possible once they had confirmation that there was something was amiss. People responded in waves, with some people trying to make sure that the person was really changing the church beyond what they had originally agreed upon. The warning signs of poor leadership can be learned and packaged in a way to help others sound the klaxon before they come to a similar situation.

Although not asked originally, it is important to ask if “perceived needs” preaching is something that should be done long term; the individual context may dictate what problems requires attention from the pastor. According to the Pastor survey results, 57.8% of the pastors
select sermons based on their congregations “perceived needs.” However, it is unclear how often this type of preaching is employed. People are always going to have problems that need solving. And one could make the argument some of the preaching becomes like preventative maintenance to prohibit the person from breaking down too far or straying from God. Nevertheless, there is more to preaching than problem solving with a Christian–sounding answer that was made popular by Fosdick. As Thompson points out, the therapeutic preaching must not be done often because it is the shepherd’s job not just to offer comfort, but guidance protection, and ensure the general welfare of those in his charge.

The church must have a more substantial diet of God’s word to grow in maturity. Jay Adam suggests developing a well–balanced sermon plan to provide all the nutrients the people will need to sustain life. The preacher must make each sermon applicable to the hearer’s life, in the oversized sufferings like a church split and the minor sufferings of everyday. Adam points out that the preacher should be compassionately aware of the congregation, but “we should not be controlled by them.” There is a larger agenda that needs to be attended to that Thompson posits: “the continued formation of a community that awaits the Parousia.”

Assessing the Congregational Needs

Preaching is a part of the continual spiritual formation of individuals remaking them into the image of God. That was impetus behind the question of people judging their own spiritual

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307 Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul*, 87.
308 Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul*, 88.
309 Adams Preaching with a Purpose, 39.
311 Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul*, 90.
growth from the situation and the sermon series. The preacher must meet the people where they are in the knowledge and gifts and use them like the proper limbs of a body. Jay Adams also encourages pastors to review their counseling notes to notice trends, ask the church elders’ view of needs and where a deficiency exists in the congregation. Another key point is to examine the horizon to see what, if any problems may be coming. The pastor then makes the sermon plan to build up, repair and preserve what has already been built in the church body. Essentially a pastor must address immediate needs of there is an emergency, but also fill in wholes that may exist in the people’s Biblical education and anticipate future trends of society.

The situation at Red Oaks Baptist Church would not have been made better by avoiding it. The preacher listened to the congregation, what Adams considers informal counseling, and planned some sermon series to address frustrations or discussions about the split. However, the church split was not the focus of the preaching. Adams and Fosdick agree that the counseling trends can help the pastor build his preaching calendar. This would stand in contradiction to some pastors who took umbrage with the very idea of using counseling information to plan sermons. Again, this could have been a misunderstanding as to which information from the counseling situations to use. No counselee’s stories should be used, but if there are more people requesting counseling for money problems, perhaps it is the time to offer a short series on the use of God’s provisions and stewardship. This type of information is gleaned from the informal counseling as well, within the course of regular conversations.

Taking all this information into account goes into Thompson’s second point, that “the church must also understand their identity as a separate people summoned to live a

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countercultural existence.”\textsuperscript{313} The Bible becomes the History of the people that they have now come to have citizenship with. The congregation must learn and understand what makes them different from the “country” they just left and at the same time still live in. This includes the teaching of the standards of conduct (Law and Grace), the specific terminology used, use of gifts and talents, for the Kingdom, and who God is and His work in the redemptive history.

Lastly, the preacher should always strive to keep the sermons Christ–Centered; always bringing the sermon back to how the sermon points back to Christ. Doing so will ensure the \textit{kerygma} or preaching takes place after the teaching of the doctrines.\textsuperscript{314} Preachers must, as Paul states, “preach Christ crucified… the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:23–24). Major doctrinal points will make their way to the surface from the depths of the text as they are included by the writers. Paul reminded the Ephesian elders that he “did not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Each preacher should also not run from all the Bible for his people. He must deal with each book and find out how it is applicable to His life and the life of his congregation.

Today there is a divide between what is considered liberal theology and conservative theology.\textsuperscript{315} Fosdick and Adams seem to stand on opposite sides of that chasm and yet they seek the same outcome, albeit by sometimes dissimilar methods. Fosdick may be more experiential when it comes to addressing his congregation’s problems with preaching and Adams approaches

\textsuperscript{313} Thompson, \textit{Preaching Like Paul}, 106.

\textsuperscript{314} Breidenbaugh, \textit{Preaching for Bodybuilding}, 72–73.

the problems more doctrinally. The project covered a lot of ground but could have been improved in several ways.

Methodology Review

First, a few questions on both Google Form Surveys could have been improved. Some questions were not clear enough as to what the researcher was really getting at. The types of answer format (i.e., multiple choice, yes/no, or long answer, etc.) could also been better to facilitate a different response or not narrow a choice down to just a yes/no may have also provided better data. However, the researcher did not want to lead the respondents too much. The researcher noted which questions could have been improved or changed in the previous chapter.

The researcher used information from the first interview to adjust some of the questions on the post sermon series survey. One such question was the first question on the Post sermon survey, about how long some was a Christian. The researcher felt this was important to know how long they had been a believer. The question was also brought about because of the people’s conversion stories or the part faith played in their entire life. The people had a very strong sense of God and faith and the researcher believes that this is what helped them get through the initial phase of the split. Unfortunately, the project was not able to talk people from the other church to see if that theory holds true.

Facebook was extremely helpful to reach a substantial number of pastors to see how they choose their preaching material. The research could have improved that survey by taking some demographic data, such as length of pastoral experience, denomination, and possibly regional location. This information could be useful to see if there are trends in ages, areas or denominations in the preaching styles and methods. This could be another survey for other research outside this project.
Why did the researcher select Psalm 107 for the sermon series and project? From a homiletical (and practical) standpoint, the Psalm is divided up into four parts, to easily make a four–week sermon series. But the Psalms are a part of Israel’s identity. Psalm 107 is a post–exilic hymn that is sung as a thanksgiving Hymn to remember the event and remember as a group. It is educational for those who did not live through the exile and return. It is cathartic for those who did spend all or part of their lives in Babylon. It is a reminder of God’s sovereignty and His plan for His Elect. The idea of returning from exile and doing it as a group (a nation) fit nicely with the situation ROBC found itself in. The Psalm reminded the church that although this event was not ideal, God was in control of the entire situation and used evil works for His good purposes.

Further Research

Pastoral Practice

A few areas of interest came about during the continual research and reading during the project. First, it seems the Puritans were already doing biblical counseling and pastoral theology before it was looked at in that light. An article by Tim Keller expounds how several puritans, unencumbered by modern psychology, used the Bible to address their congregation’s sins and maladies. J.I. Packer explains that biblical scholars don’t understand the human heart and counselors don’t know the Scripture.”

Keller points to Richard Baxter and John Owen, among other puritans and how they seemed to understand people’s hearts.

A research paper covering the entirety of Puritanism would be daunting and much too large a subject, so perhaps limiting to one or two specific Puritans, (e.g., Jonathan Edwards, William Perkins, Paul Baynes, or Richard Baxter) would be appropriate and easier to narrow

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down to a select few pastors and their understanding and how that affected their ministry. Learning what the Puritans knew may help the pastor understand and address the needs of the people and to also anticipate their congregation needs. The area of research that may be investigated is, “What made the Puritans so in tune with the human condition?” A second question to ask is “How did that understanding aid the pastors develop an understanding of what is now referred to as pastoral or practical theology? A third question would be, “Did modern evangelicals lose the understanding the Puritans seemed to have and can they regain it to help their congregations today?”

