

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

**Establishing a Christ-Centered Understanding of the Minor Prophets
at First Baptist Church, Greenville, Kentucky**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the Liberty University,
Liberty Theological Seminary
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this action research project is to help members of First Baptist Church Greenville, KY, interpret and apply the Minor Prophets from a Christ-centered perspective. This project measured church members' understanding of the Minor Prophets as they pertain to Christians today. It also measured attitudes and affections toward the Minor Prophets. A total of eleven people participated in the study. Eight were female; the other three were male. Each participant completed a pre-intervention survey, along with three instructional workshops that focused on biblical exposition, biblical theology, and hermeneutics. An eight-part sermon series was implemented to model the kind of interpretive methods taught during the workshops. Participants completed sermon evaluations after sermons three, five, and seven. At the conclusion of the sermon series, each participant took a post-intervention survey that was identical to the first survey. There was also a focus group meeting with eight of the participants. A statistical comparison of the pre- and post-intervention survey instruments demonstrated a significant improvement in church members' ability to understand and apply the Minor Prophets from a Christ-centered perspective. Data from the sermon evaluations and focus group meeting corroborated the statistical data, showing that participants grew in their understanding of Minor Prophets and came to value these books as relevant to their lives as modern Christians. This study demonstrates how coupling instructional workshops with expository preaching has the potential to enhance church members' understanding of how all of Scripture points to Jesus Christ.

Keywords: Minor Prophets, expository preaching, hermeneutics, Christocentric application

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Abbreviations

DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
ESV	<i>English Standard Version</i>
FBC	<i>First Baptist Church</i>
FCF	<i>Fallen Condition Focus</i>
KBC	<i>Kentucky Baptist Convention</i>
MCBA	<i>Muhlenberg County Baptist Association</i>
MP	<i>Minor Prophets</i>
NT	<i>New Testament</i>
OT	<i>Old Testament</i>
SBC	<i>Southern Baptist Convention</i>

CHAPTER 1: FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

Introduction

Evangelicals are generally known for their reliance on the Bible as God’s primary source of revelation. Scripture is often described by groups like Southern Baptists with terms such as inspired, inerrant, infallible, and sufficient. Such terminology reflects the deeply-held conviction that Scripture is given by God (2 Pet 1:19–21), and that it contains all that is needed to equip believers for life and doctrine (2 Tim 3:16). These beliefs shape sermons and small group studies that are based on scriptural themes or books of the Bible. However, as much as some believers may espouse a high view of Scripture, certain portions of the Bible may be neglected due to a lack of understanding of how they relate to the lives of modern-day Christians. One such portion of Scripture is commonly referred to as the Minor Prophets, or The Twelve.

As Fuhr and Yates have observed, it is sad that the Minor Prophets are so commonly neglected in churches that otherwise promote a robust view of the biblical canon.¹ These twelve books contain some of the Bible’s great promises, along with vivid portrayals of God’s majesty and glory.² The Minor Prophets pronounce God’s judgment on the unrighteous, but they also declare a message of hope rooted in repentance and restoration.³ Though some of the language and imagery found in The Twelve may strike some as odd or difficult to understand, the themes

¹ Richard Alan Fuhr, Jr., and Gary E. Yates, *The Message of the Twelve: Hearing the Voice of the Minor Prophets* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), xv.

² *Ibid.*, xiii.

³ *Ibid.*, 21.

they address are extremely pertinent for God’s people in the twenty first century. While the world has changed dramatically since the time the Minor Prophets were composed, much remains the same. Humans continue to struggle with the same things as people did in the OT. Furthermore, God has not changed across time, nor have His saving purposes, which were ultimately accomplished through the person and work of Jesus Christ. The need for redemption and God’s provision of it through Christ are the central themes of Scripture.

While it is tempting to take the evangelical commitment to the authority of all the Scriptures for granted, this would be a mistake. One recent example of a questionable approach to the OT comes from pastor and author Andy Stanley, who has suggested that churches “unhitch” the gospel from the OT. Stanley’s remarks were met with considerable criticism by leaders like Albert Mohler, Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Stanley has claimed that his idea of “unhitching” is similar to what the apostles did when they jettisoned the OT law for grace and faith in Christ.⁴ However, Mohler contends that the pattern demonstrated in the book of Acts is one of “promise and fulfillment, not rejection and repudiation.”⁵ Stanley is an effective communicator whose books and sermons have impacted a wide audience of Christians. Though he is certainly not the only one to cast doubt on the reliability of the OT, he is a prime example of how negative attitudes toward the OT can undermine contemporary Christians’ perception of its application to their lives. It is important that preachers faithfully proclaim OT texts such as those found in the Minor Prophets to help their people “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15, King James Version).

⁴ “Andy Stanley Responds to Criticism About His ‘Unhitching’ from the Old Testament Sermon,” *Relevant Magazine*, July 5, 2018, <https://relevantmagazine.com/faith/andy-stanley-explains-why-hes-stopped-saying-the-bible-says/>.

⁵ Albert Mohler, Jr., “Getting ‘Unhitched’ from the Old Testament? Andy Stanley Aims at Heresy,” *AlbertMohler.com* (blog), August 10, 2018, <https://albertmohler.com/2018/08/10/getting-unhitched-old-testament-andy-stanley-aims-heresy/>.

One of the best ways to demonstrate the inherent value of the Minor Prophets is by preaching expositionally from them in the local church. When this type of preaching is at its best, it has the potential to inform a congregation of the historical importance and contemporary relevance of the Minor Prophets. When preachers faithfully interpret and apply OT texts from a Christ-centered perspective, they accomplish at least two things. First, sound biblical preaching explains the text in its original context while also showing how it fits into God's grand purposes. This kind of preaching demonstrates to a congregation how the text applies to contemporary Christians. Secondly, faithful biblical exposition models how to study a passage in its immediate context, while also showing how a given passage relates to other books of the Bible. The ultimate aim of this kind of interpretation is to show how all of Scripture points to Jesus Christ. This type of modeling can help people learn how to read and understand the Scriptures for themselves.

While preaching is central to the health of a local church, it is also important that key leaders and teachers be properly equipped to study and present OT material in a way that points to Christ. When a church's leadership and teaching ministries are in alignment with the pulpit regarding these matters, the congregation will have a better chance to flourish under the authority of God's Word. Proclaiming the OT Scriptures from a Christ-centered perspective is not only consistent with the example set by Jesus and the apostles, it is also the most organic approach to Scripture and allows for the full scope of progressive revelation to unfold through a series of covenants toward its proper climax in Jesus Christ.⁶ This kind of Christ-centered exposition is central to this thesis project.

⁶ Thomas Schreiner, "The Old Covenant is Over. The Old Testament is Authoritative," *The Gospel Coalition*, November 1, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/old-covenant-response-andy-stanley/>.

Ministry Context

The ministry context for this project is First Baptist Church, Greenville, KY (FBC). FBC is located in a small county-seat town with a population of approximately 4,400.⁷ Most recent census data show Muhlenberg County's total population to be 30,694.⁸ People who are 65 and older make up 19.7 percent of residents, while those under the age of 18 make up 20.7 percent of the population.⁹ Of the younger generation, approximately one quarter are age five or under.¹⁰ Recent research on church attendance patterns in Kentucky shows that younger people are not attending church as frequently or consistently as older adults who belong to the Baby Boomers and Generation X.¹¹ This pattern is reflected in Muhlenberg County generally, and at FBC in particular. Many of the younger attendees at FBC are less likely to have been raised in church, and therefore have less exposure to the Bible, especially the books of the OT. However, older generations also have far less exposure to the OT than the NT, particularly when it comes to the Minor Prophets.¹² Over the years, lessons and sermons from the OT have typically focused on character studies or moralistic applications of the text rather than demonstrating how these books point to Christ.

⁷ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=greenville%20kentucky&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P1>. Accessed June 17, 2023.

⁸ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/muhlenbergcountykentucky/PST045221>. Accessed August 26, 2023.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/state/kentucky/attendance-at-religious-services/at-least-once-a-week/>.

¹² This statement is based on informal research done by canvassing long-time church members who have regularly participated in the life of FBC over three decades or more. These conversations have revealed that most of the membership's exposure to the OT has come from more popular narratives, Psalms, and selected prophetic texts that have been treated from the pulpit at Christmas or Easter.

Church Life and History

FBC was constituted in 1869 and has been at the same location on Main Street since it was established. During the 1980s and 1990s, the church was divided between those who were sympathetic to the SBC's so-called 'Conservative Resurgence' and those who were not. The pastor who served the church during this season of time was aligned more with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) in his doctrine. He had a reputation for being a good pastor but was not known as a strong Bible preacher. For the better part of four decades, the church has been served by pastors who did not consistently practice expository preaching. This has had a profound impact on the church's understanding of Scripture, particularly the OT.

Currently, the church staff includes three full-time employees and several part-time support staff. The researcher currently serves as FBC's senior pastor. Average Sunday morning attendance at FBC hovers around 110, with regular Sunday school attendance at 60–70. The church has one Sunday morning service and no regular Sunday evening gathering. In the early 2000s, some at FBC began to consider shifting from a more traditional worship format to a more contemporary worship style. This led to the development of two Sunday morning services. The idea came from another local Baptist church that had successfully implemented this type of ministry schedule. The early service began at 8:30 a.m. and was intended for those who desired contemporary music with drums and guitars, and a ministry approach that was geared toward younger people and families. The 11:00 a.m. service followed the traditional pattern that had previously been established, with hymns, a choir, and musical accompaniment provided by a piano and an organ.

The church continued to promote a weekly Sunday school that met at 9:45 a.m., sandwiched between the two morning worship gatherings. However, this experiment had the opposite effect of what was intended. Younger families continued attending the later service,

opting to sleep in and enjoy their Sunday mornings. Older members, many of whom rose early and were free of childcare responsibilities, chose to attend the early service. Within a few months, complaints arose regarding this discrepancy. Some complained that they did not like how the two services divided the church. The new ministry schedule made it more difficult for people to connect, resulting in a perceived disruption of the church's fellowship and unity.

After less than a year, FBC voted to go back to one morning service and to follow a blended worship style that included both hymns and contemporary songs. In an attempt to compromise with those who liked the earlier time and others who preferred the traditional 11:00 a.m. worship hour, the church opted to begin Sunday school at 9:00 a.m., with worship beginning at 10:00 a.m. This small change had a major impact on Sunday school attendance. While people generally seem to like the time of the worship service, many remain uninvolved with Sunday school. The church has yet to recover from where it once was in terms of Sunday morning Bible study attendance. As a result, only about half of the church body currently participates in any kind of Bible study class or small group. This lack of participation in any kind of small group ministry reduces the number of opportunities for people to be exposed to biblical teaching, which only emphasizes the need for a well-rounded preaching ministry that declares the whole counsel of God from both Testaments.

Current Ministry Schedule

The church ministry schedule includes a Sunday morning service and Wednesday evening activities. The church discontinued the Sunday evening service nearly twenty years ago. Instead of a Sunday night service, FBC has seasonal Bible studies in the spring and fall each year. Women typically meet in the church's fellowship hall, while the men gather in a large classroom. These studies have been well attended until recently, when COVID-19 altered the

church's schedule. During an average study, lasting eight to twelve weeks, the women's group will have between thirty-five and forty in attendance. The men's attendance is approximately half that amount. There are also activities for children and youth so parents can attend the adult groups.

Apart from the Sunday morning gathering, the busiest time in the life of the church is Wednesday evening. During the school year, the church sponsors a weekly meal that allows families to enjoy good food and table fellowship. There is a modest expense, as adults are asked to pay \$5 and children \$3 to help offset the cost of the meal. After the mealtime, there are discipleship activities for children and youth. In 2023, FBC reintroduced a Southern Baptist missions curriculum for children in three groups called Mission Friends, Royal Ambassadors (RAs), and Girls in Action (GAs). Several adults gather on Wednesday evenings in a small chapel for a prayer meeting and Bible study that lasts approximately forty-five minutes. This Bible study time is generally more informal than a Sunday morning service, allowing for questions and answers during the teaching time. Adult and children's choir practices are also held on Wednesday evenings.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Like many churches, FBC was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. The church did not meet in person for several weeks in 2020 due to a mandate issued by Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear.¹³ FBC did not have any Sunday school or in-person small group meetings from March 2020 until April 2021 because of government-mandated shutdowns and lingering concerns about the spread of the novel coronavirus. A group of women in the

¹³ On March 19, 2020, the governor issued a statewide mandate prohibiting all indoor gatherings, including faith-based gatherings. https://governor.ky.gov/Documents/20201020_COVID-19_page-archive.pdf.

church utilized Zoom to engage in a Bible study for several weeks during this period. The pastor used Facebook to share a half-hour Bible study each Wednesday during this time. Sadly, few people participated in these virtual Bible study sessions.

The church returned to its normal Sunday morning schedule on Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021. It took several months for FBC to restart in-person Wednesday evening activities because most of the fellowship hall seating involved gathering around 60-inch round tables during a time when people were being urged to stay six feet apart. The church was able to resume a full slate of midweek activities in March of 2022. In light of these months of missed worship gatherings and Bible study classes, the need for sound biblical teaching and preaching has perhaps never been greater. The need of the day is for sound pulpit ministry and well-trained small group leaders who can faithfully practice Christ-centered Bible exposition. A renewed focus on the Scripture of both the OT and the NT has the potential to help people value God's Word and to promote spiritual growth as they spend time alone with the Scripture in devotional reading and personal study.

Attitudes Toward the Old Testament

The current pastor had been at FBC for only two years when the pandemic dramatically altered the church's ministry schedule. During the early months of his ministry, the pastor perceived that many in the church were either confused by much of the OT or simply ignored it. While FBC has a welcoming atmosphere and wonderful programming for all age groups, the church has not been taught biblical theology that emphasizes the metanarrative of Scripture. A perceived dichotomy between the OT and NT has developed in some people's minds, making it difficult for them to comprehend important truths revealed in the OT. As a result, it has been the current pastor's observation that the church possesses little knowledge of how the OT and NT

relate historically or theologically. It is the theological connections that are most lacking at this point.

One example of this lack of understanding may be illustrated by a sermon series that was preached from the book of Judges in 2019. During the series, the pastor surveyed the lives of several of Israel's judges, showing how these individuals pointed to the need for a faithful shepherd-king. An effort was made to assert that while the text anticipated David's arrival as God's anointed, in some sense, each judge ultimately pointed through David to his most important descendant, Jesus. Several people in the congregation reported that they had never considered how the book of Judges pointed forward in anticipation of the Savior. In some cases, people testified that they had heard teaching and preaching from Judges in the past, but that most of the prior lessons and sermons had focused on good and bad aspects of the judges' moral character, with little or no connection being made to the gospel.

The congregation appears to understand that the events depicted in the NT are in some sense a continuation of the events in the OT, but there is a poor understanding of how Jesus and the apostles interpreted the OT Scripture in light of Christ's coming into the world. It is not uncommon to hear someone at FBC say "Amen!" to the verse where Paul declares that "All Scripture is breathed out by God ..." (2 Tim 3:16, English Standard Version). However, the impression one gets is that people understand this verse as referring primarily to the pages of the NT. Even those who would concede that all sixty-six books of the Bible are inspired and important may have serious difficulty explaining why the first thirty-nine books matter as much as the last twenty-seven. This is especially true of the Minor Prophets.

Attitudes Toward the Minor Prophets

In 2018, the current pastor preached a series of sermons through the book of Habakkuk. Several congregants remarked that it was the first time they had heard a sermon from that book of the Bible. Nearly every week during that series of sermons, people stated that they were hearing things they had never heard. They were beginning to make connections between the OT and NT they had never made. For example, some were quite surprised to learn that Paul's declaration in Romans 1:17, "The righteous shall live by faith," originated in Habakkuk 2:4. While there is a general lack of understanding of broader biblical-theological themes that connect the two testaments, FBC's lack of familiarity with the themes of the Minor Prophets is particularly significant.

For many church members, the concept of prophecy conjures up notions of predicting the future, especially events related to the end times. Though the prophets did foretell many future events, their primary role was that of "forth-telling."¹⁴ They faithfully declared the Word of the Lord, calling God's people to covenant faithfulness using colorful phrases and images. The future events to which they pointed often portrayed God's judgment against His people's covenant unfaithfulness.¹⁵ The prophets called the people to practice justice (Mic 6:8), to repent from idolatry (Hos 14:1–2), and to prepare for the Day of the Lord (Joel 1:15–2:17). They also declared God's wrath against sin (Amos 4:6–13) along with His mercy and grace, and the promise of future restoration (Zeph 3:9–20). These central biblical themes are as important for God's people today as they were when they were first declared. However, the Minor Prophets have been largely neglected at FBC, giving rise to a problem that must be addressed.

¹⁴ Fuhr & Yates, *The Message of the Twelve*, 20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Problem Presented

Southern Baptists have historically held a high view of the Bible. The first article of the SBC's confession of faith, updated in 2000, states that "All Scripture is totally true and trustworthy," and that "All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is himself the focus of divine revelation."¹⁶ As such, God's Word, in its entirety, is the primary source for Christian doctrine and practice. If churches are to remain faithful to God's revealed truth, they must maintain a high view of the Bible and how all of Scripture points to Jesus Christ. Therefore, sound interpretive methods and faithful exposition benefit both the preacher and the church.¹⁷

It has been the observation of the current pastor that FBC Greenville has not had enough experience with expositional preaching over the years. Much of the preaching and Bible study that has been done over the past forty years has generally focused on the NT or those portions of the OT with which people are most familiar, such as selected narrative material and some of the Psalms.¹⁸ The researcher assesses that the church has a great need for a more well-rounded understanding of how every book of the Bible points toward Christ. Current members' attitudes toward the OT Minor Prophets lean more toward moralistic instruction than gospel foundation. The church's limited exposure to this part of the OT, coupled with a more topical approach to the Scripture, has created a problem. The problem is that members of FBC Greenville, KY, do not fully understand how the Minor Prophets apply to modern Christians.