Moving into the modern day, Donald Capps was an author and professor that saw a clear connection between preaching and counseling. Capps says in Pastoral Counseling and Preaching, “preaching is a fundamental act of pastoral counseling.”317 Capps examines the theological relationship between preaching and counseling using works by Thomas Oden, that proclaiming the Gospel message is integral to preaching and counseling; in preaching it is done explicitly, and in counseling it is done in an implicit manner. Preaching and counseling communicate the love of God that the person in the seat needs to be made aware of.318 It is only the “narrative of the curing Jesus that can fill the depleted self if there is a will to believe.”319

Capps disagrees with “Fosdick’s view that preaching is counseling” and is quick to point out that preaching and counseling are separate ministries.320 Instead he posits each event is unique, but they have similar structures or patterns. Each event seeks to identify a problem and

317 Capps, Pastoral Counseling and Preaching, 14.
318 Capps, Pastoral Counseling and Preaching, 20.
320 Capps, Pastoral Counseling and Preaching, 41.
then diagnose and finally offer a solution, namely the proclamation of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{321} Although some works may lean more toward a secular psychology bent, Capps wrote and taught much in the realm of pastoral theology and care.\textsuperscript{322} A pastor concerned with establishing a sound counseling ministry and to improve their preaching would do well to become familiar with Capps’ works.\textsuperscript{323}

Ryan LaMothe claims Capps “was an extraordinarily accomplished scholar,” writing and teaching on subjects that range from pastoral psychology, preaching, philosophical hermeneutics and humor to name a few.\textsuperscript{324} He not only taught but also ministered to his students who were preparing for ministry work, and tried to teach them how to “counsel people without making a fool of myself or mess of things.”\textsuperscript{325} LaMothe continues, that Capps was more concerned with “teaching people to listen and understand others” and to be “curious about and respectful of a diversity of experiences.”\textsuperscript{326} Closely related to the pastoral theology that may be useful for the pastors leading churches through similar situations is that of the larger topic of Practical Theology.

\textsuperscript{321} Capps, \textit{Pastoral Counseling and Preaching}, 120-121.

\textsuperscript{322} For a list of works, see “Books and Articles by Donald Capps,” \textit{Pastoral Psychology} 58, no. 5–6 (December 2009): 681.

\textsuperscript{323} Lamothe points out Capps’ philosophy of pastoral ministry was an essential ministry in and out of the confines of the church walls.

\textsuperscript{324} Ryan LaMothe, “Giving Counsel: Donald Capps’ Contributions to Pastoral Counseling,” \textit{Journal of Religion and Health} 57, no. 2 (April 2018): 510.

\textsuperscript{325} LaMothe, “Giving Counsel,” 511.

\textsuperscript{326} LaMothe, “Giving Counsel,” 511-12.
Practical Theology Included in Revitalization

Reading the Biblical accounts, Paul builds the church, at least in part, through the proclamation of the Gospel message. Acts 13:5 Luke explains that when Barnabas and Paul “arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.” Luke goes on in the same chapter to that “the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.” Paul and Barnabas repeat the general method of preaching and teaching in each city they come to garner believers to the Way and build house churches in numerous cities. Paul places the office of teaching sound doctrine in the foremost position in his letters. Thompson points out the “kerygmatic traditions commonly function as the basis for Paul’s discussion with his listeners.”

With the letters we have, Paul begins with doctrine and theology and ends the letter with how to that doctrine is practical and applicable to the hearer’s lives. And the churches flourished for a time.

However, much of the revitalization literature looks at the dying or deceased church much like a sick or dying patient. It must be autopsied to see what disease the church had and how it caused or contributed to its illness or demise. The pastor musty evaluate the church body and see what the illness are and how to apply the correct medicine. In his book, Autopsy of a Deceased Church, Thom Rainer gives several steps the pastor or leadership team could take to revive a dying church: 1) remove or address toxic people that may be causing problems; 2) make the inward focused church outward focused (i.e., evangelize the lost in the neighborhood); 3 evaluate how the church and its people spends its time and money. Other literature as reviewed above points to other possible causes from poor leadership to too many committees and

327 Thompson, Preaching Like Paul, 134.
328 Rainer, Autopsy of a Deceased Church, 88.
so on, but none of them look at how the pastors are handling the word of God on a practical level. If the congregation does not know how the word of God can apply to their lives and communicate that then how can they be expected to communicate the information and the Good News with non–believers when the pastor sends them out to evangelize.

Ward quotes Rowan Williams in his assessment that practical theology is an expression of celebration, communication, and critique, “to celebrate is to make use of the language to express, in the deepest and most profound way, the mystery of God.” The congregation gathers to collectively worship God. They are there to celebrate what he has done, as is evidenced in Psalm 107 and other books and Psalms. They are there to communicate and more importantly to learn how to communicate the story of God, “in order to witness the gospel’s capacity to for being at home in more than one cultural environment.” If the mystery and majesty of God is not communicated or proclaimed form the pulpit, the congregation may begin to focus on the wrong things, which causes the demise as researched by Rainer and others.

Ward goes on to say that the “suggestion that practical theology is evident in the life of the church as celebration, communication, and critique is significant.” Practical theology would seem to be the measuring stick to church growth and health. The difficulty with applying practical theology with the church revitalization is that it is easier to point out a problem and solve it via human means, i.e., remove the perceived troublemaker, reduce programs, and spend money wisely, versus doing the long work of teaching people and using God’s word to change the people’s hearts that caused the problems in first place.

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In the Wiley–Blackwell companion to Practical theology, there is an entire chapter dedicated to healing. The author states “Healing is one of the key places in which theology has been concretely practiced in the history of the church.” While the article deals mostly with physical healing, the implication can be made to use God to heal all wounds. However, in most of the revitalization books preaching and teaching is just an assumed function that will continue without a rhyme or reason because that is the tradition. In one article in the Willey companion, the practical theology is helping to move back to a theological basis for pastoral care and using the Bible for such endeavors. And the large part of using the Bible is to preach God’s word. There seems to be no examination of a possible link between weak or perhaps better yet, sick preaching and sick churches.

While this project is not the place for extensive book reviews the researcher has done some preliminary reading to see what may be helpful to church revitalization. For further reading about Practical Theology, Miller–McLemore’s *The Wiley–Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* is extensive in the broad field of Practical theology. For more concise for a quick overview of the field, Ward’s *Introduction to Practical Theology* is a good place to start. For the more specific field of Homiletical Theology, Jacobsen’s’ *Homiletical Theology: Preaching as Doing Theology* may be a good place to start.

Matthew D. Kim, the George F. Bennett Chair in Practical Theology at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, is publishing a book titled *Preaching to People in Pain: How Suffering Can Shape Your Sermons and Connect with Your Congregation*. According to Kim, the book is

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written from the perspective of the preacher and the listeners going through loss or suffering and how this can improve or change your preaching. At the time of this project, there is not anymore information available on the specifics of the book other than a projected release date of May 2021. However, this book seems to address, at least in broad strokes, how preaching can inform and comfort a person’s or congregation’s suffering.

Text Selection for Preaching

One more topic for further research comes from the pastor’s survey and how pastors arrive at selection a certain book or topic. Stott illuminates four methods or factors that can help determine a pastor’s preaching calendar: 1) the liturgical, following the church calendar, 2) external events, 3) the pastoral factor, which may be closest to the congregation’s needs or a counseling sermon discussed in this project, or 4) personal sermons, that “emerge from [the] deep personal conviction” of the pastor.

The survey results seem to point to that most pastors use prayer or are led by prayer to select their next sermon series or sermons. However, my suspicion is that there is more that goes into the prayers themselves such as situations at the church, or locally and nationally that help point the pastor in the direction and the topics or books they select. Pastors may be inherently planning their preaching calendars by what Olford and Olford call “Prayerfully Establishing Priorities.” This prayerful approach was also very adhered to by Charles Spurgeon and D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, so much that the preacher selected the text for the week based on the Leading of the

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334 I was alerted to the book’s release via Dr. Kim’s public Facebook page (search Facebook for Matthew D. Kim Author). I contacted Dr. Kim via Facebook Messenger to ask some questions to ascertain if the book was in a similar vein as my project research. He explained the book primarily was brought about by some of his personal suffering and how that affected his preaching and sermon writing.

Holy Spirit, eschewing any want need for sermon series. Haddon Robinson says that the preacher’s insight into his congregation allows him to select the most profitable scripture for their specific church at a specific time.

The research would focus on the question of “Is the text selection based on an intuition or methods being taught.” Perhaps it is a combination of both after the pastor gains experience in the pulpit and study? Do the pastors start with a particular application in mind and then look for texts that mirror the current church situation or do they just see where the Holy Spirit takes them and hope it applies to their lives somehow? Or do they ask themselves, “‘How are my listeners doing?’” and what do the listeners need to hear from God’s word to learn be reproved, corrected, or trained in righteousness?

Closing Remarks

I have thoroughly enjoyed the project and helping the congregation through a difficult time in its history. Learning about and preaching through Psalm 107 has been a great experience. The psalm applies to my life at times as much as it has applied to the church’s life now. I felt like the guide leading the people back form the exile. It was a long journey, but I feel that the sermon series was worth it in helping the people understand God’s word and how they can be healed through the preaching of God’s word. The sermon series also helped me to grow as a preacher in assuring that God’s word is applicable to the everyday life of the congregant.


There is a new area of research to look at as the church grows and that is the practical theology; making the Bible practical and help reach other people who may have preconceived notions that the Bible does not or cannot apply to their lives today. Church growth manifests itself in different fashions, not just numerical. I have watched and listened to my congregation grow as they respond to God’s will in my life. I know my preaching is a small part of that and I know that God is working on me as much as He is working on everyone else.

We chose the name Red Oaks partially because the trees are ubiquitous on California’s Central Coast, but also because the church like a tree must grow deep roots down into the earth before it grows up to the heavens. The same thing is happening here; we are growing our roots, even though we have been replanted. I am happy to tend to my part of the garden and water the Red Oak with God’s word for His Kingdom for as long as he lets me.

Paul reminds Timothy that all Christians will suffer, evil people exist and will get worse and deceive people, but Timothy should continue on believing God’s word because “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” Jeremiah 23:29 says “Is not My word like fire?” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock?” The Word of God is the hammer that does the reshaping, to break of the hard–outer façade to extract Christ’s image in the Christian.

The pastor is like the American folk–hero John Henry, tirelessly swinging the hammer each week so the Holy Spirit can plant the dynamite to break the rock and dirt to make room for Him in people’s life. The Bible is like a toolbox full of different hammers, some heavy and some light, each one fulfilling a specific purpose. The pastor must realize what kind of hammer is

339 2 Timothy 3:10–17, the first section is a paraphrase of Paul’s advice to Timothy.
required for each job (teaching, rebuking, correcting, or training) and not just use the proverbial sledgehammer for every situation. This idea is evident in Paul’s letters where, it seems, he used a sledgehammer of sorts to explain things to the Corinthian church but used a small hammer to instruct the Philippians. Pastors should know their people and apply God’s word to them in the manner that feeds his people and himself. Walter Kaiser perhaps sums it up best for those who wield God’s word, “either the church will be nourished and strengthened by the bold proclamation of her Biblical texts or her health will be severely impaired.”

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God Brings You out of the Spiritual Desert

**Introduction:** Have you ever been sick or maybe had a bad injury like a broken leg or a shoulder injury that required surgery? How did you know who to go to, to get it fixed? How did you trust your doctor with your life to let him or her put you to sleep, and make an incision and fix whatever is broken? The surgeon or doctor will make sure you recover and can get back to living.

If you deem the doctor to be good, what do you do if some asks you for a recommendation? You would probably say, yeah, go see doctor so and so. She did a great job on my shoulder. Or you know they doctors you do not like you might say, he is good but If I could go somewhere else I would have

If we trust a human doctor to heal us and we recommend someone, what do you to proclaim God! Especially after, He heals you.

That is what Psalm 107 is about. The people have been restored by God and allowed to return from Babylon. The Exile is over, and they are thankful. Psalm 107 is a sister to Psalm 106 that was written before or probably during the Exile.

I want to make this clear up front. God did not let the people return because they finally got it. God planned that the Exile would end in 70 years as prophesied in Jeremiah and repeated in Daniel.
God Offered the people grace although they had to repent for their sins. And we see the writer celebrate that Grace and God’s love and he knows that God has gotten the people through hard times.

**Read Verses: 1–9**

**Main Point:** God will lead you and restore you through the dry times in your life.

**Intro to the Psalm**

It is the first psalm of Book 5, which is the last division of the Psalms.

But it also closes the group of psalms that go from 103–107 Psalm into four parts: 1) a Hymnic exhortation (vv 1–3); 2) the four–strophe exhortation for thanksgiving (vv 4–32); 3) a hymnic poem based on God’s work in nature and history (vv 33–41); and 4) an exhortation to the wise (vv 42–43). For the second part, “each strophe describes an anonymous group of people suffering from a different hardship.” The thanksgiving psalm is a response to answered lament. In addition, there is a close connection between hymns and thanksgivings. The groups are encouraged and remember to give thanks to God, who has delivered them from their calamity.

DeClaisse–Walford posits that vv 32–42 was not part of the original psalm but added to the psalm at some later point.

This psalm was used in the Liturgy of the Temple and was sung. So that is why when you read it you will notice certain verses are the refrain. Verses 8, 15, 21, and 31 are all similar as are verses 6, 13, 19, and 28.
Athanasius said, “that the Psalms, in a way, contain the whole Bible: while each section of the Bible consists of particular material, including law, history, prophecy, and salvation, “the Book of Psalms is like a garden containing things of all these kinds.”

Even in the 18th Century, The Psalter served as the songbook of the church from Edwards’ boyhood through his pastorate.

There are four mini stories or vignettes so that is why there are four refrains.

In our series, I broke the psalm into four parts, but I have combined the introduction, verses 1–3 with the first story, and then I combined the second story, because God brings you out of the Spiritual Desert (1–9)

I. God Will Direct You Back to Him (1–3)

Verses one through three are considered the prologue declaring that the people should to “Thank or give thanks to Yahweh, for He is Good” (v. 1). As mentioned above, this is thought to be a liturgical “song to be sung by Yahweh’s Redeemed.” But the people should not just be thankful; they should tell the others. The ESV and KJV render the Hebrew word as “Say so.” Dahood renders the phrase simply “tell,” which coincides with the NIV. What do the people have to be thankful for and proclaim to others? The knowledge that Yahweh’s hesed endures forever. This verse along with verse 43, form the inclusion that God’s hesed makes the redemption of the people possible. The statements of God’s Character are derived from the longstanding Sinai theology, as mentioned above. This seems to be a reminder of the past and a call to others to recall who Yahweh is and what he is capable of.