¹⁶ <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/#i>.

¹⁷ Daniel L. Akin, "Introduction," in *Engaging Exposition: A 3-D Approach to Preaching* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 12.

¹⁸ In 2018, after the current pastor preached through the book of Habakkuk, some lifelong members of FBC reported that, aside from the book of Jonah, they could recall hearing few sermons from any of the other Minor Prophets. The focus group meeting conducted as part of the research for this project confirmed that most people could recall only hearing sermons from the OT that focused on narrative texts, and none of the participants could report ways in which the OT stories had been meaningfully connected to Christ.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to teach members of FBC Greenville, KY, to interpret and apply the Minor Prophets from a Christ-centered perspective through instructional workshops and a series of expositional sermons. The sermons were designed to model the interpretive methods taught in the workshops so that participants would better understand how all of Scripture is gospel-focused. The ultimate goal of this project was for people to not only grow in their understanding of the OT, but in their affection for God's Word. This action research has helped the researcher better understand how to equip people to hear and evaluate lessons and sermons. The strategies employed during this project have the potential to be implemented on a larger scale to help equip leaders, teachers, and other members to interpret and apply the OT from a Christ-centered perspective.

This project is rooted in the teachings of Scripture. In his first letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul urged him to proclaim the truth of God's Word faithfully. Paul declared that if Timothy continued to teach and live according to the Scriptures, he "will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine ..." (1 Tim 4:6, ESV). Paul was adamant that Timothy should continue to proclaim biblical truth faithfully as both a ballast against unsound doctrine and as a demonstration of faith in God.¹⁹ Later, in 2 Timothy 3:15, Paul urged Timothy to hold fast to what he had learned since childhood from the "sacred writings," which are understood to be the books of the Old Testament. According to Paul, the theme of the Old Testament is God's work of salvation through Jesus Christ.²⁰

¹⁹ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 132.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 234.

The NT's affirmation of the OT as important for the church suggests that all of the Bible should matter to God's people. If it is indeed true that "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16, ESV), then it is important for people to understand how the OT applies to their lives in the twenty first century. Expository preaching that emphasizes the Christ-centered nature of the Bible has the potential to help God's people grasp the Christ-centered nature of the Minor Prophets. Modern-day believers must understand the big overarching themes of Scripture to grasp the scope of God's plan of salvation fully. Many of these important themes, such as justice, judgment, the Day of the Lord, and repentance and restoration are found in the Minor Prophets. Expository preaching is ideal for declaring these ideas because it is faithful to the meaning of the text in its original context while seeking to make immediate application in the life of the hearers. As has often been said, "The Word does the work." Faithful exposition and application create an atmosphere in which the Spirit of God, through the Word of God, can do His work in the hearts and minds of God's people.

Basic Assumptions

In developing a thesis project like the one proposed here, certain fundamental assumptions shape the plan in significant ways. It will be helpful to identify several of those assumptions before defining key terminology and working toward a thesis. The history of both pulpit and educational ministries at FBC Greenville strongly suggested that much of the material covered in the workshops would be new to many of those who agreed to be part of this study. Perhaps the most basic assumption, and the one that most impacted the sermon series, is the understanding that participants would have minimal understanding of how to apply the Minor Prophets from a Christ-centered perspective. Most FBC members have had little or no training in

biblical theology. Also, as noted above, participants possess limited experience with expository teaching and preaching methods. However, given the current pastor has practiced expositional preaching since 2018, it may be assumed that he has at least some familiarity with this form of sermon delivery.

In light of the newness of this kind of approach for many participants, the researcher proceeded with the understanding that some may not enjoy the expositional approach to Scripture. There are some who may prefer a topical approach. However, expository preaching is important in the life of the church because the Bible is important in the life of the church. Rather than the Bible serving as a platform for the promotion of various ideas and perspectives, the Bible is to be the foundation on which the local church establishes its beliefs and practices. The researcher has operated from a conviction that is consistent with Article One of the 2000 *Baptist Faith & Message*, which states that Scripture “has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.”²¹ All those who participate in this research project are expected to also hold a high view of Scripture.

The Scriptures are important in the life of the church because they are “the only sufficient, certain, and infallible standard of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.”²² Though the Bible is made up of sixty-six different books written by various authors, it declares a coherent message that focuses on God’s redemption of sinners through the work of Christ. Jesus declared that all the Scriptures (i.e., Old Testament) focus on Him and find their fulfillment in Him (Luke 24:27). The Bible displays diversity in the uniqueness of each genre and author, and yet it also exhibits a profound unity that is rooted in God’s saving work. The Scriptures also

²¹ <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/#i>.

²² Stan Reeves, ed., *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith in Modern English* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2017), 11.

possess what theologians call perspicuity, or clarity, that allows them to be understood, by God's grace, through the aid of the Holy Spirit.²³

God is gracious to reveal Himself and His saving work to humans through the Scripture. This salvation is necessary because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23, ESV). All people, including the believers who will participate in this study, are sinners in need of God's grace. Even after the human heart has been affected by the regenerating work of the Spirit and redeemed by the application of Christ's sacrifice by faith, every person continues to wrestle with the sinful nature (Rom 7:15–20). It is therefore important for people, both unbelievers and believers, to hear the gospel and to live in obedience to the good news about Jesus.

The ultimate goal of this action research project is to help God's people grow in their faith by understanding how the Minor Prophets point to Jesus. The greatest sermon and the best preacher are not enough to create the kind of change that is most desired. All of those who participate in this study will require the work of the Holy Spirit to enable understanding and empower each believer to apply biblical truth to his or her unique situation. It is both deeply desired and humbly believed that the Spirit will attend to the task of providing illumination and instruction so that God's people may be more thoroughly equipped for good works to the glory of God.

Definitions

The primary focus of this project is to consider how to establish a Christ-centered approach to interpreting and applying the Minor Prophets at First Baptist Church, Greenville,

²³ John S. Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place: The Doctrine of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 621–25.

KY. Several terms will be used that may be new to some readers. Other words may be used interchangeably or have a narrower context than might otherwise be presumed. It will therefore be helpful to define important terminology so that the reader may fully appreciate what is being communicated. Key terms such as expository preaching, evangelical, hermeneutics, and metanarrative will be clearly defined. Other, more familiar words, such as Old Testament, and revelation will also be defined to clarify the researcher's use of these terms.

Biblical theology. The discipline of biblical theology involves “reading the Bible, not as if it's sixty-six separate books, but a single book with a single plot—God's glory displayed through Jesus Christ.”²⁴ This type of theology is based on the strong conviction that the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit and that it may be read with the confidence of knowing that the Spirit communicated divine truth through the biblical authors.²⁵ Whereas systematic theology seeks to understand what the biblical canon teaches on particular doctrines, biblical theology seeks to understand how each book of the Bible fits within the canon of Scripture and explores relationships between the various books. According to author and professor James M. Hamilton, biblical theology is an intuitive approach that reflects the pattern of interpretation laid down by Moses and the Prophets and is the best way to learn how to read the Bible as Christian Scripture.²⁶

Christ-centered. This project is concerned with exploring methods of proclaiming the Minor Prophets in the local church that are faithful to Scripture by focusing on Christ. Preaching will be referred to at times as Christ-centered. According to Bryan Chappell, Christ-centered

²⁴ Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 15.

²⁵ James M. Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 21.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

proclamation reminds hearers that, “our best works are filthy rags to God and replaces cheap grace with exhortations to obey God as a loving response to the redeeming work of the Son.”²⁷ Christ-centered will be used as a general descriptive term and should not be confused with ‘Christocentric,’ which will be defined below.

Christocentric. As the term suggests, to be christocentric is to see Jesus as central to sound biblical interpretation. The christocentric method emphasizes types and shadows of Christ in the OT as having their ultimate meaning in Him and understands every word in some sense to be about Him. According to this perspective, the fullest meaning of the OT cannot be truly grasped apart from the revelation of Jesus Christ. In light of Christ’s coming into the world, NT believers have a better understanding of the OT prophecies than those who were alive when they were received and recorded. This is because Jesus is the lens through which the OT may be properly interpreted and applied.²⁸

Christotelic. This refers to an interpretive method that sees Christ as the *telos* or ultimate goal of Scripture. Those who hold the christotelic perspective believe the initial interpretive emphasis of the OT should be on the original context of a passage or book. Rather than seeing Jesus on every page, those who hold this view see Scripture as culminating historically and theologically in the coming of Jesus into the world. Where the christocentric method sees Jesus as central to all of Scripture, the christotelic method sees Jesus as the culmination of all Scripture.²⁹

²⁷ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, Third Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), xxi.

²⁸ John Goldingay, et. al., *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 184.

²⁹ Daniel I. Block, “Christotelic Preaching: A Plea for Hermeneutical Integrity and Missional Passion,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 22/3 (Fall 2018): 13, accessed September 1, 2023, <https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/equip/uploads/2019/02/SBJT-22.3-Block-Christotelic-Preaching.pdf>

Evangelical. The word evangelical has often been used in America to describe conservative Christians. While it has come to define a subset of a certain social and political demographic, the word evangelical has a much richer meaning. An evangelical believes in the good news about Jesus Christ as declared in the Scripture and is committed to proclaiming that good news to others.³⁰ For this study, evangelical refers to those who embrace the gospel, having surrendered their lives to Christ as personal Savior and Lord.

Expository preaching or expositional preaching. Generally speaking, expository preaching or expository teaching refers to instruction that is based on the text of Scripture and seeks to extract or exposit meaning from a given passage as intended by the original authors. Akin, et al., briefly define expository preaching as “Christ-centered, text-driven, Spirit-led preaching that transforms lives.”³¹ Though much of the writing on this topic has been aimed at preachers, for this project, references to biblical exposition will also include the ministry of teaching in the local church.

Hermeneutics. The methods of interpreting the Bible defined above (christocentric, christotelic) fall under the umbrella of hermeneutics. The field of hermeneutics is concerned with interpreting the Bible. It proposes strategies that build bridges between the modern reader and the ancient text by explaining linguistic, historical, social, and cultural differences in a way that makes sense.³² There is a special emphasis in this project on the historical and grammatical methods of understanding a text. History and grammar are the most important building blocks of

³⁰ Walter Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2d. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 405.

³¹ Daniel L. Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage, *Engaging Exposition* (Nashville, TN, B&H Academic, 2011), 2.

³² William W. Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Revised and Expanded. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 5–6.

sound interpretive strategies.³³ An important aspect of this project is teaching people to interpret the Bible in a way that is faithful to both the author's original meaning and a Christ-centered application of the text. Therefore, a Christ-centered hermeneutic will be advanced here.

Metanarrative. A metanarrative is an overarching story that gives meaning and context to other stories. In Christian theology, it refers to the Bible's big story.³⁴ There is an overarching narrative of Scripture that ties together all of the other stories told within its pages. This big story serves as the dominant theme that ties different threads together. The various characters and stories in Scripture, in one way or another, point toward a greater, ultimate fulfillment of God's eternal purposes. For both the OT and the NT, "the person and saving work of Jesus Christ is the ultimate focus of God's revelation."³⁵

Revelation. Broadly speaking, the term revelation refers to knowledge that has been revealed from a source outside the knower. The knowledge of God to which humans have access comes by way of divine revelation and is a work of the Holy Spirit.³⁶ People can only know God to the extent that He reveals Himself. Theologians typically distinguish between two types of divine revelation. The first is called general or natural revelation and refers to all that may be known about God from the natural world. It is general in the sense, through God's common grace that He has chosen to reveal certain things to all people. The second type of revelation is known as special revelation and refers to the particular set of truths about God and His saving work by which humans may come to saving faith in Christ.

³³ Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 13.

³⁴ James M. Hamilton, Jr., *What is Biblical Theology?: A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 12–13.

³⁵ Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2010), 151.

³⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 640.

Limitations

This action research project was limited in certain ways that were beyond the control of the researcher. Given that the research is to be implemented in a particular local church context, the number of people involved in the project was limited to those who regularly attend FBC Greenville, KY. It was further limited by the number of willing and able to participate in a series of group sessions that introduced biblical theology, hermeneutics, and expositional methods of teaching the Bible. It was expected that between twelve and twenty individuals would participate in the proposed research. Eleven individuals completed the requirements to be counted as research participants. Each person who participated was chosen because they are currently attending the Sunday morning worship gathering and Bible study regularly. Ideal participants were those engaged in leadership or teaching within the life of the church. More will be said about the participants in a later chapter.

Those who agreed to be a part of this research project were limited in how much time they had available. This intervention required an assessment before and after the workshops were conducted and the sermon series was preached. Participants were also expected to offer feedback on specific aspects of three sermons. Participants have different work schedules and family responsibilities that sometimes can make it difficult for them to meet in-person. There were other factors beyond the researcher's control. Inclement weather, sickness, family emergencies, and travel were all potential interruptions that could have interrupted the project. These considerations were accounted for as much as possible. Individuals who missed a service during the research window had access to the sermon through the church's Facebook page. Even this option was limited in the sense that it depended on the reliability of the church's internet connection. Individuals who participated in this study were also limited by their lack of

experience with certain areas of biblical study and their ability to grasp the information as it was presented.

The researcher faced limitations based on the availability of meeting space in the church building. Thankfully, the church supported this research project and provided adequate resources for the project from beginning to end. The researcher was able to secure the desired rooms for the workshops and the focus group. One final limitation was the time available for preaching each sermon. The pastor has typically been allotted thirty to thirty-five minutes for the Sunday sermon. This limits the amount of information that can be communicated, but this limitation helped the pastor focus his presentation each week so that it was concise and on point.

Delimitations

By its very nature, this research project was delimited to those who regularly attend FBC, Greenville, KY. To be even more specific, it was open only to individuals who have made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. One of the purposes of this action research was to engage adult church members who are regularly involved in the life of the church. However, it was not strictly delimited to church members. Regular attendees who showed an interest in this study were permitted to participate. Among those who volunteered, it was desired that as many current teachers and leaders as possible. Only those who are twenty-one years of age or older were included in this endeavor.

The sermon series was planned for eight weeks. This was deemed to be a reasonable timeframe for completing the intervention and collecting necessary data. The series included a sermon from the NT that provided a brief introduction to a Christ-centered approach to the prophets. The remaining seven sermons were from select portions of the Minor Prophets.

The majority of the sermons focused on the Minor Prophets to address the problem and the purpose of this project. Sermon texts were delimited to seven samples from seven different prophetic books according to the researcher's discretion. The total time allotted for this intervention was eleven weeks, with the majority of time dedicated to preaching and assessing sermons on selected texts from the Minor Prophets. Having established the limitations and delimitations of this project, it is important now to state clearly the thesis that undergirds the action research.

Thesis Statement

American evangelicals are facing numerous cultural headwinds. Local churches are up against a rising tide of progressivism that counters many biblical principles. Prosperity theology has weakened many churches by diluting the true gospel with false and faulty teachings that are often based on unsound Scripture interpretations. Biblical illiteracy compounds these issues because believers who do not have a solid biblical foundation are more susceptible to bad theology. A poor understanding of the Bible's big overarching picture, its metanarrative, lends itself to a reductive view of the Bible. Harder-to-understand passages may be overlooked, and other passages may be reduced to moralistic accounts that fail to point to Christ. All of this has the potential to create churches that have an inadequate view of God's glory and a diminished impact on the world around them.

There is no easy fix for the kinds of threats and problems described above. However, local churches that maintain a commitment to the authority of Scripture and Christ-centered ministries will be better equipped to face these challenges. This emphasis on faithful biblical interpretation and proclamation must begin in the pulpit. Pastors who seek to remain faithful to God's Word will not only seek to craft Christ-exalting sermons from both Old and New

Testaments but will also train teachers and leaders who can do the same. An increased understanding of the arc of the biblical storyline, especially how the Minor Prophets point to Jesus Christ, will equip members and leaders to exalt the Lord in their daily lives. Such a Christ-centered understanding also has the potential to improve the church's overall worship experience by putting the church's focus where it belongs, on Jesus. Therefore, this project proposes that if people at FBC Greenville, KY, are taught to interpret and apply the Minor Prophets from a Christ-centered perspective, along with modeling through expository preaching, then they will better understand how these books apply today.

CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING THE CHRIST-CENTERED NATURE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Literature Review

An intentional review of the pertinent literature is necessary for building the foundation for this Doctor of Ministry research project. There are several biblical, theological, and theoretical concepts that support the action research that will be described in a later section of this paper. This chapter will examine important ideas related to expositional preaching, hermeneutics, and biblical theology that will shape how the message of the Minor Prophets should be interpreted, applied, and proclaimed in the local church. The purpose of this literature review is to consider how various authors have impacted the current understanding of the Christ-centered nature of the OT. This will be foundational to this project's goal of better understanding how to proclaim the gospel from the Minor Prophets.

Ways of Finding Christ in the OT: Five Views

An important question to ask for a project like this is perhaps the most obvious one: Can a preacher truly proclaim Christ from the OT? To get even more specific, can a Christ-centered interpretation of the Minor Prophets be derived from sound exegesis, or is this an artificial construct imposed upon the text? C. H. Spurgeon famously advised young preachers to make every sermon about Jesus Christ. He believed that just as many roads lead to London, so there are many roads that lead from a text to Christ. Spurgeon even went so far as to say:

I have never yet found a text that had not got a road to Christ in it, and if I ever do find one that has not a road to Christ in it, I will make one; I will go over hedge and ditch but I

would get at my Master, for the sermon cannot do any good unless there be a savour of Christ in it.¹

Spurgeon is not the only one to state that all preaching should be Christ-centered. That the OT points to Christ is widely accepted among evangelicals. The question is how does a preacher make the connection between an OT text and Christ in a way that is both faithful to the text and helpful for his audience?

Preaching Christ from the OT requires that the interpreter read the biblical text in light of Christ rather than reading the incarnate Christ into the pages of the OT.² The OT must stand on its own, but Christians must also read it with an awareness that Christ has come; that God has fulfilled His promises in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Wright proposes several ways that the preacher can make connections to Christ from the OT. One way is by showing how a given text fits into the Bible's big story. The goal here is to show how Jesus fits into God's redemptive plan as it was foretold in the OT.³ Sidney Greidanus states that all Christian preaching should be rooted in the unfolding history of God's revelation.⁴

An example of how this plays out may be found in the book of Ruth. This book anticipates the arrival of King David, who will lead God's people to serve the Lord and conquer their enemies. In its original context, Ruth is a beautiful testimony of God's lovingkindness, His faithfulness to all kinds of people. Yet the story of Ruth points forward to an even greater event, namely the birth of Christ. The Christ-centered expositor can show how Matthew includes Ruth

¹ Charles H. Spurgeon, "Christ Precious to Believers," (March 13, 1859), cited in Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 16.

² Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 227–28.

³ Christopher J. H. Wright, *How to Preach & Teach the Old Testament for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 64–66.

⁴ Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 236.

in his genealogy of Jesus, which establishes His claim to David's throne.⁵ By outlining Yahweh's covenant with David, including the important promise that David's Son would reign forever, the preacher can show how the book of Ruth anticipates the Messiah's arrival. Texts such as Matthew 1:1–17, where Jesus's genealogy is recorded, demonstrate His importance as the one who fulfilled God's promise to David. God's activity in the book of Ruth is an important part of the gospel story.

The above example from the book of Ruth demonstrates what Jason DeRouchie calls the Bible's salvation-historical storyline.⁶ The gospel story is often described in terms of God fulfilling His promises. Indeed, a vital part of showing how Christ fits into the unfolding narrative of the OT is highlighting God's promises and how Christ fulfills them. Wright contends that much of the NT is based on the apostles' belief that Jesus had fulfilled all of God's ancient promises to Israel and the nations.⁷ Kaiser's understanding of the OT follows a similar line of thought. He believes that the overarching theme of Scripture is what he calls 'the promise plan of God.'⁸ Similarly, Greidanus believes preaching that focuses on the theme of promise fulfillment can be particularly powerful for those who may have developed a stunted view of Christ's authority.⁹

Though the Bible says many things, it tells a grand story that climaxes with Christ's coming into the world. As Hunter and Wellum have stated, "the Bible has a single message

⁵ Wright, *How to Preach & Teach the Old Testament*, 64–66.

⁶ Jason DeRouchie, "Redemptive-Historical, Christocentric Approach," in *Five Views on Christ in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 188–89.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2008), 3.

⁹ Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 248.

uniting its diverse parts.”¹⁰ That message is centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ. As the one who fulfills God’s promises, Jesus is portrayed in Scripture not only as Lord of the church but also as the incarnate Messiah, King of the nations and Sovereign over history. According to the promise-fulfillment pattern, God always initiates relationships with humans through covenant promises, which He then accomplishes according to His Word. Promise-fulfillment is an important way of seeing Christ in the OT, but it is not the only way. Other ways of pointing to Christ from the OT include exploring types and analogies in the OT, drawing comparisons and contrasts, or showing how Jesus is similar to or different from an OT character. The goal of any of these approaches should always be to highlight Jesus’s unique role as Son and Savior.¹¹

Some OT texts are easier to handle than others. The OT contains several problematic passages that illustrate the depth of human depravity. When it comes to preaching from these texts, Greidanus suggests that the way of contrast helps the preacher demonstrate that “Christ is the answer to Old Testament problems.”¹² Ultimately, every sermon from the OT should help people see how God expects His people to live while highlighting human sinfulness and the weakness that makes it impossible to live up to God’s righteous standards. Once those two things are established, sermons can then point to God’s provision through the grace made available in Christ.¹³ This is not the only option. There are other ways to interpret the OT in light of Christ.

In a recent book titled *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament*, five scholars have presented different ways of finding Christ in the OT. Each of these views represents an honest

¹⁰ Trent Hunter and Stephen Wellum, *Christ from Beginning to End: How the Story of Scripture Reveals the Full Glory of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 39.

¹¹ Wright, *How to Preach & Teach the Old Testament*, 68–79.

¹² Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 272.

¹³ Wright, *How to Preach & Teach the Old Testament*, 82–83.

approach to the OT that seeks to understand how modern Christians can best read and interpret it. There is something of value in each of the methods presented here, but there is one that best suits the needs of believers who want to make sense of the OT from a Christ-centered perspective. Jason DeRouchie's Redemptive-Historical, Christocentric Approach is favored above all the other approaches. Before discussing his view and comparing it with what is known as the Christotelic Approach, it will be helpful to briefly survey the other three views of Christ in the OT.

The First Testament Approach

John Goldingay represents a position called the 'First Testament Approach'. He laments the name 'Old Testament' as a "rather sad title" because it suggests an outdated, seemingly irrelevant record of God's old ways of doing things.¹⁴ Goldingay observes that Jesus and the apostles referred to the first thirty-nine books of the Bible as 'The Scriptures'. By looking at the Hebrew Scriptures as the 'First Testament', Goldingay suggests that readers will be better able to discern God's pattern of graciously calling people to faithfulness.¹⁵ Goldingay states that neither Jesus's friends nor His enemies understood Him to be declaring anything new about God, but they were surprised and sometimes offended when He claimed divine status.¹⁶ Like other contributors to *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament*, Goldingay seems concerned that a premature focus on Christ will undermine the OT authors' original meaning. Still, he asserts that the Bible tells a unified story with Jesus as the climax of God's revelation.¹⁷ The First Testament

¹⁴ John Goldingay, "The First Testament Approach," in *Five Views on Christ in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 21.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 28–29.

Approach does a good job of preserving the Bible's unity. However, this view guards so carefully against the idea of reading Christ into the text that it imposes an artificial barrier that would have been foreign to the apostles.¹⁸

The Reception-Centered, Intertextual Approach

In another approach to understanding the OT from a Christian point of view, Dharamraj favors what he calls a 'Reception-Centered Intertextual Approach.' According to this way of reading the OT, the reader considers how the sixty-six books of the Bible interact with each other as literary and theological units.¹⁹ This method presupposes that the reader brings a host of personal and cultural experiences and understandings that shape how the text is read, whereas authorial intent plays a minor role in the interpretive process.²⁰ The Intertextual Approach will be particularly appealing to those with a postmodern mindset who are sympathetic to the literary philosophy that emphasizes a reader-centered approach to interpretation. This method may also be more frequently applied in multicultural settings as it seeks to incorporate a reader's experience as part of the interpretive process. While this approach is intended to help the reader avoid imposing a narrow Western cultural bias onto the text, it may unwittingly introduce other reader-centered interpretive cues that are equally unfavorable. Those who are committed to the primacy of authorial intent will find this method difficult to embrace.

¹⁸ Goldingay, "The First Testament Approach," 42–45.

¹⁹ Havilah Dharamraj, "Reception-Centered, Intertextual Approach," in *Five Views on Christ in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 130.

²⁰ Dharamraj, "Reception-Centered, Intertextual Approach," 130–31.

The Premodern Approach

Yet another approach to reading the OT in light of Christ is called the ‘Premodern Approach.’ Carter explains that this method calls for a renewed emphasis on the ancient fourfold sense of the OT.²¹ It is essentially a repackaged version of patristic hermeneutics. Carter contends that while the literal sense of the text is important, it should be accompanied by other senses that shape the christological or spiritual meaning of the text.²² On the positive side, Carter asserts that OT prophecy predicts Christ’s coming either directly or through types. He also has a strong view of Christ as the renewed Israel and therefore as central to God’s saving work.²³ However, his insistence that the reader impose the fourfold sense on every OT text runs the risk of finding things that simply are not there. Furthermore, his approach treats the text of Scripture as almost synonymous with Christ, rather than as God’s chosen means of revealing Christ.

The three views described above each contribute something to the discussion about how to interpret the OT from a Christ-centered perspective. However, none of them are adequate to accomplish the purposes of this thesis project. The two remaining approaches are much more viable options for modern Christians who desire to be faithful to the OT text. The Christotelic and Christocentric views are better alternatives for helping Christians understand how Jesus and the apostles read and proclaimed the gospel from the OT. In the following paragraphs, these two

²¹ The fourfold sense of biblical interpretation was popular during the patristic period but has largely fallen out of favor since the time of the Enlightenment. It involves looking at a text of Scripture to discern 1) the literal meaning, 2) the allegorical meaning, 3) the tropological meaning (moral/ethical implications), and 4) the anagogical meaning (future orientation/eschatological sense). For a more expansive definition and description, see Craig Carter’s chapter on the “Premodern Approach” in *Five Views on Christ in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022).

²² Craig A. Carter, “Premodern Approach,” in *Five Views on Christ in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 239–40.

²³ Jason DeRouchie, “Response to Craig A. Carter,” in *Five Views on Christ in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 285.

views will be examined in more detail. After comparing and contrasting them, the researcher will be in a position to argue in favor of the preferred approach for this project.

The Christotelic Approach

The term christotelic comes from the Greek word *telos*, which refers to the final goal of a process. Hence, the Christotelic Approach understands Scripture to be pointing toward the ultimate end or goal of redemptive history, which is fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ.²⁴ This view is represented by Tremper Longman III and Daniel I. Block. According to Longman, the fact that no one understood who Jesus was, and that it took so long for the apostles to appreciate what was happening in their day, indicates that they did not see the kind of pointers to Christ that many modern interpreters claim to see so clearly.²⁵ To arrive at this kind of understanding, Block asserts that the interpreter must make every text about Christ, while often ignoring what the author originally intended.²⁶ One way to remedy this rush to find Jesus in every OT text is to read every passage twice. This is Longman's suggestion for those who wish to grasp the text's complete meaning. Ideally, the first reading will pay close attention to the original context, and the second reading will look for clues that help the interpreter understand the passage in light of Christ's arrival.²⁷ Block argues that while the Christocentric Approach sees the OT as *being about* Christ, his Christotelic view understands the OT to be *pointing to* Christ. Another way to state Block's contrast is to say that the Christocentric Approach sees every passage, in one way

²⁴ Tremper Longman III, "Christotelic Approach," in *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament*, ed. Brian J. Tabb and Andrew M. King (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 74.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Daniel I. Block, "Christotelic Preaching: A Plea for Hermeneutical Integrity and Missional Passion," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 22/3 (Fall 2018): 13, accessed September 10, 2023, <https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/equip/uploads/2019/02/SBJT-22.3-Block-Christotelic-Preaching.pdf>.

²⁷ Ibid., 12.

or another, to be pointing to Christ, whereas the Christotelic Approach looks at how the entire OT points forward to Christ's coming. Block believes the Christocentric view imposes an interpretive grid on the OT that is foreign to it, requiring the reader to read the Bible from back to front rather than allowing the Scriptures to unfold in a manner that is more consistent with progressive revelation. The distinction may seem subtle, but it is significant.

Central to Block's argument is his interpretation of Luke 24:27 and Luke 24:44.²⁸ He contends that the Christocentric view reflects a poor understanding of the Greek in these verses. By taking the passage too literally, Block believes interpreters have often taken an unnecessarily broad view of Luke's statement that Jesus declared the things concerning Himself from "Moses and all the Prophets." He summarizes his argument by stating that Luke did not say that "all the Scriptures speak of Christ, but that he explained those texts that spoke of him from all the Scriptures."²⁹ Block appears to conceive of the Christocentric reading of the OT as forced, while the Christotelic reading is more organic and reflects the trajectory of salvation history.

Longman is willing to concede that the entire OT anticipates Christ's coming, though he notes that the disciples seemed quite surprised by how His coming unfolded.³⁰ Part of Longman's argument rests on an assertion that some in Jesus's day thought there could be two Messiah figures to emerge.³¹ Since many first-century Jews had difficulty imagining how one man could accomplish all that Scripture predicted, they entertained the idea that two individuals might come, one serving a kingly role and the other a priestly role.³² Though the point he makes here is

²⁸ Block, "Christotelic Preaching," 13.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Longman III, "Christotelic Approach," 83–84.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

interesting, it is not necessarily convincing. There is a common saying, “Hindsight is 20/20.” It is easy to see how the apostles could have seen things that the prophets did not since they had access to fuller revelation than previous generations. Though it may appear unlikely to Block and Longman that the prophets would have been able to understand what they pointed to completely, this does not negate the idea that new and fuller meanings could become clear when read through the interpretive lens of Jesus Christ. While the apostles may have seemed confused about certain details prior to Jesus’s death and resurrection, they demonstrated incredible confidence in the OT portrayal of the gospel story once they read it in light of Christ’s finished work.

The Christocentric Approach

Up to this point, the phrase “Christ-centered” has been used frequently to describe the general sense in which Christian interpreters understand how the OT speaks of Jesus Christ. The term christocentric refers to a particular way of understanding how to interpret the OT from a Christian perspective. The Christocentric Approach is represented by the work of scholars such as Sidney Greidanus, Graeme Goldsworthy, and Jason DeRouchie. DeRouchie calls his view the ‘Redemptive-Historical, Christocentric Approach.’ As its name suggests, adherents of this view understand that Jesus Christ is central to a proper understanding of salvation history, and therefore to all of Scripture. According to Goldsworthy, two fundamental presuppositions undergird this approach: first, that the Bible is inspired and authoritative, and second, that it is marked by “unity within the diversity of both the theology and the literature of the Bible.”³³

DeRouchie echoes Goldsworthy’s commitment to inspiration and authority with an emphasis on

³³ Graeme Goldsworthy, “How Do We Preach Christ from the Old Testament,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 22/3 (Fall 2018): 118, accessed September 10, 2023, <https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/equip/uploads/2019/02/SBJT-22.3-Goldsworthy-How-do-we-Preach-Christ-from-the-OT.pdf>.

the OT's unfolding of redemptive history through a series of covenants.³⁴ According to DeRouchie, "Jesus is ... the beginning and end of the Bible, holding it all together (Col 1:16–17)."³⁵ The Christocentric Approach emphasizes Jesus's role within God's redemptive purposes and perceives Him as key to interpreting the OT from beginning to end.³⁶

The Christocentric Approach applies a NT hermeneutic to OT texts by considering how problems find their solution in Christ and how shadowy images find their substance in Christ.³⁷ It is sometimes alleged that the Christocentric Approach requires one to read Christ back into the OT as if He was not there in the first place.³⁸ However, this assumes that looking for Christ-connections in the OT is unnatural, even foreign to the text. The prophets may not have fully grasped the things to which they pointed, but they did have some understanding of what they saw. It may be said that what the prophets saw through a glass dimly, the apostles saw face to face.

In his response to DeRouchie's case for the Redemptive-Historical, Christocentric Approach, Longman claims that DeRouchie overestimates just how much the OT writers knew about God's redemptive plan.³⁹ However, Jesus cited Abraham as an example of one who had divine foresight regarding the coming of the Messiah. He told the Jewish leaders, "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). Dempster observes that there is a growing body of evidence to support the idea that the biblical authors had

³⁴ DeRouchie, "Redemptive-Historical, Christocentric Approach," 182.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 183.

³⁷ Ibid., 182.

³⁸ Tremper Longman, "Response to Jason DeRouchie," in *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 217ff.

³⁹ Longman, "Response to Jason DeRouchie," 217.

a sense of what they were proclaiming.⁴⁰ Scholars like Dempster have argued that the OT writers, especially those of the exilic and post-exilic periods, understood that the OT possessed a unity that pointed forward to David's descendant who would reestablish God's reign over the nations.⁴¹

It is helpful to remember that the OT is God's promise and the NT depicts the fulfillment of God's promises. Once the fulfillment has come, the promises become clearer and even more meaningful to those who have received them. Poythress demonstrates how this view applies to an OT text like Gen 15:1–6. He argues that as the interpreter identifies key themes like promise/fulfillment, offspring, inheritance, fear/protection, he must also look forward to see how these themes are related to the finished work of Christ in the NT.⁴² This approach gives latitude to the preacher to explore the variety of themes presented in the OT, while guarding against the temptation to run too quickly to the cross in application. The original context of the OT is thereby safeguarded, while the ultimate purpose of Scripture, i.e., to point people to God's saving work in Christ, is faithfully and consistently proclaimed.

Both the Christotelic and Christocentric views understand the OT to be pointing to Christ in some sense. It may be said that the Christotelic view sees the OT as pointing to Christ more generally, while the Christocentric view understands these pointers to be far more specific and widespread. Both views are committed to helping believers, and especially preachers, see how the OT points to Christ. Yet it is the Christocentric Approach that most closely resembles the way Jesus and the apostles handled the Scriptures. Having examined these five views, it will now

⁴⁰ Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 30, 23–31.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Vern S. Poythress, "Christocentric Preaching," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 22.3 (2018): 47–66, <https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/equip/uploads/2019/02/SBJT-22.3-Poythress-Christocentric-Preaching.pdf>.

be important to consider how one may read and understand the OT from a Christ-centered perspective.

Reading the Old Testament in a Christ-Centered Way

Barrett observes that the OT is essentially a closed book for many modern Christians.⁴³ Goldsworthy identifies at least three reasons why people may be tempted to avoid the OT.⁴⁴ Some have been affected by Enlightenment thinking and have come to see the OT as a primitive, out-of-date source that has little to offer contemporary Christians. According to this view, the OT fails to live up to certain NT ideals and is therefore considered pre-Christian or even sub-Christian. Another group appears to have a higher view of the OT and may even laud it as inspired Scripture, yet functionally they treat it as more of a secondary source that is mainly useful as background for the NT. Goldsworthy's third group does not argue about the substance or validity of the OT as Scripture; they simply find it boring.⁴⁵

Garrett acknowledges that this last point is of particular concern for many pastors, who, "struggle to get their congregations to persevere in a habit of reading [the OT]."⁴⁶ Furthermore, he contends that many dark themes and ethical dilemmas are off-putting to the average reader.⁴⁷ Murray notes several negative influences that have shaped how modern Christians view the OT. These include theological liberalism, which casts doubt on the OT's reliability, and

⁴³ Michael P. V. Barrett, *Beginning at Moses: A Guide to Finding Christ in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018), 1–2.