Verses two and three encourage the redeemed to proclaim that Yahweh, the redeemer has provided deliverance from calamities. The use of the repeated word of redeem, ga’al, which can
mean to “release or redeem, freeing a family member who is in need or enslaved” illustrates the relationship of God and His people and is used as almost shorthand to describe the covenantal relationship instituted at Sinai. “Yahweh belongs to Israel: nonetheless, Israel belongs to her Redeemer.” The redeemer title has intertextuality that stems all the way to the Prophet Isaiah and links the redeemer” all the way back to creation itself. The title of Redeemer sets Yahweh apart from other gods. Isaiah records God’s words in 44:6–8

“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel
   and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts:
   ‘I am the first and I am the last;
   besides me there is no god.
7 Who is like me? Let him proclaim it.
   Let him declare and set it before me,
   since I appointed an ancient people.
   Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.
8 Fear not, nor be afraid;
   have I not told you from of old and declared it?
   And you are my witnesses!
Is there a God besides me?
   There is no Rock; I know not any.’”

It is clear from the statement in Isaiah and others in the entire Bible, Yahweh is unique in His ability and status and the redeemed are given a special place among the nations as His people. Isaiah 44:8 coincides with Psalm 107 God’s own words declares that God’s people are witnesses to the fact that God is a unique and He has saved them. God calls these witnesses back to Him.
Verse three may continue the Isaiah connection by gathering His people from the four cardinal points; “from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.” The directions may serve to indicate the metaphor of “all directions,” but also to indicate the reach of God’s power and what is essentially His Empire, with the borders “according to Isa 45:1–8, ‘from the rising of the sun to its setting’ (Isa 45:6).” Both the Assyrian and Babylonia empires descended from the North, and “psalm 107:3 thus emphasizes that Yahweh delivers his ‘redeemed ones’ from the evil power ‘of the north.’”

The English translations use “South” as the last cardinal direction, to perhaps set the borders on the world, but the Hebrew text has the word for “from the sea” instead of “south.” “But the same phrase occurs in Isaiah 49:12, ‘from north and from the sea’ (mitstsâfôn ûmiyyâm) which suggests that emendation is unnecessary. Dahood points out that the sea may be pointing to the southern sea or the Gulf of Aqabah. Again, there is a deeper meaning in the text to the Jewish audience; the sea played an integral part in Israel’s escape from the Egyptians. In any case, the metaphoric meaning of the people being called home is the more important idea for a dispersed across an empire like Babylon.

II. God Will Satisfy Your Thirst (4–6)

Verses four through nine make up the first strophe for the four rescue scenarios: the desert wanderers. As discussed above, verses six and eight are refrains, to be sung by the people in their time of need and then rejoice in their rescue. Verse four and five set the picture of a person or a group of people lost in the desert wasteland. Although the psalm is most likely fiction, or at least not tied to any specific event, being lost in the desert was a very real threat to the Israelites. “Few travelers in the Ancient near East dared any attempt to traverse the bleak terrain between Palestine and Mesopotamia.” For anyone who has lived in or visited a desert region knows the
hopelessness that stems from seeing the continuous sea of brown sand. Surrounded by dunes, rocks, and small scrub brush with nothing to orient the traveler, let alone find food and water. It can be a dire situation.

The psalmist echoes this dire struggle in verse five, with the people or person suffering from lack of food and water to the point that their “innermost being is faint.” Dahood explains that this phrasing alludes to Exodus 16:3 and 17:3 describing their hunger and thirst in the Sinai Peninsula. The people have “no way” or road to travel leading to an inhabited place and so lose hope as their life force leaves them. They have nothing left to do, but to cry out to the Yahweh in their trouble (v. 6) and God answers them and “delivered them” or more accurately “saved them” from their troubles.

III. **God Will Satisfy Your Hunger (7–9)**

The psalmist explains how God saved the people. He led them or more literally, the verb *darak*, renders as “God marched them” or more accurately “to cause to walk.” Anyone who has spent time in the military and commanded or marched a unit, such a flight (as it is known in the Air Force) or company knows that group listens to and abides by the commander’s commands. The person in charge of the flight controls the cadence of the march by counting, “left, right, left, right” and directs the unit on which way to go on the road, by a series of precise instructions. The author also closes the inlucsoio started in verse 4 where the people had “no way” or path and now God marched them by “straight way” or path leading them out of the wilderness to a town or inhabited pace that contains shops or a market to obtain food and drink. The town represents having the necessary shelter, food, and water for survival.
Being led on the straight path has larger theological implications than just recounting that “God led them on the correct road to a town.” The word for “way” or “path” is found throughout the Wisdom literature. Psalm 1 talks about the way of the righteous and the wicked. Proverb 1:15 encourages the son to “not walk in the way of sinners.” “The psalm thus evokes here the model of successful versus unsuccessful life as a consequence of walking or not walking in the right path of the commandments or the Torah, a theme developed in many ways in wisdom and Torah theology (cf. Psalms 1; 119, especially 119:176, as well as Prov 4:10–19; 7:25–27; 14:12; 16:25; 21:16).” Proverb 2:8 reminds the hearer that God gives wisdom and “watches over the ways of His saints.” Being wise by obeying God also falls in line with the end of psalm 107 that says, “whoever is wise let him attend to these things.”

Verses eight and nine bring the reader to the second refrain to “Give thanks to Yahweh for his hesed...because he satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul.” God is the bread and water of life because he is the God of life. The statement in verse 9 is also stating that God is “worthy of our praise because he has truly satisfied the thirsting and the hungering of the wanderers.” [18] The Christian aspect of the psalm and these verses is Jesus proclaims that he is the bread and the living water. And he tells the woman at the well that he provides a water that will permanently quench her longing.[19]

Application

Look to God:

1. For direction

Notice the contract between verse 4 and verse 7. Some wandered, finding no way or road and then the direct opposite is God led them on the straight way.
You can read the book of Judges and see the people wandering in their own way. And that period did not turn out well until God sent a judge.

When we are going through tough times, we need to keep focused on the direction God is leading us. In a desert, everything looks the same and there are very few if any points of references.

There are road markers saying Lompoc 20 miles. You just know God is leading you west and you stay headed west until you are redirected.

The world says just follow your heart, but if the heart is wicked, it will lead you down the wrong path. Only when your heart of stone has been replaced with a heart of flesh that you are able to want to follow God.

Psalm 23 encourages us

23 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters.  
3 He restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.  
4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

2. For Sustenance

Sustenance as defined as food and drink regarded as a source of strength, nourishment.

Verse 9 says God satisfies the longing soul and the hungry soul he fills with good things.
In Matthew 4 When the devil tried to tempt Jesus, by turning rocks into bread, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3 when he says man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

Jesus refers to himself as the bread of Life. Our physical bodies need real bread, and our spirit requires food as well. That is Jesus. After Jesus fed the 5000 and the 4000, he was in the boat with the apostles and they said we have no bread. They were worried about the physical food and Jesus says do you not know. I am the bread that is sitting here with you, to sustain you.

3. For Redemption

The psalm opens, referring to the redeemed. “Let the redeemed of the Lord Say so or proclaim who redeemed them.”

The Israelites place the redemptive action squarely on God’s shoulders. They finally understand that God saved them, and they are thankful for it.

God the son has redeemed us with the father.

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith” (Rom. 3:23–25a).

Romans 3:21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his
righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. 28 For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, 30 since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. 31 Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Conclusion:

What do we do when we are lost, we cry for help and God will answer? God has probably answered your call. I know he has answered my calls for help, and I know that he has answered calls already from us concerning this church.

You can be patient waiting for God. And once he gives you a direction, keep walking it because he is leading you on the right and righteous way.

Benediction

Galatians 6:14–16

But as for me, I will never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world has been crucified to me through the cross, and I to the world. 15 For both circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing; what matters instead is a new creation. 16 May peace come to all those who follow this standard, and mercy even to the Israel of God!
Sermon #2

Psalm 107:10–22

God Brings You Out of Spiritual Darkness

Introduction: Incarceration and Limited. Joseph, Daniel, Paul, and Peter all spent time in prisons and we get an idea of what that looks like for the people in those time periods. The Roman Prisons were not comfortable. It was more a hole than a cell that we understand now.

The Psalm was written after the Exile, but the Exile was a form of prison because the Israelites were not allowed to return to their homeland. They were placed in Exile because of their sins and likewise we put ourselves in prison every time we sin.

Read Verses:10-22

**Main Point:** God can rescue you no matter where you are

I. God Will Lead You out of Prison (10–22)

Verses 10–16 and 17–22 are the second and third vignettes of the people who need rescued from their situation. The former group is said to be imprisoned and the latter group is suffering from is spiritual sickness. For the purposes of the Sermon series, these two groups are similar enough to create one coherent sermon for these two situations. Thematically, the two stories are tied together by disobedience. Verses 11 and 17 tell the reader the people are in their respective predicament due to their rebellious nature (v 11) or because of their misdeeds (v 17). Disobedience to God’s Words brings the people’s ruin and God’s Word brings about their rescue. Taking the commonality one step further, the refrain verses 13 and 19 are grammatically the same, even using the same verb for saving them.
DeClaisse–Walford links the westerly direction to the location of the group mentioned in verse 10–16 to the setting of the sun, where darkness occurs, and “the sun dies every night.” Alter looks to a more “concrete image of a dark, windowless dungeon–like place of captivity.”

Without electricity, prisoners most likely spent time alone in the dark, and that time can be spent thinking how the prisoner ended up there. Verse 11 gives us the answer, “it is the consequence of disobedience to God.” The people disobeyed God’s words or commands. The Hebrew word used is imre or ‘emer. By their failure or willingness to disregard the words from God that would lead them to freedom, they found themselves imprisoned, put away from God. For the exiled people, this prison is a foreign land and the people cried for help (v 13). The Psalm is a coming to grips with what caused the Israelites’ situation, and the realization brings about, in their readiness to be saved. Verses 14–16 illustrates God “bringing them out” of their darkness, their prison and he broke their chains, and doors of iron and bronze that held them in the prison. Like the intertextuality of the first strophe to the prophet Isaiah, Zenger and Jarrick link Psalm 107’s second strophe to the book of Job, particularly through the phrase “darkness and shadow of death.” Job wishes for death in chapter 10:21–22, and Job says he must go to die in “the land of darkness and deep shadow, the land of gloom and like thick darkness.” Job is convinced he is going to the land of the dead, never to return, and the psalmist expresses a similar idea, that their prison is inescapable. However, the good news for Job and the Israelites in the vignette is that God rescues them. The refrain of verse 15 calls them to be thankful for his hesed, despite the people not obeying His words.

I. God Will Lead You Out of Destruction (17–22)

Verse 17–22 also talks about people’s foolishness in their disobedience causing illness and bringing them to the gates of death. Jarrick links this section to the northerly direction given
in verses 1–3. Regardless of the direction, the people listed are called fools through their sinful ways or transgressions. Again, this implies the fools did not obey God’s word, which contrasts to the wise who follow God’s direction. Some translations render the Hebrew word ‘awal as sick or as Dahood renders the word, enfeebled. Sickness was often associated with foolishness or sin and both conditions were attributed to God enacting punishment for both.

Verse 18 says the foolish were unable to eat and they were close to death. Given the figurative nature of the Psalms and the Bible in general, it is possible that this passage could be an allusion to the word of God sustaining the people, but the transgressions resulting in a sickness because of the foolishness now turns away even the most delectable literal food. Being too weak to save or feed themselves, they cry out to Yahweh for salvation (v 19). Their way led them to the gates of death.

The link between verses 11 and 18 is shown in verse 20, “He sent out His word (dabar) and healed them. The Hebrew concept of dabar or word is akin to the Greek logos. Much like Yahweh or hesed, the word dabar, implies much more than just God speaking to save them It is the fact that he can save with his dabar. God’s dabar implies that that it is a “function of a conscious and moral personality.” Dabar is the majestic word of command, sublime, meaningful, creative or destructive.” He saves His people because it is part of His nature. And this nature is not just something that a person can live off, like food, (see Deut. 8:3 or Matt 4:4) but His very dabar produce life. Genesis 1–2 demonstrate this, with God speaking everything into existence. Boman points out that our translation of dabar is somewhat inadequate because in English, the use of word “removes the deed within it.” However, in Hebrew it is a reality as we see here, God’s “effective dabar” heals the sick or perhaps more aptly, makes the foolish wise, which
delivers them from their destruction. As Boman posits, “dabar is Yahweh as he is recognizable to mortal man.”

Genesis 15 is an integral chapter in Israelite history with regards to God’s word. God establishes and clarifies His covenant with Abraham. “After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.’” Abram receives the word (dabar) of Yahweh and God’s word/deed makes this covenant with Abram and establishes the promise of offspring (the people) and their land.

Verse four reiterates, “Behold, the Word of the Lord came to [Abram].” These two instances are the only times the phrase “the word of the lord” appear in Genesis, “but it is widely found in the Old Testament.” God also details that the Egyptian period detailed at the end of Genesis and the book of Exodus. God delivered on His promises; He made good on his dabar. God dispels Abram’s doubt, expressed in v. 8, by “giving a very real assurance by orchestrating the covenant ceremony that, in the ancient near east, “guaranteed the greatest contractual security” between two parties.

One more example about the importance of God’s words comes from Joshua 23:14–15.

14“Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed. 15 It shall come about that just as all the good words which the Lord your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the Lord will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you.”
Again, we see God speaking to the people and He compares His good word with His bad word. The good word is most definitely a reference to the Sinai covenant and the promise of the Land. Here we see how God differentiates between how His words can be used. The good words are blessings, and the bad words refer to the covenantal curses, and the focus of this address in Joshua squarely upon Deuteronomy 28:15–68. The audience of Psalm 107 are the recipients of the covenant both as the offspring and the land dwellers. And they are also the recipients of the good and bad words that God promised.

The post exilic Israelites are the dealing with the reinstatement of the covenant that was foretold in Jeremiah 29:10 “For thus says the Lord, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.’” There are many more examples in the Bible of God using His words to act. God’s word is important in fulfilling his covenant with his people and sustaining His people through his words and deeds and this is demonstrated in the Psalms’ refrain.

Returning to Psalm 107, verse 21 echoes the overall theme of thanksgiving for the people but verse 22 deviates from the other refrains. The verse calls for the people to offer “sacrifices of thanksgiving.” This is an interesting tie into the idea of food because when “thank sacrifices were offered to God, the priests and the worshippers shared in a communal meal of gratitude for God’s goodness.” This festival nature would be the exact opposite feeling of someone who is too sick to eat. The people can rejoice and be alive as they are with other people who made it out of the same predicament. The question is how do we avoid owing to prison or get out of the prison we are in?

Application

1. Be Aware of Sin—
Sin manifests itself in the physical way whether it is speech or our actions or maybe inaction sometimes. It is either commission or omission.

But it is our heart. Our unwillingness to disobey God’s word that is the root of sin. It is what is on our heart that drives us to sin.