⁴⁴ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2012), 11–12.

⁴⁵ Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, 11.

⁴⁶ Duane A. Garrett, *The Problem of the Old Testament: Hermeneutical, Schematic, & Theological Approaches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 15.

⁴⁷ Garrett, *The Problem of the Old Testament*, 16–17.

dispensationalism, which tends to emphasize the NT to the relative exclusion of the OT.⁴⁸ Add the problems of ignorance and laziness to these influences, and the reader has some idea why many believers may struggle to grasp the value of the OT for their lives.⁴⁹

Roberts argues that in many cases, Christians fail to grasp the scope of the OT almost as much as the general population.⁵⁰ This has been the researcher's experience over several years of pastoral ministry. People may be familiar with stories like Moses parting the Red Sea, David facing off against the giant Goliath, and Daniel in the lion's den, but they often fail to understand their significance for today. They also have little understanding of the role these passages play in the unfolding story of God's redeeming love. If more familiar narratives are misunderstood or misapplied by contemporary believers, then it seems likely that the portions of the OT that deal with things such as the tabernacle/temple, dietary laws, and animal sacrifices are truly a mystery to the average person in the pew.⁵¹ While it may be tempting to set certain harder-to-read portions of Scripture aside, to discard any portion of the OT would be to ignore the Bible as Jesus knew it. As Wright has stated, to ignore the OT Scriptures is "to lose most of the meaning of Jesus himself."⁵²

This meaning is expressed through a variety of literary genres over a long period of history. Though OT Scripture is diverse, it possesses a unity that makes it both accessible and applicable to today's Christians. Hunter and Wellum argue that the Bible's central theme is none

⁴⁸ David Murray, *Jesus on Every Page: 10 Simple Ways to Find Christ in the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 6–7.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Vaughn Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2002), 14.

⁵¹ Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*, 14.

⁵² Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: IVP Academic, 2014), 45.

other than Christ.⁵³ They assert that it is unsurprising for Scripture to have a single focal point given that it has a single divine author.⁵⁴ Reading the Bible, one gets the sense that there is an ultimate author/editor who guides the process so that, even though its contents were composed over many centuries by various individuals, its message is singular. Roberts agrees with this assessment, stating that the Bible “covers a great deal of ground,” but both the OT and NT are bound by “one supreme subject that binds it all together: Jesus Christ and the salvation God offers through Him.”⁵⁵ As Lethem has stated, “Christ is the key to the relationship between the Old Testament and the New.”⁵⁶ In the OT, Christ is foreshadowed, whereas, in the NT He is revealed.⁵⁷

The Unfolding Drama of Scripture

The story of Christ takes a long time to unfold in the Bible. While the NT covers a few decades, the OT spans several centuries. One may wonder why God took so long to unveil His plan of salvation. In His sovereignty, God chose to reveal Himself progressively through the ages. As Hunter and Wellum have noted, “The Bible is long and layered for a reason. It prepares us to see and receive Jesus as the only solution to our problem and the only Savior from our sin.”⁵⁸ It is this focus on God’s saving work in and through Jesus Christ that provides the proper framework for interpreting the Scriptures, including the Old Testament. Both the OT and the NT bear witness to God’s wrath against sin and His salvation by grace.

⁵³ Hunter and Wellum, *Christ from Beginning to End*, 39.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Roberts, *God’s Big Picture*, 17.

⁵⁶ Robert Lethem, *Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 243.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 244.

⁵⁸ Hunter and Wellum, *Christ from Beginning to End*, 100.

DeRouchie offers an important reminder that the same God is at work in Scripture from beginning to end.⁵⁹ As Clowney has stated, “Only God’s revelation could maintain a drama that stretches over thousands of years as though they were days or hours.”⁶⁰ This description of God’s ability to summarize such a grand story as human history in approximately 1,250 pages is striking. Goheen emphasizes the theme of God’s revelation as ‘drama’, asserting that while the Bible is full of many narratives, it is a united story with Jesus taking center stage.⁶¹ Motyer picks up on John Bright’s helpful illustration of a ‘two-act play’ to argue that the Bible is essentially a single story told in two parts.⁶² Though it is filled with all kinds of historical details and personal drama, “The Bible has a story line. It traces an unfolding drama,” that centers around Jesus Christ.⁶³

Many believers would heartily agree with such an assertion, yet they may not be able to explain how the grand narrative of Scripture unfolds. A lack of understanding of how the various parts of the Bible are related fosters a selective approach to Bible reading and preaching. Failure to grasp the beautiful storyline of Scripture as it unveils the glory of God in Christ may also mute the believer’s understanding of God’s incredible work by making it hard for a person see how all parts of the Bible apply to their lives. As Clowney has observed, it is possible to know the

⁵⁹ Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 7–8.

⁶⁰ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament*, 2nd Ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 13.

⁶¹ Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 20.

⁶² Alec Motyer, *Look to the Rock: An Old Testament Background to Our Understanding of Christ* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 20.

⁶³ Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 12.

contents of the Bible while missing its main point.⁶⁴ This is an unacceptable reality that church leaders must address through Christ-centered teaching and preaching.

Baker notes that while various NT authors may emphasize different interpretive themes, there are at least four common elements that unite how they understood the OT in light of Christ's life and ministry.⁶⁵ First, the NT authors recognized that the significance of Christ's work cannot be fully appreciated apart from the OT. Second, the NT authors saw themselves as bearing witness to a story that was a continuation of the OT. Third, the NT authors understood that the OT authors were speaking of theologically significant events that were future-oriented. Fourth, and finally, Baker concludes that NT authors interpreted the OT "as a witness to God's revelation and salvation in history."⁶⁶

The two Testaments may be distinct, but they are intricately connected.⁶⁷ From the opening chapter of Matthew's Gospel, it is clear that the NT authors understood their writings to be a continuation of a grand narrative God was writing on the pages of human history. This is precisely the point Jesus made to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. During this encounter, the Lord surveyed "Moses and all the Prophets," demonstrating that He is the focus of the OT (Luke 24:27, ESV). The NT bears explicit witness to Jesus Christ. The OT also bears witness to Christ by outlining in great detail the character and ministry of the Messiah.⁶⁸ As Barrett has observed, "Jesus is the key that unlocks all the mysteries of the Old Testament."⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: The Theological Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, 3rd Ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 33.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Garrett, *The Problem of the Old Testament*, 171.

⁶⁸ David M. King, *Your Old Testament Sermon Needs to Get Saved: A Handbook for Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2021), 22.

⁶⁹ Barrett, *Beginning at Moses*, 13.

Reading the OT Prophets in a Christ-Centered Way

The purpose of this project is to help God’s people understand and apply the Minor Prophets from a Christ-centered perspective. Though some of the prophets’ ideas and imagery may seem foreign to today’s readers, Lo contends that their writings remain incredibly relevant for the church.⁷⁰ However, believers may struggle to grasp the fullness of God’s revelation if they do not understand how the OT points to Christ. Part of the problem rests on the notion that God worked differently in the OT than He did in the NT. Some Bible readers have the idea that God saved according to the law in the OT, while He saves by grace in the NT era. However, Wright offers an important reminder that even in Exodus there are eighteen chapters devoted to God’s redeeming work before the law was given to Israel.⁷¹

Gentry notes that everything in the Prophets is related to the covenant God made with His people after the Exodus.⁷² God lovingly calls His people back to Himself, often in strong, emotional language, such as that found in Hosea. While some people may be tempted to avoid the writings of the prophets because they view them as overly negative, Sailhamer’s observation about the prophets’ tone suggests that this is a misconception. He states that, “While the substance of much of the prophets’ warnings is the Sinai covenant, the actual message of the prophetic books centers on the ‘new covenant.’”⁷³ In other words, the message of the OT is essentially the same as the message of the NT.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Alison Lo, “Preaching the Minor Prophets,” in *Reclaiming the Old Testament for Christian Preaching* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 197.

⁷¹ Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, 76.

⁷² Peter J. Gentry, *How to Read & Understand the Biblical Prophets* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 15.

⁷³ John Sailhamer, “Preaching from the Minor Prophets,” in *Preaching the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 120.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

That is not to say that the message the prophets declare is always pleasant or easy to hear. The prophets regularly issued calls to repentance and faith in anticipation of the Day of the Lord as a time of justice and judgment for the unrepentant. Even so, as Bartholomew and Goheen have shown, though the Lord's pronouncements were often severe, He was never quick to evict the people from their land, and He never forsook His covenant relationship with them.⁷⁵ Even as the prophets called out God's people for their unfaithfulness to the covenant, God demonstrated His grace in reminding them of their relationship to Him. He also reminded them of the consequences of disobedience, while pointing toward a future day when He would restore them through His redeeming work.⁷⁶

Some believers may possess negative attitudes toward the Minor Prophets because they see them as no longer relevant for Christians. If church members struggle to grasp the contents of the Minor Prophets, part of the problem could be the pulpit. Murray observes that there has been a lot of Christ-less preaching from the OT over the years that has often interpreted the OT through a moralistic lens.⁷⁷ This concern will be addressed in more detail in the next section. The goal here is to not only identify the problem but to propose solutions that will help the preacher faithfully proclaim the gospel from the Minor Prophets. Before addressing the specifics related to preaching Christ from the Minor Prophets, it will be helpful to consider preaching Christ from the OT in general.

⁷⁵ Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 111.

⁷⁶ Fuhr and Yates, *The Message of the Twelve*, 58.

⁷⁷ Murray, *Jesus on Every Page*, 7.

Preaching Christ from the Old Testament

Scripture testifies to the need for sound biblical interpretation. In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul urged Timothy to handle the Scriptures carefully by interpreting them accurately.⁷⁸ Sound interpretation is fundamental to sound biblical preaching. Meyer contends that preaching's ultimate goal is to help hearers encounter God.⁷⁹ This kind of encounter comes only after preachers have faithfully stewarded the Word of God (interpretation) and have faithfully heralded the Word of God (proclamation).⁸⁰ When preachers approach the OT, they must have a sense of what God was saying in the original context, and also how the text ultimately points to Christ.

Goldsworthy adamantly declares that the OT is "all about Christ." His goal is to help preachers proclaim the gospel from all of Scripture. Goldsworthy's understanding of why this is important may best be summarized in the following quote:

The prophetic word prepares the way for the incarnate Word of God. After his ascension, the ministry of preaching is the appointed means for the continuance of this saving principle. But since Christ is the creating word, proclamation that fulfills God's purpose is only ever the word about Christ.⁸¹

Goldsworthy argues that preaching should always focus on Christ because the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments does the same. Wright is careful to remind the preacher that context matters and that preaching requires diligent study and careful interpretation.

Goldsworthy agrees but argues for a more direct line of interpretation between Christ and the OT. Likewise, King has argued that no matter what part of the OT the preacher is preaching

⁷⁸ Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2010), 80.

⁷⁹ Jason C. Meyer, *Preaching: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 21.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸¹ Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 5.

from, his goal should ultimately be to point people to Christ.⁸² The connection between how God was at work in the OT and how He worked in the NT requires some familiarity with biblical theology.⁸³ More will be said about this discipline in a later section.

Faithful preaching treats the Bible as a stewardship, proclaiming God's good news in a way that leads to real and lasting change.⁸⁴ The preacher's objective is to change minds, but, even more importantly, to change hearts so that they are reoriented toward God.⁸⁵ Yet the preacher must always remember that he cannot accomplish this goal apart from the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:14). By God's grace, His Spirit attends to the ministry of the Word. When the preacher is faithful to exposit the Word of God, the Spirit has a greater opportunity to impact the hearts of the listeners.⁸⁶ Chapell offers an important reminder that it is, "the Word preached, rather than the *preaching* of the Word, [that] accomplishes heaven's purposes."⁸⁷ As Orrick, Payne, and Fullerton have observed, when the Bible is preached, God Himself is active.⁸⁸ God's creative activity in Scripture is always associated with the power of His Word. The preacher may approach his task with confidence, knowing that God's Word has the power "to bring spiritual life to His people."⁸⁹ This confidence is available whether the preacher is expositing more

⁸² King, *Your Old Testament Sermon Needs to Get Saved*, 43.

⁸³ Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 5–7.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸⁵ David R. Helm, *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 102.

⁸⁶ Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 33.

⁸⁷ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, Third Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 5.

⁸⁸ Jim Scott Orrick, Brian Payne, and Ryan Fullerton, *Encountering God Through Expository Preaching: Connecting God's People to God's Presence Through God's Word* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017), 21.

⁸⁹ Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert, *Preach: Theology Meets Practice* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2012), 30.

familiar texts, such as those found in the NT Gospels and Epistles, or more challenging texts, such as those found in the Minor Prophets.

Gilbert has rightly emphasized a commitment to gospel proclamation in every aspect of life in the local church.⁹⁰ When people discuss a preacher's sense of calling to the ministry, they often use phrases like 'called to preach the gospel.'⁹¹ However, when the preacher opens his Bible, he immediately finds that approximately three-fourths of the texts available to him are found in the Old Testament. How is the preacher supposed to proclaim the good news about Jesus Christ when He is not mentioned by name until page 975 in a book that has about 1,250 pages? It may seem strange to many modern Christians to think of the gospel being proclaimed from the pages of the OT. Yet, Paul demonstrated in Romans and elsewhere that the good news of God's grace had been revealed long before Jesus was born (Rom:1:1–2; 16:25–26; Gal 3:8). Lanier observes that Paul did not cite specific OT passages; rather, he "simply says the entire OT bears witness to the gospel."⁹² To be faithful to the task of preaching the gospel from the OT, the preacher must consider how God has revealed Himself progressively, and how each text in the Bible anticipates God's full revelation of Himself through Christ. This speaks to the goal of preaching.

⁹⁰ Gilbert states that believers should "work to make sure that this gospel is preached, sung, prayed, taught, proclaimed, and heard in every aspect of your church's life." See Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 21.

⁹¹ It has been the researcher's experience that licensing and ordination papers often refer to an individual being set apart for the 'gospel ministry'. This is traditionally how Southern Baptists have thought of the pastoral office, especially as it pertains to preaching.

⁹² Greg Lanier, *Old Made New: A Guide to the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 67–68.

The Goal of Preaching

Piper states that the goal of Christian preaching is, “the glory of God in Christ reflected in the glad submission of his creation.”⁹³ The cross of Christ is central to the preaching task. “[T]he preacher’s task is by the gospel and for the gospel.”⁹⁴ The cross provides a solid foundation on which one declares that God is righteous and that He calls sinners to fully submit to Him.⁹⁵ The question at hand is, how does the preacher declare these things from texts that predate Christ’s incarnation by several centuries? God was at work in the OT, creating, judging, and redeeming. The NT presents God working in new ways, yet He is the same God, and He works to accomplish all that was promised and predicted in the OT. Biblical preaching addresses the Bible’s central theme of redemption, restoration, and re-creation.⁹⁶ Although this theme climaxes in Jesus Christ, the message is communicated from the very beginning (Gen 3:15).

The Bible “unfolds *the story* of the kingdom, and God’s glory is *the reason* for the story” (emphasis original).⁹⁷ Jesus Christ is the King at the center of that unfolding story. Greidanus advises preachers to begin by recognizing the continuity that exists from the OT to the NT.⁹⁸ Even the names given to the two major parts of the Bible suggest a fundamental connection between what they declare and Who they come from. The Bible is divided into the ‘Old’ Testament and the ‘New’ Testament. In referring to the two halves in this manner, Christians

⁹³ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, Revised and Expanded (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), 333–4.

⁹⁴ Orrick, Payne, and Fullerton, *Encountering God Through Expository Preaching*, 158.

⁹⁵ Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 40.

⁹⁶ Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 238.

⁹⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), xiii.

⁹⁸ Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old*, 45.

have historically understood that God has progressively revealed His redemptive plan through a series of covenants. Broadly speaking, this discussion is centered on the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant ratified by Jesus Christ. The two Testaments, or covenants, are tightly connected and equally important. Johnson calls the OT “God’s partial and preparatory words of promise,” while the NT is “his final word spoken in Jesus, the Son who is the Word.”⁹⁹ Faithful Christian preaching proclaims the truth of God as revealed in the text of Scripture in a way that exalts the glory of God in Christ.

Bray observes that God’s Word may be discussed in two ways. His spoken and written Word are recorded in the Bible; His living Word exists in the person of Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁰ As Stott has stated, “[I]f we want to hear the Word which God himself has spoken, we must remember that he spoke it in Christ and in the biblical witness to Christ.”¹⁰¹ In some sense, everything written before Christ’s incarnation anticipates Him. Everything written after Christ’s ascension looks back to Him as the fulfillment of God’s eternal plan while looking forward to His imminent return. Preachers may approach the biblical text with confidence, knowing that God has spoken fully and finally through Christ and that He continues to speak through Scripture.

Hunter and Wellum argue that from the opening pages of Genesis, God is a God who speaks truthfully and who acts faithfully according to His Word.¹⁰² This Word has been “breathed out” by God with a purity and power that is consistent from beginning to end.¹⁰³ Barrett contends

⁹⁹ Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 4.

¹⁰⁰ Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, 15.

¹⁰¹ John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 98.

¹⁰² Hunter and Wellum, *Christ from Beginning to End*, 34–35.

¹⁰³ William R. Edwards, John C. A. Ferguson, and Chad Van Dixhoorn. *Theology for Ministry: How Doctrine Affects Pastoral Life and Practice* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2022), 2.

that both the Old and New Testaments declare God’s saving work in Jesus.¹⁰⁴ Preachers who seek to proclaim ‘the whole counsel of God’ must preach Christ from both Testaments. This assessment corresponds to the witness of Scripture. As the writer of Hebrews declared, God spoke clearly through prophets and apostles, and He has ultimately spoken through His Son, Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1–2).¹⁰⁵ If the goal of preaching is that God be glorified through the glad submission of repentant sinners to Christ’s kingly authority, then preachers must faithfully and consistently preach the gospel. This does not mean they will only play one note, but rather that they will work to show their people how all of Scripture is either preparation for Christ or celebration of Christ.

Bridging the Gap Between Human Sinfulness and God’s Holiness

Preaching Christ from the OT requires the preacher to consider how a passage speaks to the human condition while helping people see how God has provided redemption from their brokenness. Chapell calls this the ‘Fallen Condition Focus’ (FCF).¹⁰⁶ The FCF asks at least two questions of every text: First, what did the author intend to communicate? This speaks to the importance of understanding the historical and theological context into which the words were originally communicated. The second question to ask is, what is the Holy Spirit’s purpose for this passage in the lives of God’s people?¹⁰⁷ This question demonstrates a regard for the inspired

¹⁰⁴ Barrett, *Beginning at Moses*, 12–13. Barrett asserts that, “Special revelation... is God's gracious communication of the good news of salvation in and through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In one way or another, all of special revelation merges in that revelation of Christ.”

¹⁰⁵ Bray observes that any time you have two sources of revelation, there is the potential for conflict, or at least the appearance of conflict. In the case of Christ and Scripture, there is no conflict because the Bible bears witness to Christ and Christ upholds the authority of Scripture. See Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, 15–16.

¹⁰⁶ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, Third Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 30.

¹⁰⁷ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 48–52.

nature of Scripture, while focusing on the contemporary relevance of the text. Chapell's method equips the preacher to apply the OT in a Christ-centered way by connecting aspects of human fallenness to God's grace as it is revealed in the text of Scripture.¹⁰⁸ An important part of the preacher's job is to bridge the gap between the original context of the passage and that of the listener by showing how Christ is central to God's redeeming work.¹⁰⁹ By assessing the FCF of a prophetic text, the preacher can more effectively bridge this gap by showing how the Minor Prophets point toward Christ and how Christ fulfills all that the prophets anticipated.

Challenges to Preaching Christ from the OT

The apostles and the early church understood that Jesus was the Messiah who had “fulfilled the Old Testament promises of God to bring about this great redemption.”¹¹⁰ They recognized that He was the hermeneutical key that unlocked the interpretive riches of the Scriptures. Baker states that the NT writers leaned heavily on the OT because they believed that God had done “a new and unprecedented act . . . in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.”¹¹¹ The coming of Christ did not undermine their confidence in the OT Scriptures; but rather, gave them a profound reason to search the Scriptures with renewed focus. Baker asserts that the central feature of the Apostolic witness was that “Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes and expectations.”¹¹² However, by the time of the Church Fathers, the method of interpreting and preaching the OT had shifted.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 270.

¹⁰⁹ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 270–71.

¹¹⁰ Matthew Barrett, *God's Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 196.

¹¹¹ David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: The Theological Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, 3rd Ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 34.

¹¹² Ibid.

Kaiser has argued that Marcion's criticism of the OT caused many church leaders during this time to embrace an interpretive method that focused on analogy and typology.¹¹³ Those who followed this method were more likely to maneuver their way to creative Christ-centered interpretations than they were to declare important moral, ethical, and doctrinal issues as stated in the OT.¹¹⁴ To be clear, the apostles also used analogy and typology to discern what God had communicated through the OT. However, the methods employed by many of the Church Fathers tended toward allegorizing rather than careful exegesis. Greidanus distinguishes between typology as a reliable method of interpreting how certain OT images and individuals point forward to Christ, and what he calls "typologizing," which is the unfortunate tendency to see a type in every minute detail of the OT.¹¹⁵

Unfortunately, poor interpretive methods have not ceased to exist, which may partially explain why so many believers, including preachers, overlook large portions of Scripture, such as the Minor Prophets. Duncan laments the fact that it is even necessary to emphasize preaching Christ from the OT.¹¹⁶ The imbalance in preaching the OT relative to the New is a fairly new phenomenon. While some early Christian preachers chose to allegorize the OT, many modern preachers have too often neglected it altogether. There are a number of reasons why preachers may prefer preaching from the NT. From his interactions with numerous pastors, Gibson has observed that preachers simply find preaching from the NT easier.¹¹⁷ They find Hebrew to be

¹¹³ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 43.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 252–53.

¹¹⁶ Ligon Duncan III, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," in *Preaching the Cross* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 40–41.

¹¹⁷ Scott M. Gibson, "Challenges to Preaching the Old Testament," in *Preaching the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 21–26.

more challenging than Greek, they find the OT culture to be more foreign than that of the NT, and they tend to favor the NT because it is easier to understand and seemingly more relevant to the needs of today's church.¹¹⁸ Acknowledging these difficulties is important as church leaders seek to help their congregations delight in 'all' of God's revelation.

It must also be observed that the OT addresses many topics that are controversial in the modern world. However, the tendency to shy away from the OT says more about the culture and the state of the contemporary church than it does about the nature of God's Word. Kaiser contends that preaching from the OT is needed now as much as it has ever been needed. He identifies four areas where the OT speaks to the modern church: doctrine, ethics, practical living, and preaching.¹¹⁹ Two decades ago, Kaiser warned that churches that do not benefit from faithful OT preaching will become spiritually bankrupt.¹²⁰ One might argue that Kaiser's prescient statement is being fulfilled in the 21st century. A lack of OT proclamation in the local church creates an imbalanced understanding of God's glory and sovereignty, ignoring the exact Scriptures Jesus read and preached. An environment in which selective reading and preaching of the Bible is common practice can become the seedbed for future heresy, as Marcion's example has shown.¹²¹

Why Contemporary Believers Need OT Preaching

One may accept that both Testaments are God's Word and that the gospel is central to the church's ministry yet fail to grasp what it means to preach Christ from the OT. Preaching the

¹¹⁸ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament*, 43.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹²⁰ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament*, 40.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 39–40.

gospel is more than just talking about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, though these events are of ultimate importance. Since the good news about Jesus is central to knowing God in a saving way, the gospel should shape how the OT is read and interpreted.¹²² The gospel story began long before Calvary. It includes bad news that provides the context in which the good news becomes truly beautiful. Broadly speaking, the biblical narrative follows a pattern that moves from creation to fall, then from redemption to new creation. The creation narrative is one important example of how the OT impacts one's understanding of who God is and what He is doing in the world. Weeks contends that "Failure to understand what Scripture says about the relation of God to his creation will not only affect our understanding of general revelation. It will also distort our understanding of Scripture."¹²³ The OT is where the gospel story begins to unfold, demonstrating repeatedly that God is a God who saves by grace through faith, and who calls His people to live faithfully before Him.

The OT provides the preacher with a wealth of resources, including a variety of genres and topics that are important to God and God's people. As Kaiser has observed, there are many "modern issues, such as the sanctity of truth, marriage, property, the heart and its motives," that are best supported and taught by the OT.¹²⁴ Betts considers OT preaching to be vital for the NT church because the OT points to Christ, setting the stage for the NT.¹²⁵ Gospel proclamation that reflects a firm belief in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture will include a healthy balance of preaching from both the NT *and* the OT. God's Word in the OT is God's revelation of

¹²² Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 6.

¹²³ Noel Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture: Basic Issues and Points of Contention* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2023), 26.

¹²⁴ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament*, 44.

¹²⁵ T. J. Betts, "Reasons Why New Testament Believers Need to Study, Teach and Preach the Old Testament," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 26.3 (2022): 172–78.

Himself, providing the kind of wisdom and instruction believers need to hear and know.¹²⁶ It is at this point that attention turns to the Minor Prophets, which continue to be largely overlooked by modern Christians.

Preaching Christ from the Minor Prophets

Greidanus observes that the prophets not only declared the Word ‘from’ God but also proclaimed, “a message ‘about’ God, his covenant, his will, his judgment, his redemption, his coming kingdom.”¹²⁷ Preachers who call a congregation’s attention to the prophetic books will have ample opportunity to address these important themes while pointing to Christ as the One who fulfills each of them. As Fuhr and Yates observe, the prophets did not declare anything new; rather, they reinforced God’s call to covenant faithfulness while proclaiming judgment for those who remained unrepentant.¹²⁸ As heralds of the Mosaic Covenant, the prophets regularly called people to repentance, specifically calling Israel back into fellowship with Yahweh.¹²⁹

The subjects dealt with by the Minor Prophets are incredibly contemporary. Because of this, Goldsworthy warns the preacher not to jump too far ahead in making applications due to the risk of misapplying them to “modern social structures and injustices.”¹³⁰ The danger here is potentially allowing presuppositions to shape how a message is delivered from the Minor Prophets. Sermons that do not take the Minor Prophets’ history, culture, and theology into consideration may miss both the original context and the contemporary application. Preachers

¹²⁶ Ibid., 178–81.

¹²⁷ Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1988), 229.

¹²⁸ Fuhr and Yates, *The Message of the Twelve*, 20.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 20–21.

¹³⁰ Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 171.

must consider each prophet's unique context, while also seeking to understand how the twelve prophets relate to one another historically and theologically.¹³¹ The Minor Prophets are in many ways a microcosm of the Bible. The prophets call God's people to faith and repentance, to obedience and proper worship. As the people were reminded of God's faithfulness to their forefathers, they were called to trust that God would continue to fulfill His word to Israel.

Fuhr and Yates show how the prophets often expressed themselves in layers of fulfillment that may be near-term, middle-term, or long-term.¹³² While paying attention to each of these levels of fulfillment, the preacher must be careful to craft sermons with the flow of redemptive history in mind.¹³³ Sailhamer contends that the message God has for the current generation may not be precisely what the prophet declared to people in his day.¹³⁴ As Longman has observed, the Bible was written *for* us but it was not written *to* us.¹³⁵ Therefore, the preacher must take care to apply the Minor Prophets in light of historical-grammatical background, while connecting that background to redemptive history as it unfolds in the NT.¹³⁶ Making these kinds of connections will help people see how the Minor Prophets apply to believers today. Indeed, as Lo has stated, "It is not difficult to preach Christ from the Minor Prophets, because the covenant promises are seen as fulfilled in Jesus Christ."¹³⁷ Such a statement is loaded with theological convictions. Some of these convictions will be explored in greater detail in the next section.

¹³¹ Lo, "Preaching the Minor Prophets," 200–03.

¹³² Fuhr and Yates, *The Message of the Twelve*, 24.

¹³³ Lo, "Preaching the Minor Prophets," 204.

¹³⁴ Sailhamer, "Preaching from the Prophets," 126.

¹³⁵ Longman, "Christotelic Approach," 75.

¹³⁶ Sailhamer, "Preaching from the Prophets," 135.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

Theological Foundations

The goal of this section of the project is to establish a theological foundation for the research by examining key passages that demonstrate how the OT anticipates Christ. Numerous passages in the OT point forward to the coming of the Messiah. He performs many roles as God's anointed. As a prophet, He not only proclaims the Word of God, but He is also the Word of God incarnate (John 1:1). He is also the Great High Priest who lays down His life as the once and forever sacrifice so that His people may be set free from sin (Heb 9:11–14). In two other important portraits of His coming, He is depicted as a suffering servant (Is 52:13–53:12) and as an eternal king descended from David in fulfillment of God's promise (2 Sam 7:10–16; Is 9:6–7). Several more texts from both the OT and the NT will be addressed below in order to get a clearer picture of how Christ is the common focus of all Scripture. A particular focus will be on how Jesus and the apostles understood the OT in light of Christ's coming into the world.

What the Old Testament Says About Christ

As early as Genesis 3:15, there are intimations of Christ's ultimate victory over Satan and sin.¹³⁸ When Yahweh pronounced judgment after the fall in Eden, He spoke of the ongoing conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman that suggested that the human race would diverge into two streams: the righteous and the unrighteous.¹³⁹ In God's judgment against the serpent, He declared that although the serpent would cause Adam's progeny pain, the serpent would himself be mortally wounded with a head-crushing blow inflicted by the woman's

¹³⁸ Kenneth. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, vol. 1A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 247.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 245.

offspring.¹⁴⁰ The Greek root word for ‘offspring’ in the Septuagint suggests a reference to a singular individual who would triumph over evil.¹⁴¹ Longman notes that while those who first heard this prophecy would likely not have understood its full significance, the NT identifies Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection as the fulfillment of God’s promise in the garden of Eden.¹⁴²

Later, in 2 Samuel 7:12–16, Yahweh initiates a covenant with David, guaranteeing that David’s house will not cease to have a man on the throne. There are aspects of the covenant that apply to David’s immediate successor, his son Solomon. However, Solomon’s reign effectively ended when he died, with the kingdom degenerating significantly after his death. Other aspects of God’s promise point to a different person (Matt 1:1).¹⁴³ Bergen observes that the NT writers understood this part of the Davidic Covenant to refer to Jesus, an idea they got from the Lord himself.¹⁴⁴ There are at least three times in the NT when Jesus mentions building a temple (Matt 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19–22), sitting on a glorious eternal throne (Matt 19:28–29; Heb 1:8), and possessing an imperishable kingdom (Luke 22:29–30; John 18:36). Though by all appearances, David’s earthly dynasty seems to have ended, through Jesus Christ, His lineage would be established forever.

¹⁴⁰ Douglas Mangum, Miles Custis, and Wendy Widder, *Genesis 1–11*, Lexham Research Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), Gen 3:1–24.

¹⁴¹ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, vol. 1A, NAC, 247.

¹⁴² Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 113. See also Colossians 2:15.

¹⁴³ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 20. Morris comments on Matthew’s reference to Jesus as a descendant of David to say that, “[Matthew’s] book is to be about one who fulfilled all that is meant in being the descendant of Israel’s greatest king.”

¹⁴⁴ Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 340.

As the OT prophets called God’s people to covenant faithfulness, they continued to anticipate the one who would reverse Eden’s curse, ushering in God’s kingdom on earth. In Jeremiah 23:5–6, the prophet looks forward to a time when the LORD’s promise to David would be fulfilled and the one known as the “righteous Branch” would come forth to provide salvation and security. Daniel saw one coming who was described as a “Son of Man” and the “Ancient of Days” who would establish an eternal kingdom that cannot be destroyed (Dan 7:13–14). Both Jews and Christians have historically understood this to be a reference to David’s descendant; the long-expected king of Israel.¹⁴⁵ Later, Daniel prophesied that this anointed prince would make atonement for sins (Dan 9:24–27). Micah predicted that David’s heir would be born in Bethlehem and that His kingdom would extend worldwide (Mic 5:2).¹⁴⁶ Zechariah picked up on Jeremiah’s language of a Branch who will build a temple for the LORD (Zech 6:12). Zechariah also declared that the Messiah would fulfill God’s promises to David, that He would make a joy-inducing appearance in Jerusalem on the back of a donkey (Zech 9:9), and that He would ultimately be “pierced” while many looked on in immense sadness (Zech 12:10).¹⁴⁷

Central to God’s work of salvation through the Messiah was His death and burial (Is 53:8–9). It was this death that satisfied God’s wrath against sin and secured salvation for God’s people (Is 53:10–12). Christians have understood Isaiah 52:13–53:12 to be a description of Jesus’s experience of being mocked, beaten, killed, and buried in a borrowed tomb. Jesus identified with Isaiah’s Servant at the beginning of his earthly ministry when he read from Isaiah

¹⁴⁵ John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 30, ed. by David A. Hubbard, et al., (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 170.

¹⁴⁶ See Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, vol. 32, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 44.

¹⁴⁷ See also Zech 13:7, where the Lord’s shepherd is the object of wrath, both human and divine, and the sheep are scattered as a result.

61:1, announcing that He was the one on Whom the Spirit of the Lord rested, the one Who was anointed to preach the good news and set captives free. According to Luke’s gospel, Jesus made this bold declaration in His hometown of Nazareth, declaring that Isaiah’s word was fulfilled in His arrival (Luke 4:16–21). This is only one of many NT references that strongly suggest that Jesus was the one the OT looked forward to, going all the way back to the garden of Eden. It will now be helpful to consider how Jesus preached from the OT, specifically in the ‘Sermon on the Mount.’

Jesus’s Preaching from the OT

In His ‘Sermon on the Mount’, Jesus declared that His purpose in preaching a gospel of grace was not to abolish the Law and Prophets, but to fulfill them (Matt 5:17).¹⁴⁸ This audacious claim served at least two purposes. First, Jesus announced to His audience His commitment to the sufficiency and authority of the Scriptures of the OT. Secondly, He sought to publicly correct many of His opponents, who had falsely claimed that He was undermining the authority of God’s Word.¹⁴⁹ Contrary to His enemies’ assertions, Jesus was firmly committed to the proposition that all that God declares in Scripture will be accomplished (Matt 5:18).

Later in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made a series of pronouncements that reinterpreted elements of the Mosaic law to make them even more stringent (Matt 5:21–48). In this passage, He frequently uses the formula “You have heard it said ... but I say to you” Kaiser observes that Jesus has sometimes been accused of allegorizing the law in a fashion

¹⁴⁸ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992), 107.

¹⁴⁹ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 107.

similar to the method employed by the Qumran community.¹⁵⁰ However, in each case, it is clear that He is making direct analogies that expand upon the text rather than offering new and creative interpretations.¹⁵¹ His purpose was not to diminish the OT but to show that the law cannot be reduced to a list of dos and do nots.¹⁵² God desires sincere, heartfelt obedience, not mere rule-keeping. In this regard, Jesus functioned as a prophet, calling God's people to covenant faithfulness in response to God's mercy and grace while announcing the fulfillment of the New Covenant. It will be helpful now to consider other NT passages to understand better how the two Testaments are theologically and thematically connected.