John Bunyan, author well known for the Pilgrims Progress wrote a to more books. In a Poem called A Caution to Stir up to Watch Against Sin

Stanza 9 and 10 read

SIN can harden the heart against its God,
Make it abuse his grace, despise his rod,
‘Twill make one run upon the very pikes,
Judgments foreseen bring such to no dislikes
Of sinful hazards; no, they venture shall
For one base lust, their soul, and heav’n and all.
Take heed then, hold it, crush it at the door
It comes to rob thee, and to make thee poor.
X
SIN is a prison, hath its bolts and chains,
Brings into bondage who it entertains;
Hangs shackles on them, bends them to its will,
Holds them, as Samson grinded at the mill,
‘Twill blind them, make them deaf; yea, ‘twill them gag,
And ride them as the devil rides his hag.
Wherefore look to it, keep it out of door,
If once its slave, thou may’st be free no more.
I want to be clear that this more than just being a good person or a moral person. This is giving your heart and you mind over to God.

2. **Use Your Words.**
Genesis Says that God spoke the world into existence. We are not God and we cannot speak things into the universe and have them appear. I have tried it so I can have a million dollars, but so far, the briefcase full of money has not rang my doorbell. We are not and never will be deities and we do not have the ability to make something appear out of nothing. That is a power reserved for the Almighty.

But we can still use our words wisely and to great effect.

Puritan Preacher Paul Baynes demanded that preaching often be somewhat painful: “Wherefore take heed … and love that word which brings you to the sight of sin, that brings you to fear judgment. These are sound wholesome words; though they smart, yet they are medicinable.”

**Use Your words to Repent**

This goes right along with what the psalmist is saying in this psalm and many others as well.

Jesus says Repent and be saved.

**Use your words to Pray**

Paul instructs the Ephesian church “praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.’ Eph 6:18–20

**Use Your words to Praise**

This again goes along with the attitude that this Psalm wants us to do as a church. Give thanks. Say it or Proclaim God’s goodness and love.
In Paul’s letters he gives praise to God and he also give praise to people who help further the Gospel.

Praise God for the goodness and His love that he has demonstrated through Jesus, on the cross that reduces you from your prison of sin and the

**Conclusion:**

Peter, Paul, and Stephen spent time in prison but not because they were sinful, but because they were believers. Today others are also in prison in other countries because of their beliefs which is a crime against man and his rule.

But We should know that when we sin, we walk into the prison cell ourselves. But It keeps us there because Sin can, or may it seem like it can overwhelm your life and trap you.

But the Key to open the cell door is to Repent. For the kingdom of God is at hand. if you are free, help others get out of their cells and then help yourself and others stay out of that sin induced prison.
Intro: I want you to think back about 100 days so, to the end of February, beginning of March. Life as we knew it was normal. We started to see an uptick in COVID cases. But Spring training was in full swing and headed toward Opening Day, the NHL and NBA was on track toward the Playoffs Easter and spring break for schools was coming up. Concerts were going on. People were making travel plans, you could go anywhere you wanted, not have to wear a mask, and all seemed right in the world.

Then Bam...A virus that is so much smaller than the width of a human hair takes hold of the world and locks everyone and everything down.

A lot of the quarantine, and facemasks, business closure, is caused by mankind’s attempt to control the natural world.

One way that the people of the ancient world could exercise control and it spoke to their skill was sailing.

Read Verses 23–32

MP: God is outside the storm because he is controlling the storm

I. God Places You on the Ship (23–24)

The fourth narrative is the longest section of the stories, covering ten verses and describes the crisis–situation in more detail. In an abrupt turn from the cardinal directions compass, the focus turns to the sea. The Israelites are largely a non–seafaring people and “seem to have a distrust of the sea.” However, the Canaanites, or Phoenicians were renowned for the seafaring abilities.
Phoenician civilization was an enterprising maritime trading culture that spread across the Mediterranean during the first millennium BC, between the periods of 1200 BC to 900 BC. Though ancient boundaries of such city–centered cultures fluctuated, the city of Tyre seems to have been the southernmost. Sarepta between Sidon and Tyre is the most thoroughly excavated city of the Phoenician homeland. The Phoenicians often traded by means of a galley, a man–powered sailing vessel. They were the first civilization to create the bireme, which was a type of ship and they used their fleets to haul cargo for trade in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic as far as England.

The Phoenicians were not limited to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic; they also sailed down the Red Sea and possibly the Indian Ocean too. The book of I Kings in the Bible describes a Phoenician expedition during the 10th century BCE to a new land called Ophir to acquire gold, silver, ivory, and gems. The location of Ophir is not known but is variously considered to be in Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, or even an island in the Indian Ocean. The ships of this fleet were built at Eziongeber on the Red Sea coast and funded by King Solomon. The great distance covered is suggested by the description that the expedition was repeated only every three years.

To do this, the Phoenicians had to learn how to work with the sea and wind by constructing the boats to withstand different environments and possible weather like storms.

So, even though the Israelites are not known for their sailing prowess, they were aware of others that were able to seemingly master the sea.

However, for the Israelites, water does play an important part in the Exodus escape, with God holding back the waters of the sea or the Jordan on their journey toward and into the Promised Land. However, the Hebrew story remains predominantly on dry land, for the people, the sea was something to be feared, but the sea is also under God’s control.
So, no matter how good of a sailor you are, there are storms and problems that arise on the open.

II. God Raises the Storms (25–28)

25 He spoke and raised a stormy wind
that stirred up the waves of the sea.
26 Rising up to the sky, sinking down to the depths,
their courage melting away in anguish,
27 they reeled and staggered like a drunkard,
and all their skill was useless.
28 Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out of their distress.

In these verses we see the contrast between God’s ability to control versus the crew or man’s inability to make the waves or the ship obey them. In addition, man’s only recourse is to cry out to the lord in their trouble.

The story in the psalm although not given to any one event per se, has similarities with the tale of the prophet Jonah. Jonah went to Jaffa or Joppa, which grew into or connected to Tel Aviv.

Just like in Jonah, the psalmist states in verse 25, he commanded and raised the wind. The intertextuality seems evident when one reads the stories side by side. Verse 23–25 describes the sailors doing great business on the sea and how God commanded the storm that made even the most experienced sailors cry out to God in their distress.

In a few sentences, the psalmist describes the first chapter of Jonah very succinctly. After being thrown overboard, Jonah begins his psalm, “I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me” (Jonah 2:2). The dating of the book of Jonah is difficult, with scholars dating the book on either side of the Babylonian exile, so it is unclear which author borrowed which story to create the other. Research “suggests that a final editing or composing of Jonah took place during the exilic, but more likely during the postexilic. So maybe the Psalmist helped edit Jonah
or maybe they were sitting in the same office while they worked. The earliest date would be the
time of Jonah’s ministry, which 2 Kings 14:25 places in the first half of the eighth century.
However, the fact is that the psalm and the prophet share similarities.

III. God Calms the Storms (29–32)

The overall message of this story and the book of Jonah is the providential control that God
exercises over His natural world. The sea may be fitting illustration. If the Hebrews were aware
of the unpredictability of the Sea and its raw power to destroy one of man’s greatest
technological inventions and their sailing skills, the ship, they should ultimately fear the creator
and controller of the sea.

Jonah being rescued in the mouth of the fish, “promises to pay vows and make sacrifices as
marks of gratitude.” Likewise, the sailors are “brought to their desired haven,” (v. 30), express
thanks for God’s hesed and wondrous works and exalt God. The four stories have now ended and
so the psalmist takes the audience to the conclusion or application.

Verses 29–30 say

29 He stilled the storm to a whisper,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
30 They rejoiced when the waves grew quiet.
Then he guided them to the harbor they longed for.