Jesus's Use of Jonah to Illustrate His Own Ministry

Jesus referred to the Prophet Jonah in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. When the Pharisees asked Jesus for some sort of sign to prove His identity, He responded rather sternly, telling them the only sign they would get was His imitation of Jonah's three-day entrapment and subsequent deliverance (Matt 12:38–40). This obvious hint at Jesus's death and resurrection was lost on His audience. Most people remember the dramatic events surrounding Jonah's attempt to run from God, but it is important to note that Jonah also declared a message of repentance and salvation to pagan Nineveh. Like the prophet Jonah, Jesus proclaimed salvation to all nations, not just to Israel. However, Jonah was merely God's mouthpiece, declaring judgment and salvation. Jesus was both a messenger of God's grace *and* the One through Whom salvation had come.

¹⁵⁰ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, Revised and Expanded (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 262.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 106.

Green demonstrates that Matthew's argument for Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah builds across four declarations.¹⁵³ Jesus is presented as greater than David (Matt 13:4), as greater than the temple (Matt 13:6), as greater than Jonah (Matt 13:41), and as greater than Solomon (Matt 13:42). The reader is meant to see that there is "nothing in the spiritual history of the world than which [Jesus] is not greater!"¹⁵⁴ While Matthew used Jesus's reference to Jonah's three days in the belly of the great fish to highlight His resurrection, Luke's reference to the same episode emphasized Jesus's prophetic ministry in announcing impending judgment on Israel.¹⁵⁵

Both Matthew and Luke have Jesus citing Jonah's successful preaching ministry in Nineveh as an example of wayward sinners who repented when they heard the Word of the Lord (Matt 12:40; Luke 11:29–30). In Luke 11:30, Jesus spoke of a clear sign of God's activity that will be revealed in His generation. This future orientation anticipates Jesus's resurrection from the dead.¹⁵⁶ Although Jesus did not directly quote Jonah in either Matthew or Luke, His reference to the prophet in each case was intended to provide a rebuke to unrepentant sinners and a call to repentance, faith, and obedience. In both Gospels, Jesus declared that Jonah's ministry and example pointed to one who was far more important than the prophet. Jesus suggested that the primary reason for God's imminent judgment in his day was a general lack of belief in what God was doing through Him (Luke 11:32). Jonah pointed forward to Jesus through typology, but God also sent another prophet who proclaimed the coming of the Lord even as Jesus began His public ministry.

¹⁵³ Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 148.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Luke," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 324.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

Jesus Quotes the Prophet Malachi

When Jesus received a visit from two of John the Baptist's disciples early in His public ministry, He was asked, "Are you the one who is to come or shall we look for another?" (Luke 7:19–20, ESV). John's ministry was coming to an end, while Jesus's ministry was just getting started. John had strong suspicions that Jesus was the Messiah and he trusted Him enough to ask Him this straightforward question. Jesus responded by referring to important markers such as the supernatural events and authoritative biblical preaching that highlighted his ministry. As John's disciples walked away, Jesus turned to speak to the crowd gathered around Him, announcing that John was not only a latter-day prophet, but that he was the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy about a special messenger who would prepare the people for the Day of the Lord (Malachi 3:1).¹⁵⁷ Jesus's wording in Luke 7:27 indicates that He identified with Yahweh regarding Malachi's prophecy, and that John was intended to point beyond himself to Jesus.¹⁵⁸

Jesus went on to declare that "among those born of women none is greater than John" (Luke 7:28, ESV). What Jesus said about John was far more than a glowing review of his life and ministry. It was an affirmation of everything John taught. John had called people to prepare for the kingdom of God, whereas Jesus would call people to participate in it.¹⁵⁹ In an earlier exchange, John had stated some important things about Jesus. All four Gospel writers have John the Baptist declaring that the people should expect someone after him who would be far more important than he was (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; John 1:27). John's bold proclamation immediately preceded Jesus's baptism (John 1:29). It was on that occasion that Jesus received

¹⁵⁷ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 222.

¹⁵⁸ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 296.

¹⁵⁹ Trent C. Butler, *Luke*, vol. 3, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 108.

two important affirmations. The first, and most important, was the Father's affirmation of His identity and purpose as He was baptized (Mark 1:10–11). The second was John the Baptist's declaration that Jesus would baptize "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Luke 3:16, ESV). When Jesus announced that John was the one to whom Malachi had pointed, He was also saying that John was correct in declaring Him to be the One in whom all of God's promises to Israel and the nations would be fulfilled.

The Apostles' Preaching Ministry and the Minor Prophets

If it is important to consider how Jesus understood the OT, then it is also essential to examine how Jesus's closest followers interpreted the Scriptures. The Lord told the apostles that they would bear witness to all that He had said and done (John 15:27; Acts 1:8). In the days following His resurrection, Jesus's disciples proclaimed the simple, yet surprising news that He was alive. Later on, they began to read and understand how the Scriptures pointed to Christ. The apostolic preaching tradition is marked by a Christ-centered application of the OT. Some of the best examples of this preaching tradition are found in the book of Acts. Acts primarily focuses on the ministries of Peter and Paul, two apostles who played important roles in leading the early church. In the following paragraphs, samples of Peter's and Paul's preaching will be briefly described.

Peter's Preaching in Acts

When Peter stood up to defend the honor of the disciples who were accused of public drunkenness on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:12–13), he boldly declared the gospel from the book of Joel and the Psalms (Acts 2:14–41). In doing so, Peter "applies the [Joel] passage to Jesus, so that 'the Lord' who brings salvation is no longer Yahweh who shelters survivors on

Mount Zion, but Jesus who saves from sin and judgment everyone who calls on his name.”¹⁶⁰

Peter argued that God had done many signs and wonders through Jesus, but the greatest of all God’s works was raising Him from the dead (Acts 2:22–24). To put this in perspective, whereas Peter had violently sworn he did not even know Jesus shortly after His arrest, less than two months later, he was boldly proclaiming that prophets like Joel had predicted the very events witnessed in the life, death, and resurrection of his Lord and Master.

In another sermon, Peter called people to repentance and faith in Jesus, who, he said, was the one whom all the prophets foretold (Acts 3:17–26).¹⁶¹ Peter’s emphasis on the prophetic writings was a reminder that Israel had been repeatedly called to covenant faithfulness ever since God established a special relationship with Abraham.¹⁶² By dating the prophetic ministry back to Samuel, Peter also made a clear connection to God’s covenant with David; a covenant that was fulfilled by Jesus. Although Peter’s reference to Christ’s sufferings as being foretold by the mouth of all the prophets may have appealed particularly to Isaiah 52:13–53:12, his choice of words makes it clear that in some sense all of the prophets point to Jesus as the one in whom God’s covenant promises would be realized.¹⁶³

Paul Preaches the Gospel from Habakkuk

The apostle Paul also included references to the Minor Prophets in his preaching and writing. When Paul and Barnabas traveled to Pisidian Antioch, Paul made a passionate gospel appeal to the Jews in his audience. In Acts 13:41, Paul quoted Habakkuk 1:5. In doing so, he

¹⁶⁰ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 73.

¹⁶¹ I. Howard Marshall, “Acts,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 546.

¹⁶² John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 137.

¹⁶³ Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, NAC, 137.

declared that the prophet's words were representative of all the divine warnings issued to Israel throughout the OT.¹⁶⁴ Paul understood that God was doing a work in his day that people may have struggled to believe due to the amazing nature of God's redemptive activity. Having raised Jesus from the dead, God had done the unthinkable. Paul declared that Jesus was the Messiah the people had longed for, while warning them of God's judgment against those who scoff at the good news of the gospel.¹⁶⁵

Paul also included a quotation from Habakkuk in letters to the Romans and the Galatians (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:16–17; Gal 3:11). Picking up on the prophets' pronouncement that "the righteous shall live by faith," Paul applied the text to the good news of salvation that has come through Jesus Christ. Habakkuk declared that the way to God was by faith; Paul declared that Jesus was the object of the saving faith to which Habakkuk referred. Paul used the same text in his argument against the Judaizers in Galatians 3:11. The logic of Paul's argument in Galatians 3:10–14 is as follows:

1. The law was never intended to provide salvation, but rather, to point people to God.
2. God always saves by His grace.
3. The law must be kept at every point, with no exceptions.
4. Humans are under a curse because they disobey God's law.
5. Justification can, therefore, only be accomplished through faith.
6. Jesus, having kept the law, became accursed in the place of wicked sinners at His crucifixion.

¹⁶⁴ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 395.

¹⁶⁵ Marshall, "Acts," 587.

7. Jesus's death and resurrection provide salvation for Jews and gentiles alike, who look to Him by faith through the Spirit.¹⁶⁶

Though it may seem at first glance that this way of thinking is new, and therefore to be considered NT thinking, a closer look reveals that Paul is merely fleshing out the things he had previously learned and taught. What is different is that Jesus has come, fulfilling all that the OT promised. Paul did not declare something new; rather, he proclaimed that Jesus was the one to whom all the Law and the Prophets pointed. This is exactly what Jesus said to His friends at Emmaus in Luke 24. The message that Peter and Paul preached was the same message that Jesus preached, and all of them preached this gospel message from OT books, including the Minor Prophets.

Interpreting Zechariah 12:10–13:9 from a Christ-Centered Perspective

Having briefly surveyed a sampling of OT and NT texts that point to God's saving work through Jesus Christ as the theme of Scripture, this section will consider an example of how one might interpret the Minor Prophets christocentrically. The text selected for this purpose is Zechariah 12:10–13:9. Several of the terms and images used in this passage lead the Christian reader to conclude that the text is all about Jesus. While this assumption is correct, it is important to consider what the prophet was saying to his original audience and how his proclamation can help contemporary Christians as they consider Christ's work in their own lives. The text is a first-person pronouncement by Yahweh to the "house of David" and the "inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Zech 12:10). David's descendants are mournful over their sins in contrast to the

¹⁶⁶ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 234.

unfaithful shepherds mentioned in Zechariah 11. The people of Jerusalem are representative of all God's covenant people, from the poorest to the richest.¹⁶⁷

The expectation of a fountain that will provide cleansing from sin is similar to the events depicted in Zechariah 3, when an angel had the High Priest Joshua remove filthy garments and replace them with clean garments Yahweh had provided.¹⁶⁸ In both instances, sin is inherent in the person or people and purification is provided by God. A fountain that offers cleansing from all uncleanness evokes the image of Jesus healing the lame man near the pool of Bethesda in John 5. The word of the LORD through Zechariah was that God would deliver His people from all uncleanness (Zech 13:1). The cleansing in mind here is spiritual rather than physical.¹⁶⁹ When Jesus healed the lame man at Bethesda, He demonstrated the kind of healing Zechariah had predicted.

The prophet anticipated a time marked by a new covenant rooted in God's grace. When this time comes, idolatry and false prophecy will be put away (i.e., forgotten), and God's truth will win the day.¹⁷⁰ Until that time, Israel was called to pay close attention to all that God had spoken while ignoring other voices that contradicted His revelation.¹⁷¹ Some overlapping prophetic themes in Zechariah 13:7–9 point forward to a future moment.¹⁷² Yahweh will provide a shepherd, but this shepherd will be struck down (13:7). After the shepherd is struck down, the sheep will be scattered. Finally, there will be a time of redemption and restoration.

¹⁶⁷ George L. Klein, *Zechariah*, vol. 21B, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 363.

¹⁶⁸ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 28, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 210.

¹⁶⁹ Klein, *Zechariah*, 373.

¹⁷⁰ Klein, *Zechariah*, 378.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 384.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

In its original context, the identity of the shepherd is somewhat mysterious. It is unclear who he is, but it is clear that he plays an important role in Yahweh's work of cleansing and restoring His people. He is portrayed as standing next to Yahweh, suggesting that He possesses a level of intimacy with God that is unique. As such, He is unlike any other shepherd Israel has ever known.¹⁷³ The theological implications of the shepherd reference are hard to miss. Both Matthew and Mark have Jesus quoting this text when He predicts His impending arrest and Peter's denial (Matt 26:31; Mark 14:27). Morris notes that Jesus's wording in Matthew 26:31 is in the perfect tense, suggesting that although the prophecy was uttered a long time ago, it still carries the force of God's divine purpose.¹⁷⁴ Though the events are tragic, the fact that they fulfill ancient prophecies brings comfort to God's people, who can rest in knowing that His saving purposes will be accomplished.¹⁷⁵ The finished work of Christ is central to all of Christian theology. Along with important theological ideas, there are also certain theoretical concepts that are important for this project. In the next section, some key concepts will be defined and described.

Theoretical Foundations

A lot has been written on the subject of preaching Christ from the OT. There have also been several books published on a more popular level to help the average church member better understand how to read and apply the OT from a Christ-centered perspective. Sadly, many church members have not come to value the OT in a way that reflects its true worth. While pastors who spend significant time in Bible study may relish the opportunity to explore Christ-

¹⁷³ Klein, *Zechariah*, 386.

¹⁷⁴ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 664.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

centered applications of books like the Minor Prophets, they face an uphill battle with many parishioners who fail to see the intricate connections between the two Testaments.

This section will consider some examples of how other researchers and authors have worked toward a Christ-centered understanding of the OT. The ideas discussed here will help establish a theoretical foundation for this project. The action research presented in this thesis rests on a foundation laid by others who have sought to help believers in local churches understand how the OT points to Christ. The work of two pastor-scholars will be briefly discussed, along with other important ideas that have shaped this thesis project. A model for creating a gospel-driven culture that fosters the kind of spiritual growth this project seeks to create will also be considered. First, however, it will be important to show how Jesus and the apostles laid the groundwork for these ideas. All of the theories of interpretation and application examined in this paper are based a particular view of Scripture as God’s holy Word, and on the practices Jesus and His first followers modeled.

A New Testament Model for Biblical Interpretation

The day Jesus read from the scroll in Isaiah 61, He applied a specific prophecy to Himself. In doing so, He identified fully with the Servant as depicted throughout Isaiah’s writings. In Luke 24:27, Jesus went a step further by declaring that the entire OT was in some sense all about Him. It is important to observe that the resurrected Jesus did more than just quote from the Scriptures; He interpreted them.¹⁷⁶ Jesus had previously declared that the OT was God’s revealed truth (Luke 16:29–31). In His Emmaus Road conversation, Jesus announced that

¹⁷⁶ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 722.

Scriptural truth was centered in Him. Jesus is the ideal person to help His people make sense of the Scriptures because it is to Him that the Scripture points.¹⁷⁷

In Acts 8, Philip followed this same interpretive method when he helped the Ethiopian eunuch understand that Isaiah 53:7–8 ultimately spoke of Jesus’s sufferings. Luke later records Paul and Barnabas preaching the gospel from the OT to the people of Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16–52). Their message is essentially a summary of salvation history. According to Paul, Moses and the prophets taught that the Christ would suffer and die to redeem sinners, but the religious leaders did not recognize Jesus as the suffering servant (Acts 13:27). Central to Paul’s argument was his contention that Jesus was the one who came to fulfill God’s promises to David.¹⁷⁸ Paul’s entire interpretive framework and ministry were altered drastically when he came to understand who Jesus was and what He accomplished (Gal 1:23–24). This new, Christ-centered perspective did not diminish Paul’s view of the Scriptures; rather, it enhanced his confidence in their reliability (Rom 13:26–41). Near the end of his life, Paul urged Timothy to continue in the pattern of sound doctrine he had received since childhood by focusing on the “sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). Paul then declared that “all Scripture is profitable” for both personal edification and for public ministry (2 Tim 3:16–17, ESV).¹⁷⁹ This reference to the Scriptures is a clear allusion to the OT.

Paul was not the only apostle with a strong opinion of the value of the OT as a primary source of God’s revelation. Peter bore witness to the truthfulness of stories that were already

¹⁷⁷ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 722.

¹⁷⁸ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 385.

¹⁷⁹ See also, Rom 15:4 where Paul refers to the OT Scriptures as a source of hope.

circulating about Jesus. He also declared that his experience with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration corroborated the apostolic interpretation of OT Scriptures (2 Pet 1:16–18).¹⁸⁰ While Peter’s firsthand accounting of events is significant, it is striking that he seems to put a greater emphasis on the written record of God’s redeeming activity (2 Pet 1:19). Schreiner observes that Peter couples his confidence in Christ’s first appearance with his forward-looking confidence in Christ’s second coming.¹⁸¹ What is of incredible comfort to Christ’s followers is that they can trust the Scriptures because God has given both the text and the interpretation by His Spirit (2 Pet 1:20–21).¹⁸² Peter’s reference to the text of Scripture refers primarily to the OT, while his reference to the Spirit’s gift of sound interpretation speaks to a Christ-centered hermeneutic.

The witness of the NT is a confirmation of the fulfillment of all God’s promises in Jesus Christ. As the writer of Hebrews declared, God spoke in times past by the prophets, but in these last days, He has spoken through His Son, who is both maker and heir of all things (Heb 1:1–2.). The salvation that comes through Jesus Christ is both personal (Eph 1:1–8) and cosmic (Eph 1:8–9) in its impact. In the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus, God has affirmed His commitment to redeem all of creation.¹⁸³ As Revelation 22:13 (ESV) states, Jesus is “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Christ is the most glorious of all treasures; the one Who will be front and center throughout all eternity, in heaven and on

¹⁸⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 323.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 131.

earth. He is also the center of the biblical metanarrative and the one who, by His Spirit, helps God's people fully grasp the scope of His saving work.

Jesus and the Minor Prophets

The best way to establish a Christ-centered understanding of the Minor Prophets is to see how Jesus and the apostles understood and applied these books. Jesus affirmed that the prophets spoke of Him. He made some broad statements, suggesting that the prophets predicted his arrival. He also quoted from the prophets, indicating their authority as sacred Scripture. Like the Lord, the apostles also declared the good news about Jesus from the OT, including the Minor Prophets. In this section, Jesus's views on the prophetic writings will be briefly discussed. A later section will look at the Apostolic preaching tradition.

Jesus Declared that the Prophets are About Him

Luke's account of the Walk to Emmaus and the subsequent conversation between Jesus and His two companions is a striking example of how the NT is a continuation of the OT. In many ways, this passage is a natural starting point for discussing how the OT in general, and the Minor Prophets in particular, point to Jesus as God's anointed. Edwards summarizes Jesus's teachings in Luke 24:25–27 by stating that, "The plenary witness of Scripture ... is a metanarrative of the Christ-event."¹⁸⁴ From the announcement of Christ's birth to the moment Jesus revealed Himself to His friends at Emmaus, Luke portrays the OT as a book full of promises that point to and are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 722–23.

¹⁸⁵ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 722–23.

Though questions abound regarding why Cleopas and his friend did not immediately recognize Jesus, they soon came to learn His true identity once He broke the bread in their presence. Jesus then proceeded to explain how He fulfilled the Scriptures. Marshall contends that the disciples' ignorance of Jesus's identity was due to their spiritual blindness and should be considered an act of God, rather than an act of Satan.¹⁸⁶ After their eyes were opened to the truth, Jesus addressed the two men, declaring that all the Law and Prophets in some way refer to Him (Luke 24:25–27). The Lord's purpose that day was not only to prove His resurrection to crestfallen disciples but also to provide those disciples with an interpretive framework by which they could read OT for themselves.

The Greek word *diermēneuein*, usually translated in Luke 24:27 as 'interpreted' or 'explained' is the root word from which the term 'hermeneutics' is derived.¹⁸⁷ Time would not have permitted Jesus to explicate the entire text of the OT. Jesus therefore provided a hermeneutical method of reading and understanding the OT Scriptures so that the disciples could grasp the full intent of God's revelation. As Nolland observes, Jesus informed their minds, but He also touched their hearts.¹⁸⁸ That day, the disciples learned to read the Scriptures from a new perspective, one that was Christ-centered.

When Jesus interpreted the Scriptures for his companions at Emmaus, He demonstrated that a complete understanding of the OT requires a perspective that was not fully available before He came into the world. Edwards asserts that "The resurrected Jesus presents himself as the fulfillment of Scripture, and his life as both the interpretation and actualization of

¹⁸⁶ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 893.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 721.

¹⁸⁸ John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, vol. 35c, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), 1207.

Scripture.”¹⁸⁹ If the OT is ultimately about God’s saving work through Jesus, then only a Christ-centered hermeneutic will suffice for proper interpretation and application of the text.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, Jesus is the key by which both Testaments are to be properly read.¹⁹¹ Goldsworthy contends that Jesus’s role as mediator has “enormous hermeneutical implications” because He is the one through whom God’s message is communicated on both divine and human levels.¹⁹² Having considered how Jesus and some of the apostles interpreted the OT, it will now be helpful to see how recent researchers have built on this foundation.

Previous Research on Christ-Centered Application of the OT

When it comes to ministry research, there is no better laboratory than the local church. Though this project is unique, it is not without precedent. In 2017, Caswell presented a thesis that looked at the impact of training church leaders to interpret the Minor Prophets Christocentrically.¹⁹³ His project design was similar to the present project, but his focus was much more specific. He concentrated his efforts on a group of five church leaders at a one-year-old church plant in Texas. His stated goals were 1) to help these leaders better understand the Minor Prophets, 2) to change their affections for Christ through a study of the Minor Prophets, and 3) to help them interpret Christ from the Minor Prophets.¹⁹⁴ He also wanted to help these

¹⁸⁹ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 714.

¹⁹⁰ King, *Your Old Testament Sermon Needs to Get Saved*, 60.

¹⁹¹ Barrett, *Beginning at Moses*, 13.

¹⁹² Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 62.

¹⁹³ Micah Lawrence Caswell, “Teaching Leaders of Redeemer Church, Denton, Texas, How to Apply Old Testament Minor Prophets,” (DMin thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), https://repository.sbts.edu/bitstream/handle/10392/5366/Caswell_sbts.pdp_0207A_10307.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹⁹⁴ Caswell, “Teaching Leaders of Redeemer Church, Denton,” 86–88.

leaders understand why expository preaching is important in the life of the church, especially as postmodern interpretive practices have filtered into biblical studies.¹⁹⁵

Caswell utilized a pre- and post-intervention survey instrument he devised to assess the three areas listed above. He presented a series of seminars on a Sunday afternoon following the morning worship service, covering a wide range of topics pertinent to his task. Caswell's seminar contents were more expansive than the information presented in the workshops for this project. Given that he was working with experienced church leaders, some of whom had been lead pastors, he was able to discuss a broader range of topics with which they were already somewhat familiar. The central feature of his seminars was the use of Greidanus's "7 Ways to Christ" as an interpretive framework. He then preached a series of eleven sermons through the book of Micah. Caswell felt that it would be best to demonstrate Christocentric interpretation by working through a single book of the Minor Prophets.

Caswell was able to show that seminars and sermons helped change leaders' views on the Minor Prophets. This supported the idea that a similar approach could impact the broader church population. This is exactly what was observed as the present intervention unfolded. At the end of his research, Caswell observed a measurable increase in participants' understanding of the Minor Prophets as a literary unit, and of how the prophets point to Christ. Each of the five individuals in his study also grew in their love for the Minor Prophets as they developed a greater appreciation for how these books relate to God's historical-redemptive purposes. Similarly, this project has sought to engage participants' affections by helping them see how all of God's Word applies to all of God's people by pointing to Christ. Caswell's project was important because it helped the

¹⁹⁵ Caswell, "Teaching Leaders of Redeemer Church, Denton," 86–88.

researcher see how he could address the problem at FBC Greenville through targeted training and expository preaching.

Another project that provided support for this action research was completed by Bryan Kurt Nystrom in 2016. In his research, Nystrom sought to address the importance of interpreting OT narrative at his church in New Mexico. While the type of literature he focused on in his project is different from this one, what was important about Nystrom's work was his emphasis on application. The goal of the present project is not to merely communicate information, but to help believers understand how the Minor Prophets still apply to their lives today. Nystrom had three goals for his project. First, he sought to raise awareness among church members of how they currently apply OT narrative. Second, he instructed them on how to properly interpret these kinds of texts using a method he taught in a one-day seminar. Third, and finally, Nystrom presented a series of sermons from Genesis 37–50 to model the kind of interpretive method he had proposed in the seminars.

If Caswell helped lay the foundation for this project, then Nystrom added framing that helped shape how it was built. One of the goals of this project was to help believers understand how to apply the Minor Prophets Christocentrically.¹⁹⁶ Nystrom's emphasis on application modeled how biblical studies and hermeneutics may be presented in such a way that the average church member can learn to use these methods. As much as expository preaching is about effectively communicating God's truth as revealed in Scripture, it is also about modeling how the Bible may be understood and applied in a modern context.

¹⁹⁶ Bryan Kurt Nystrom, "Applying Old Testament Narrative at Angel Fire Baptist Church," https://repository.sbts.edu/bitstream/handle/10392/5202/Nystrom_sbts.pdp_0207A_10255.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Gospel-Focused Expository Preaching in the Life of the Church

The best kind of preaching is that which points hearers to the words of God in Scripture.¹⁹⁷ Preaching that is expositional ‘and’ Christ-centered will not only help people come to faith in Christ but will also help them understand the importance of the gospel for daily living.¹⁹⁸ As Leeman observes, preachers can be confident in such an [expository] approach to preaching because the Word of God is “backed up by the power of the Holy Spirit to produce conviction, joy, and obedience.”¹⁹⁹ The Spirit’s power is made available by diligent preparation and faithful proclamation of the grand story of Scripture.²⁰⁰ It is important to note that when it comes to heralding God’s truth, God cares about both the message and the method used to communicate it.²⁰¹ Expository preaching is preferred because of its exalted view of Scripture. A high view of Scripture tends toward a high view of God, and vice versa.²⁰² The goal of expository preaching is not only to explain what God ‘did’ but to declare what He is ‘doing’. As York and Decker assert, preachers who communicate God’s truth in an engaging manner are those who let the biblical authors speak for themselves while helping hearers apply God’s Word to their daily lives.²⁰³ This is an important part of the preacher’s task: to faithfully interpret and apply the Scriptures in a way that models for a congregation how to read and understand the OT from a Christ-centered perspective.

¹⁹⁷ John Piper, *Expository Exultation: Christian Preaching as Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 164.

¹⁹⁸ Leeman, *Word-Centered Church*, 119.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Hershael W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2003), 8–9.

²⁰¹ Orrick, Payne, and Fullerton, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching*, 30.

²⁰² Tony Merida, *The Christ-Centered Expositor: A Field Guide for Word-Driven Disciples Makers* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 41–42.

²⁰³ York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 4–7.

The recent emphasis on expository preaching is both appropriate and welcome. As Scripture takes center stage in weekly worship, God's people will come to see its relevance for their lives. It is important for the people in the pews to see a model of how to interpret and apply the Scriptures from a Christ-centered perspective. Expository preaching is best suited to provide this kind of example. In addition, ongoing training that promotes Christ-centered biblical interpretation and application in the local church will provide the kinds of tools necessary for this task. A church's weekly gatherings are an important time for God's people to be formed by the Word. Both preaching *and* teaching are necessary if the members of a local church are to become salt and light in their community.²⁰⁴

It is common for church members to report a lack of understanding of how the OT and the NT are connected, and how they both point to Christ.²⁰⁵ A project like this one can help people engage meaningfully with the Minor Prophets on at least two levels. First, focused instruction equips believers develop essential hermeneutical skills. Secondly, expository preaching models sound interpretive and application strategies. This kind of teaching and preaching promotes a view of Scripture that values every book's contribution to the canon. It helps remove the cloud of confusion and empowers God's people to read and obey the Scriptures as God intended.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented some of the most pertinent findings related to a Christ-centered understanding of the Minor Prophets. The current project seeks to build on these findings by exploring new ways of helping local church members understand how the Minor

²⁰⁴ Hansen and Leeman, *Rediscover Church*, 59.

²⁰⁵ Nystrom, "Applying Old Testament Narrative at Angel Fire Baptist Church," 77.

Prophets point to Christ. The purpose of this thesis project is to establish a Christ-centered understanding of the Minor Prophets at FBC Greenville, KY, by training members with the skills needed to interpret and apply these books from a distinctly Christian point of view. This is necessary to address the problem of a lack of understanding of how the Minor Prophets apply to Christians today. This project bridges the gap in the literature regarding how to help the average church member understand and apply the OT, especially the Minor Prophets, to their lives.

If a Christ-centered, expositional training program is established and modeled at FBC Greenville, KY, then members will better understand how the Minor Prophets point to Christ. This not only has the potential to be personally edifying to those engaged in the reading and teaching of God's Word but should also encourage the body by focusing greater attention on how Christ's redemptive work applies to them. Since this project focuses on implementing an intervention in a local church context, it will be important to show what that looks like. In the following chapter, the thesis project methodology will be described in detail, while also exploring whether or not the intervention has been successful.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to evaluate the impact of expository preaching on an individual's ability to understand and interpret the Old Testament Minor Prophets from a Christ-centered perspective. As action research, the purpose of this project is bigger than simply communicating information about the Bible. The goal here is to engage participants in a way that equips them to correct a problem. As observed in chapter one, the problem that exists at FBC Greenville is that people do not have a clear understanding of how the Minor Prophets apply to Christians today. This intervention sought to address the problem by helping participants understand how the Minor Prophets ultimately point to Christ and how New Covenant believers can apply the Minor Prophets to their lives. The approach adopted here follows the theological and theoretical framework described in chapter two. It includes a christocentric interpretive method that leans heavily on the work of Jason DeRouchie. The following pages will explain the research methodology and how each part of the intervention addressed the problem and purpose statements as summarized above.

Intervention Design

While this project was designed to collect data about an important aspect of local church ministry, it had far bigger aims. The design of this action research project was intended to collect information that leads to transformation. As Sensing observes, projects like this “are not designed just to understand phenomena but to provide the minister an opportunity to impart

pastoral leadership that implements change.”¹ The change sought here is an improved ability to interpret and apply the Minor Prophets from a christocentric perspective. There are several important elements that provide the scaffolding on which this research stands.

The intervention design began with a series of three workshops intended to enhance understanding of how the Minor Prophets apply to modern Christians. The design also included a pre-intervention survey and a final survey that were then compared and analyzed. The survey was taken before the workshops began in order to gauge levels of understanding and interest in the Minor Prophets. The final survey made it possible to measure any significant shifts in attitudes after the intervention had been implemented. There were also three sermon evaluations and a focus group discussion that provided additional findings. Together, these elements made it possible for the researcher to assess for any significant changes from before and after the intervention was implemented.

As action research, this project involved a leader; in this case, the lead pastor of FBC Greenville engaged people who are actively involved in the life of the church with the goal of helping them read, interpret, and apply the Minor Prophets in new ways. While the project was implemented by a lead researcher, it involved a community of people who care deeply about the life and health of FBC Greenville. As Stringer has observed, “A fundamental premise of participatory action research is that it commences with an interest in the problems of a group, a community, or an organization.”² The problem as stated in this project is that members of FBC Greenville do not fully understand how the OT Minor Prophets apply to modern Christians. Each of the participants agreed with the rationale of the project and acknowledged that it addressed a

¹ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 63.

² Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 14.

gap in their own biblical knowledge. This project was designed to help them grow in their understanding of and love for God's Word, and of the Christ who is central to a proper understanding of the whole Bible. From the beginning of the recruiting phase to the end of the research phase, this action research process took eleven weeks to complete. A summary of the intervention process may be found in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. The intervention process

Description of Procedure	Duration of Procedure	Level of Engagement
Recruitment	3 consecutive weeks	Verbal/visual announcement; opportunity for discussion w/researcher after each service or via phone/email
Initial Survey of Attitudes Toward OT	15–30 minutes	In-person prior to beginning of first workshop session
Seminar/Workshops	4 hours + lunch	Face-to-face in a group session
Sermon Series	8 weeks	In-person (or Facebook for those who are unable to attend due to travel, sickness, etc.)
Sermon Evaluations (after sermons 3, 5, and 7)	3 hours	Completely and returned in either hard copy or electronically
Focus Group	1.5–2 hours	In-person, group session after final sermon

The primary goal of this mixed-methods research project was to assess whether or not Christ-centered expositional preaching paired with instructional workshops has the potential to help members of FBC Greenville, KY, better understand and apply the Minor Prophets. The

survey instruments provided important data to assess the potential impact of Christ-centered expositional preaching on participants' views on the Minor Prophets. The sermon series was a vital part of the project because it sought to model the methods taught during the workshops. It also provided an additional way to solicit feedback in the form of sermon evaluations. At the end of the research phase, the focus group provided an opportunity for participants to provide further feedback on their experience. In the following paragraphs, the intervention design will be described in greater detail.

The Original Intervention Plan

There were a few changes to the original intervention plan between the time it was originally proposed and when it was implemented. The original project design called for a pre-intervention survey instrument to be implemented electronically. While the option of paper surveys was part an option, the goal was to have each volunteer complete the survey online. Completing the survey online was also deemed to be a valid way of recording each participant's consent to be part of the research project. Simply submitting the survey would be an acknowledgment of consent.

After the initial survey, the next phase of the project was the series of workshops. These sessions were intended to cover a range of important topics pertinent to this action research. They were designed to provide participants with a framework for understanding how to interpret and apply the Minor Prophets. This training also equipped them to evaluate the sermons they would hear more accurately. The sermon evaluations were intended not only to help the researcher glean information about the potential effectiveness of expository preaching, but also to help the participants think more deeply about the texts and topics covered in each sermon. More will be said about the workshops later in this project.

Challenges Encountered

In any research project, there are unexpected surprises that can interrupt the flow of the project design implementation. Such challenges may be serious, but they are often merely minor inconveniences. Even the most well-designed projects will need to be adapted as circumstances change. This was certainly the case for this action research project. The researcher experienced a few minor challenges between the time the project was conceptualized and when it was implemented. The following paragraphs describe those challenges and how they were met.

One of the challenges in creating the workshop schedule was fitting in all the necessary information in a timeframe conducive for maximum participation. Some thought was given to scheduling the teaching sessions during the Sunday morning Bible study hour. However, as several of the participants were actively engaged in teaching classes, this was deemed to be too disruptive. Another idea was to spread the sessions out over two or three days, either consecutively or on weekends. Again, this arrangement was discounted due to concern that it would alienate potential subjects who simply were unable to sacrifice their time on different days or over multiple weeks.

In the end, it was decided that a one-day schedule would work best for both the researcher and those who chose to participate in the project. Once the schedule was decided, the researcher began to consider how to arrange the material that was to be presented during the course of the three sessions. It became clear early on that too much material was included and the contents needed to be edited down to a more manageable volume. The goal of this project was to address a real problem in the context of a local church. As Sensing has stated, a good DMIN thesis project “will effectively engender transformation in the lives of congregants when they

engage them in particular and concrete ways rather than abstract and generalized approaches.”³ The initial workshop curriculum for this project was too dense and abstract to be helpful to the participants. Therefore, it was revised multiple times in order create a curriculum that was more concise and practical.

The researcher also encountered some challenges during the sermon series. Given the fact that there are twelve Minor Prophets, it was somewhat challenging to design a sermon series that would accomplish the purpose of the project within a reasonable time frame. The original idea was to preach one sermon from each of the twelve books. However, on second thought, it was believed that this would spread the series out too long. A longer implementation plan could have been discouraging to those participating. It also would have made it difficult for the researcher to complete all the necessary steps for the project by the established deadline. The final decision was to preach an eight-part sermon series covering selected texts from seven of the Minor Prophets. The other sermon, from the book of Luke, was crafted to present a NT perspective on the OT prophets and served as an introduction to the series.