If you fast forward those statements to the new Testament, In the Gospels, this episode appears
in all three of the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Mark 4:35–41

Wind and Waves Obey Jesus
35 On that day, when evening had come, he told them, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the sea.”
36 So they left the crowd and took him along since he was in the boat. And other boats were with him.
37 A great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.
38 He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So, they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher! Don’t you care that we’re going to die?”

39 He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Silence! Be still! ‘The wind ceased, and there was a great calm.
40 Then he said to them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”
41 And they were terrified and asked one another, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”

To make the link even stronger, the NASB and the NIV use the word Hush in verse 39. But the underlying meaning of the Greek word used to disrupt the process of making a sound or speech. Jesus commands the wind to stop. He tells it to hush.

Mark not only links to the psalm but also the prophets.

Mark 4:39a (ACCS Mk (Rev)): The Prophets Fulfilled. One of the Church fathers, Tertullian, explains: When he disperses its waves, Habakkuk’s words are fulfilled, where he speaks of the Lord “scattering the waters in his passage. “When at his rebuke the sea is calmed, Nahum’s prophesy is fulfilled: “He rebukes the sea and makes it dry.”

Application:

1. **Do not stress out In the Storm.**

A. They are inevitable and rain brings growth, and it makes you somewhat clean.

Paul, Daniel, Joseph may be our best role models for this. They were lol. Put into extremely stressful situations, all of them were jailed at some point in their lives and usually wrongly so, You cannot control the storm. Just as the people cry out in their distress. The distress is caused in part by the idea that people are powerless against natural and supernatural events.

B. **You are Not in control**

The psalmist is clear that God is in control.
I am thankful that I am not responsible for controlling the world. The Movie Bruce Almighty tries to give some insight on what it is to be an omniscient and omnipresent being. In a nutshell, Bruce cannot handle the job.

This may be hard for some of us, especially as Americans, as we like to think we pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, but that is quite worldly wisdom. Or God help those who help themselves. Those statements are anti–Biblical, and it is very works based.

Proverbs 28:26 says Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe. (Proverbs 28:26)

While this motto is not in the Bible, a variation of it can be found in another religious text: the Quran. The Quran’s Ar–Ra’d 13:11 reads: Indeed, Allah will not change the conditions of a population until they change what is in themselves.

This again is not biblical and points to the difference between Yahweh and Allah, thus in part proving that Muslims and Christians do not worship the same God.

God Changes us. God the Holy Spirit works on our conscience

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly… God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6,8)

Christ’s death is the solution to the problem of sin and death that we cannot solve on our own. It is tempting to think that we might be able to help ourselves out of even this predicament, but the Bible clearly teaches that there is nothing we can do on our own to find salvation.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8–9)
Our help comes from God alone, and it happens when we turn our lives over to him in faith, trusting in the work of Christ on the cross. This is not something we work for; and there is certainly nothing we can change about ourselves to make us worthy of God’s help. Instead, we are saved by the passionate, undeserved love of God. It is his gift to us!

From the Baptist Faith and message 2000 the Holy Spirit’s Role is described as

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination, He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration, He baptizes the believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Does this mean that we throw our hands up and just say, well I will just wait or Oh there is nothing I can do?

C. There are Actions You can take

There are certain responsibilities that sailors have and certain actions they take in a storm. They lower sails and maybe anchors, point the ship into the waves and steer the ship manually.

They wait patiently

The Storm will last however long it is going to last. Luke records in Acts 27 that the storm or gale lasted 14 days.
The sailors respond to the wind. It is interesting that both the Hebrew and Greek words for the Holy Spirit both mean wind and breath. So, our most important action we can take is to respond to the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is there to convict us and to comfort us. He is convicting us of our sins against God. Because in the postmodern and post Christian worldviews, truth is subjective and so is morality. It becomes a time of the judges where we all do right in our own eyes, and we can tell no one what is right or wrong.

Well, there is One does tell us what is right or wrong. God. Moreover, we need to rejoice when everything grows calm as it says in verse 31. and we need to Praise God that e cuts through the confusion of the rain and wind and storms in our lives.

**Conclusion**

Because here is an interesting and important thing to remember about those who sailed. The sailors transported a myriad of goods to and from distant places. They braved the storms and sea monsters to bring people food and clothing and news from distant lands. Likewise, we go into the storm with the message of Jesus in our hearts and on our Lips. Bringing tidings of great Joy.

No matter how skilled you think you are, the world is bigger than you are, and you will run into problems that you cannot handle.

You do not have to worry though because there is someone that can handle it. God. He can handle the world; he can handle other people and he has handled your sin.

So, if you have not done so, repent. Quit trying to fight life so hard and turn the fight and the storms over to God.

If you try to work hard enough, you will tire yourself out and you will be no closer to heaven.
Give your life to God. Deuteronomy 15:10 ESV

You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.

Revelation 3:20 ESV

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him, and he with me.

Awakening the Christ Asleep in You. Augustine: When you must listen to abuse, that means you are being buffeted by the wind. When your anger is roused, you are being tossed by the waves. So, when the winds blow and the waves mount high, the boat is in danger, your heart is imperiled, your heart is taking a battering. On hearing yourself insulted, you long to retaliate; but the joy of revenge brings with it another kind of misfortune—shipwreck. Why is this? Because Christ is asleep in you. What do I mean? I mean you have forgotten his presence. Rouse him, then; remember him, let him keep watch within you, pay heed to him…. A temptation arises: it is the wind. It disturbs you: it is the surging of the sea. This is the moment to awaken Christ and let him remind you of those words: “Who can this be? Even the winds and the sea obey him.”

“Sermons 63.1–3.
Sermon #4

Psalm 107:33–43
God Brings You into Spiritual Blessing

**Intro:** Happy Father’s Day to all the fathers and my dad, stepdad, and my father-in-law.

But we have come to the last section of Psalm 107. The people have been called to give thanks to God for his love, grace, and mercy to His people. To communicate the woes, we heard four different stories that, at the very least are echoes of Biblical History. This is the last two verses of the song or hymn. And this part of the psalm is a reminder of What God has done for His people.

**Read Verses:**

**Main Point:** Even through the Tough times, God guides you and bring you Spiritual Blessings

**I. God Will Bless You with Provisions (33–36)**

The last section of the Psalm “proclaims God can provide the people with all of their needs “and punishes the evil (33–34) while rewarding the just (35–36). Although some commentators think that the last section was added later. The description in the hymn praise God for his bounty and the links to the preceding verses demonstrates the coherence of the entire psalm.

As the psalmist is giving a conclusion to the song or a final verse to the stories, he calls the Israelites back to God’s sovereignty. There are times in Israel’s History that God closed the skies and there was no rain. In the time of Elijah in 1 Kings chapters 17–18, God has Elijah declare a drought. 1 Kings 17 1–4 says: “Now Elijah the Tishbite, from the Gilead settlers, said to Ahab, “As the Lord God of Israel lives, in whose presence I stand, there will be no dew or rain during these years except by my command!”

2 Then the word of the Lord came to him: 3 “Leave here, turn eastward, and hide at the Wadi Cherith where it enters the Jordan. 4 You are to drink from the wadi. I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.”

5 So he proceeded to do what the Lord commanded. Elijah left and lived at the Wadi Cherith where it enters the Jordan. 6 The ravens kept bringing him bread and meat in the morning and in the evening, and he would drink from the wadi. 7 After a while, the wadi dried up because there had been no rain in the land.
In verses 33–36, the Psalmist mirrors, or paraphrases Isaiah 41:18–20

The poor and the needy seek water, but there is none;
their tongues are parched with thirst.
I will answer them.
I am the Lord, the God of Israel. I will not abandon them.

18 I will open rivers on the barren heights,
and springs in the middle of the plains.
I will turn the desert into a pool
and dry land into springs.

19 I will plant cedar, acacia, myrtle, and olive trees
in the wilderness.
I will put juniper, elm, and cypress trees together
in the desert.

20 so that all may see and know,
consider and understand,
that the hand of the Lord has done this,
the Holy One of Israel has created it.

The London Baptist Confession of 1689 says in chapter 5 paragraph 5. The perfectly wise, righteous, and gracious God often allows his own children for a time to experience a variety of temptations and the sinfulness of their own hearts. He does this to chastise them for their former sins or to make them aware of the hidden strength of the corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts so that they may be humbled. He also does this to lead them to a closer and more constant dependence on him to sustain them, to make them more cautious about all future circumstances that may lead to sin, and for other just and holy purposes. So, whatever happens to any of his elect happens by his appointment, for his glory, and for their good.

And So, when God decides to turn the land into a desert or into pools, God sovereignly chooses to do so for a reason. He is either providing for his people where there is otherwise nothing there or he is chastening His people. He uses famines and droughts to correct his people.
In the time of Abraham, we see that God provided for Abraham and his family. He gave him two types of provisions: Physical and Spiritual

Physical

Abraham was well off already, but as Genesis says Now there was a famine in the land; so, Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, “See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you.” It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. Pharaoh’s officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house. Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels. The time spent in Egypt netted Abraham wealth in the way of property and money.

Spiritual

God not only provides for your physical needs but your spiritual needs as well.

God gave Abraham the faith to take Isaac to the mountain. Abraham says “we will be back because he knows God will provide the ram for the sacrifice. God provides for our Spiritual needs and growth as well.

God also provided the ultimate sacrifice in Christ. Our most important spiritual need is reconciliation with God. Jesus gave many physical blessings by healing the sick and lame, feeding thousands, and bringing people back from the dead.

But he provided much more in ways of our Spiritual needs.

Philippians 4:19 ESV—And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
Ephesians 2:8–10 ESV for by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Romans 8:32 ESV He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

II. God Will Bless You with Rewards (37–40)

They sow fields and plant vineyards that yield a fruitful harvest.
38 He blesses them, and they multiply greatly; he does not let their livestock decrease.
39 When they are diminished and are humbled by cruel oppression and sorrow,
40 he pours contempt on nobles and makes them wander in a trackless wasteland.

The story of Joseph is a good one to illustrate the wicked and faithful.

First Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery so they would kill him, which landed him in a position of leadership in Potiphar house. Then Potiphar wife falsely accused him and got Him sent to prison. But He was faithful and made his way into the second most powerful position in Egypt. This position allowed him to save His family and subsequently His people.

All of this was made possible because Joseph was faithful to God. Genesis 50:15 “When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!” 16 So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, “Your father charged before he died, saying, 17 ‘Thus you shall say to Joseph, “Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.”’ And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father. “And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 18 Then his brothers also came and fell before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.” 19 But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. 21 So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Therefore, he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.
By the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus over four hundred years the Hebrew population grew so large that the Pharaoh did not know what to do with them all. God provided them a place to grow into a large enough population so they could leave Egypt. Even in slavery and forced labor, God was making a way for them.

Puritan John Flavel says “All providences are overruled and ordered for good, according to that blessed promise (Rom. 8:28); not only things that are good in themselves, as ordinances, graces, duties and mercies, but things that are evil in themselves, as temptations, afflictions, and even sins and corruptions, shall turn in the issue to their advantage and benefit…out of the worst of evils God can work good to His people.”—JOHN FLAVEL

We spoke about it on Easter. Good Friday. The term Tolkien used was Eucatastrophe. Christ’s death was meant to harm and humiliate Jesus, but God meant his death for our good to bring us the called to himself. It is the sheep called by the shepherd.

III. God Will Bless the Wise (41–43)

The Psalm closes with the verse “Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord. “The wise do not need to learn from the experience of pain but learn from the teachings of others. In the stories the psalmist said, “the ones who were fools suffered for their sinful way” (v 17), The good news is that the people learned from their sin and turned to God and cried out for help. What the psalmist is saying is that “wise people utilize their suffering as a religious opportunity for introspection and repentance, whereas fools do not.” Sometimes suffering is self–induced and to lessen those times, we should be wise and “attend to these things” of God and His instructions. But there are things like the sea, that are out of our control no matter how skilled we are. In all cases, we know that God is in control of all
things. And in all these things we give thanks to the One who made us and delivered us or brought us out of the situation because of His hesed.

**Application:**

1. **God is the giver of Justice**

   There will be justice at the End. But now we have justice provided through Jesus Christ One author explains it like this: “In putting forth Jesus as our propitiatio, the Lord vindicated His righteousness, ensuring that He remains just even as He becomes the Justifier of those who believe in Christ Jesus (v. 26). God provides what sinners need to be righteous in His sight without compromising His justice. When we are accounted righteous in Christ, justice is still done, but we do not feel the punishment our sin deserves. Instead, Jesus suffered it in our place.

2. **We should not be shocked when the world does worldly things.**

   Man’s idea of justice is fleeting and changes with the wind. And we may suffer for the injustice that the imperfect man enacts or enforces, but when we suffer it helps us long for heaven and that we are not long for this world.

3. **Through suffering we learn about God**

   The Puritans clarified that God’s chastening of believers springs not from “vindictive justice “but from “fatherly mercy.”18 When God brings adversity into our lives as discipline for sin, He does this not to satisfy His justice but as a “rebuke and caution, to bring us to mourn for sin committed, and to beware of the like.”19
The “grand reason” all things work together for the good of the saints is “the near and dear interest which God has in His people.” Here, Watson referred to God’s covenant promise to His people, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Jer. 32:38). “By virtue of this compact,” Watson wrote, “all things do, and must, work for good to them…. This word, ‘Thy God,’ is the sweetest word in the Bible, it implies the best relations: and it is impossible there should be these relations between God and His people, and everything [would] not work for their good.”¹² These relations, in Watson’s exposition, include the relationship of a physician

**4. We can give people blessing by giving the Gospel**

In the Gospel we have hope and benefits. William Perkins says, “The fifth gain or benefit is that all the miseries and calamities of this life cease to be curses, and are made blessings, being turned to the good of them who are to be saved by Christ” [Rom. 8:28].

Why is the good news hopeful and full of hope? Thomas Watson says, “The grand reason” all things work together for the good of the saints is “the near and dear interest which God has in His people.” Here, Watson referred to God’s covenant promise to His people, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Jer. 32:38). “By virtue of this compact,” Watson wrote, “all things do, and must, work for good to them…. This word, ‘Thy God,’ is the sweetest word in the Bible, it implies the best relations: and it is impossible there should be these relations between God and His people, and everything [would] not work for their good.”¹² These relations, in Watson’s exposition, include the relationship of a physician

**Conclusion**
The conclusion ties all four vignettes together and demonstrates that no matter which situation you find yourself in, God is in command and he will be provided for your needs. An overarching truth comes out of each story. The people were foolish and got themselves into their troubles or distress. Moreover, God was the only one that could save them.

What has turned out for Good in your life? For this church, even though the first few months when it seemed like the end was near and people would just find another church, God brought us or kept us together and so far, things have turned out well. I believe we have a way to go but if we are faithful, we will God will provide for this church, he will reward this church and he will bless us in our wisdom when we do His will by making disciples.
Dear Darin Wilt, Dwayne Milioni:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

101(b):

Category 2. (iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

- The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.
If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*

*Research Ethics Office*