Some thought was given to preaching a series of sermons through a single book from the Minor Prophets. However, given the nature of the Twelve as a singular literary unit, it was decided that a sampling of texts from different books would be best. In the end, seven books were chosen for the sermon series. The researcher made the determination to preach from seven of the Minor Prophets for a variety of reasons. As noted in chapter one, the church had already heard a sermon series from the book of Habakkuk, so a sermon from this book would have been a bit repetitive. The book of Hosea is a beautiful story of God’s redemptive love, mercy, and grace. However, it deals with some mature themes that could have provided unwanted

³ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 13.

distractions.⁴ Other prophetic books, such as Amos and Jonah have generally received more attention in the past. Since one of the goals of this project was to help people understand and apply some of the more neglected portions of Scripture, the books chosen for the sermon series were among those most often overlooked, such as Nahum and Obadiah.

Recruitment and Enrollment

Action research projects like this require the participation of willing individuals who agree to become invested in seeking answers to important questions. Volunteers for the present study agreed to participate in a brief series of one-day educational seminars focused on interpreting and applying the OT Minor Prophets from a Christ-centered perspective. The three-week recruitment phase was implemented in several different ways. The first week, an announcement appeared in the church bulletin describing the project with only basic details. This printed announcement was accompanied by a verbal announcement at the end of the church service explaining more about the project. Examples of the recruiting announcements are available in Appendix B.

The researcher made himself available immediately following the service for those who wished to ask questions or volunteer for the project. The pattern of publishing an announcement and explaining the need for volunteers was repeated for three consecutive Sundays. The church email system was utilized each week in an effort to reach out to FBC members who may not have been in attendance during the morning service. The original recruiting plan also called for use of overhead screens to add another layer of communication. However, the church began a

⁴ This is not to suggest that one should never preach from Hosea; rather, it is to say that the researcher chose to avoid including Hosea so as to avoid any problems that could detract from the study's purposes and goals. It is expected that the researcher will preach a series from Hosea at a future time.

large-scale HVAC renovation in the primary worship space that made it necessary to gather in the Christian Life Center during this time. Since the screens were not available, it was not possible to post the announcements in this manner.

Five people expressed their interest in participating on the first day the project was announced. An additional two people communicated their interest via text message that afternoon. Each person who inquired about the project was provided with further information in an email that explained the basic design and process of the research project. At least two of the individuals who volunteered in that first wave encouraged friends to consider joining the group. This was completely their idea and not something they were asked to do. Their efforts did not go unrewarded as two additional participants volunteered for the project after being encouraged by friends to do so.

Since one of the goals of this project was to equip leaders and teachers for more effective ministry, all current Sunday school teachers and teaching assistants were invited to participate. The researcher communicated directly with each Bible study teacher via text or email. This initial form of communication was followed up with personal conversations by phone or in person. In-person communication was the preferred method for follow-up. These conversations helped the researcher gauge the seriousness of each potential subject's interest in the project, making it more likely that those who began the training would continue it through to completion of the research. In addition to teachers, anyone who served in the area of children's ministry or youth ministry was invited to join this study. Staff members and deacons who showed interest in the project were also encouraged to participate.

Ideal Candidates for the Project

Candidates for this project were, first and foremost, required to demonstrate a growing personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They were also expected to be fully engaged in the life and ministries of FBC. The initial goal for this project was to enroll a minimum of twelve participants, with a maximum of twenty people. The original project design called for a screening process that would identify the strongest candidates if more than twenty people volunteered. Some of the criteria outlined included screening for age and gender. The researcher operated under the assumption that older, more mature candidates would be most desirable. It was also believed that a balance of men and women would best represent the total church population.

While thirteen individuals signed up to participate, only eleven people completed the entire research process. Recruiting did not show preference to one gender over another. In the end, the demographics were slightly skewed, with eight females and only three males joining the research cohort. For the purpose of this project, only those who were twenty-one years of age or older were considered. Ideal candidates were identified as individuals age twenty-five or older who were regularly involved in the life of the church through worship attendance and participation in a small group or Sunday school class. It was assumed that adults are likely to possess a greater degree of spiritual maturity than younger candidates and were more likely to benefit from this project. The demographic described here is also likely to be in church leadership or teaching positions now and/or in the future.

There was a 23-year-old woman who joined the group and was actively engaged in the project. Although she was not a member of FBC, she had recently begun attending and seemed eager to participate in all aspects of the study. She was also a recent college graduate who was deemed to be a great candidate due to her personal maturity and experience teaching children in

Sunday school. It was vital to secure cooperation from people who exhibited a commitment to being fully engaged of this project. This significantly increased the likelihood that volunteers would complete the process and that the data would therefore be reliable.

A single group made up of qualified candidates formed a cohort that moved through the different stages of the intervention together. Each person signed a consent form before the project began. An example of this consent may be found in Appendix A. The group was trained together in Christ-centered biblical interpretation and application during the workshops. Each participant was asked to complete the same surveys before and after the workshops and sermon series. They were each asked to evaluate three of the eight sermons that attempted to model the method taught during the workshops. Finally, each participant was invited to join a focus group at the end of the sermon series.

Implementation of the Research Design

As noted above, there were some minor changes in the way the intervention was implemented. These had to do mostly with the workshop schedule. In this section, those changes will be highlighted as the various elements of the intervention are described in detail. The two key elements of this project were the instructional workshops and the sermon series. The survey instruments and the sermon evaluations made it possible for the researcher to assess the impact of the workshops and the sermons. These elements provided vital information that helped the researcher assess the effectiveness of expository preaching when coupled with the kind of target training described below.

Workshop Goals and Curriculum

The primary focus of this project was to increase participants' ability to interpret and apply OT Minor Prophets from a Christ-centered perspective using exegetical methods. The workshop sessions introduced how the two Testaments are connected, both historically and theologically. The average church member has not had training in theology and biblical exposition. One of the purposes of the workshops was to provide a "crash course" in systematic and biblical theology, along with a basic introduction to hermeneutics and expository methods. The workshops were designed to equip participants with a basic understanding in a few key areas so that they would be able to identify and evaluate expository preaching as modeled in the sermon series.

The researcher felt it was important that the participants grasp the rationale behind this project. Therefore, the problem, purpose, and thesis statements were all explained in terms that were slightly less academic and, hopefully, clear to the workshop attendees. During the recruiting phase, the researcher explained the 'what' of the project. By the time they arrived at the workshops, participants had heard an explanation of the topic and what would be expected of them. It was important to help participants grasp the purpose of the intervention. Therefore, the workshops communicated the 'why' behind the project. The primary resource for the workshops was a simple curriculum that presented background information on the Minor Prophets, along with exegetical and interpretive tools.

The researcher created a teaching module that served as the curriculum for the three workshops. The module contained an introduction to important concepts such as biblical theology, systematic theology, hermeneutics, and expositional teaching and preaching. The researcher briefly explained some of the ways Christians have read and interpreted the OT from a Christ-centered perspective, with particular attention paid to the Christocentric Approach.

Portions of the Minor Prophets were read, explained, and discussed, using Jason DeRouchie's Redemptive-Historical, Christocentric method. The texts used in the seminars were different from the texts used during the sermon series. Some of the prophetic texts examined during the seminars contained more obvious allusions to the Messiah, while others were more obscure. The purpose of this exercise was to demonstrate how to understand the Bible from a Christ-centered perspective even when He is not obviously mentioned or implied. Care was taken to survey biblical background of each text on the way to making NT connections that focus on God's saving work through Jesus Christ. The goal of the sermon series was to model the interpretive skills taught during the workshops so that participants could then apply the Minor Prophets from a Christ-centered perspective.

Table 3.2. Seminar design

<p>The General Scope of the Seminars:</p> <p>OT Introduction →</p> <p>The Minor Prophets →</p> <p> Systematic Theology →</p> <p> Biblical Theology →</p> <p> Christ as the Hermeneutical Key →</p> <p> Expositional Preaching →</p> <p> Understanding the OT Through the Lens of Jesus Christ</p>

Workshop Sessions

The three workshop sessions were foundational to this thesis project. In Chapter Two, the researcher identified some specific topics that are important for understanding how the Minor

Prophets still apply today. At the beginning of the first workshop, participants were each given a copy of the training module in a fill-in-the-blank format. Keywords were omitted from the student copies to encourage active listening. Workshop attendees were asked to follow along and take notes. These notes were theirs to keep after the session ended. Some participants reported returning to the notes before each sermon evaluation to freshen up on the subject matter.

Workshop 1

The first workshop covered the topics of biblical exposition and expository preaching. The leader/researcher began by stating the problem, purpose, and thesis statements that have guided this project from the beginning. The training module outlined some of the reasons it is important for Christians to have a basic grasp of the OT. Among these reasons is the fact the OT was the Bible Jesus read. It was also the text from which the apostles proclaimed the gospel. As Paul told the Galatians, no one is justified by law, but by faith alone (Gal 2:10). It is therefore essential that believers understand how the gospel may be understood from the pages of books like the Minor Prophets. Only when a church is properly equipped with sound gospel teaching will it be in a position to take the good news to the world.

The first workshop explained some important background information about the Minor Prophets, such as why they are so named, when they were written, and some of the key themes that emerge from them. At least two participants stated that they had no idea why the Minor Prophets were called 'minor'. They had been under the impression that the books of the Twelve were somehow less important than other prophetic writings. These individuals were fascinated to learn that the Minor Prophets are simply shorter when compared to the likes of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. After defining what the Minor Prophets are, it was helpful to succinctly define some

key terms, such as expository/expositional, hermeneutics, biblical theology, systematic theology, and metanarrative.

The final part of session one was a deeper dive into the areas of biblical exposition and expository preaching. The most important aspect of this portion of the training was to emphasize the authority and sufficiency of Scripture. The idea that the sixty-six books of the Bible are the primary source for understanding God's work in the world is foundational to this project. It was important to underscore this notion. The ultimate goal of the first workshop was to help participants appreciate what exposition is and what biblical preaching seeks to accomplish. At its best, exposition seeks to understand how a passage is connected to the rest of the book in which it is found and to the rest of the Bible, while ultimately seeking to understand how the text points to Jesus Christ.

Workshop 2

The second session focused on how biblical theology can help believers understand God's grand purposes in revealing Himself through the biblical text. Many theologians have offered suggestions as to how the biblical storyline unfolds. For the purposes of this session, the fourfold framework of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation were employed to describe God's activity across salvation history. This part of the training provided the perfect context for introducing the biblical covenants as an important part of God's revelation. At the end of each of the four movements in biblical theology (creation, fall, redemption, new creation), the researcher asked open-ended questions to stimulate discussion. This helped to guard against covering too much information too quickly. The discussion time provided participants with an opportunity to ask questions about the material covered so far. It also helped the researcher assess whether or not the material was making sense to those in attendance.

Workshop 3

The final workshop drilled down on the subject of hermeneutics. This session provided some basic insights into interpreting the whole Bible from a Christ-centered perspective, while focusing on how to interpret and apply the Minor Prophets. The original workshop schedule called for a lunch break between sessions two and three. However, both the researcher and the attendees agreed that it would be nice to press ahead and finish earlier than expected. With this agreement established, the group began to explore an introduction to biblical hermeneutics.

After reminding the group that hermeneutics is the art and science of biblical interpretation, the researcher proceeded to review some basic concepts while adding new information. Central to this part of the training was the basic tenet that when believers interpret the Bible, they are seeking to understand what it meant in its original context in order to better explain how it applies to them today. This emphasis on context is especially important when one is working toward a christocentric understanding of an OT text. As noted in chapter two, some have expressed concerns about the Christocentric approach's perceived tendency to undervalue the original context in an effort to make meaningful Christ connections. The researcher sought to guard against this issue by explaining the three levels of context for every OT text.⁵

- 1) Close context: The close context includes what a particular book of the OT says about God's activity in the world and how it communicates God's redeeming purposes.
- 2) Continuing context: The continuing context addresses how a book of the OT fits into God's story of salvation. It identifies a book's place in the biblical metanarrative.

⁵ DeRouchie, "Redemptive-Historical, Christocentric Approach," in *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament*, 187–88. See also Hunter and Wellum, *Christ from Beginning to End*, 42–69.

- 3) Complete context: The complete context seeks to understand how an OT book is used in other places in the Bible. It is ultimately concerned with how the passage/book points to Jesus, and how it anticipates the fulfillment of God's redemptive purposes.

Final Thoughts on the Workshop Experience

The workshops were successful in a variety of ways. The researcher was able to communicate important content that helped the participants better understand the purpose and goals of the project. The three sessions covered a lot of information in a relatively short time period. However, the response to the sessions was overwhelmingly positive. This was a tremendous encouragement to the researcher. Furthermore, the group experienced bonding during the hours spent together. Most of the people who volunteered to participate in the action research do not interact with each other in smaller group settings like this one. During breaks, several people engaged the researcher with questions or comments about the material. The participants also engaged each other in discussion.

The initial project proposal called for the researcher to record the teaching sessions for anyone who could not be physically present. Even as late as the day of the workshops, this was still the plan. However, the researcher made the judgment that a recording device could have interrupted the workshops in at least two different ways. First, it is sometimes the case that people behave differently when they know they are being recorded. Even though the camera would have focused on the presenter and not the group, the fact that audio was being recorded could have been enough to make some participants hesitant to make comments or ask questions. Secondly, the researcher could have been distracted by the recording apparatus. This would have resulted in a presentation that was formal and rigid, rather than informal and engaging. The researcher decided to focus on those in attendance for the workshops and make a later recording

of the lectures. The three sessions were recorded individually and uploaded to a private YouTube channel. This YouTube link and the accompanying notes were emailed to the two individuals who could not make it to the workshops. This made for extra work, but in the end, it was deemed to be worth it.

The Eight-Week Sermon Series

An equally important component of the research project was a series of eight sermons designed to model the method of Christ-centered interpretation and application taught during the workshops. The first sermon focused on Luke 24, where Jesus teaches the downtrodden disciples on the road to Emmaus how the Law and the Prophets point to Him. The other six sermons focused on selected texts from the Minor Prophets to model gospel proclamation from these books using the Christocentric Approach. In the next section, each of the eight sermons will be briefly described. Particular attention will be given to the three sermons that the participants evaluated.

Sermon 1 – Luke 24:13–35; 44–49

The first sermon in this series was taken from Luke 24, where Jesus reveals Himself to two disciples shortly after His resurrection. It was titled “How Jesus Helps Us Understand the Bible.” The main point of the sermon was to show how Jesus provides the interpretive framework through which all of the Bible may be read and applied. Just as corrective lenses help poor eyesight, so too, believers need help seeing how God’s purposes have unfolded throughout history. Jesus is the lens that enables believers to see God’s cosmic plan to glorify Himself by saving sinners through Christ’s atoning sacrifice. Jesus helps believers understand that the whole Bible has a single message that climaxes in His coming into the world to accomplish the Father’s

plan. Through Christ, believers come to see how God is working in their lives. Also, local churches come to understand the reason for their existence and the goal of their ministries.

Sermon 2 – Joel 2:12–27

The book of Joel was the first of the Minor Prophets to be addressed in the sermon series. The sermon from Joel 2:12–27 was titled, “The God Who Restores.” The primary purpose of this sermon was to encourage God’s people to trust in Him, even during difficult seasons of life. In the book of Joel God reveals Himself as sovereign, authoritative, and trustworthy. The things God permits and the things He accomplishes in this life do not always make sense to His people. Yet God, through His Word, reminds believers that even His judgment is intended to work in a saving way. When God judges a nation, He causes such desperation that tender hearts turn to Him in faith.

God’s grace is on full display in Joel as Yahweh provides salvation to those who believe and repent. He is also portrayed as a God of righteous indignation, judging those who rebel against Him. Ultimately, God is a God who restores all that the locusts had eaten (literally, in Israel’s day), and who promises to bless and restore His people at a future time. The ultimate fulfillment of this word comes through Jesus, who vanquishes sin and death, and to return someday to finish all that He began to do during His time on earth. Believers can wait patiently, trusting that just as God was faithful to the people in Joel’s day, so too He will be faithful to the end.

Sermon 3 – Obadiah 1–21

This sermon, titled “The God Who Judges Rightly,” focused on God’s marvelous grace toward sinners. Since the book of Obadiah is so brief, the entire work was read aloud. The

sermon focused on the historical tension between Esau/Edom and Jacob/Israel. Obadiah's prophecy is a reminder that God must judge sin, and that those who rebel against Him are by nature under divine wrath. The prophecy also points to God's sovereignty in choosing whom He will use to accomplish his purposes. Believers experience peace with God through Christ, in addition to restored human relationships that are marked by God's grace. These temporal blessings anticipate further eternal blessings that are only available in Christ. This is because sins have been nailed to the cross (Col 2:13–15) and the debt of sin has been paid in full. As a result, Christians now live lives marked by the law of love.

The Edomites frequently sinned against their brothers throughout history, and God had called them to account for their wickedness. However, Israel had also rebelled against God many times. Obadiah illustrates God's electing grace and how Yahweh chooses to bless some and judge others. Ultimately, all sin must be judged. God's demonstration of righteous judgment against sinners, both Edomites and Israelites, shows that He will not abide iniquity in any form. In the book of Obadiah, God's identity as the Holy One of Israel, and His activity as the righteous Judge and faithful Redeemer are on display.

God's judgment against heathen nations foreshadows His dealings with unrepentant sinners at a future time. God will eventually judge all unrighteousness. Only those who submit to God's grace will be spared from the consequences of their sin. According to 2 Cor 5:21, God poured out His wrath against sin on Christ, who bore the punishment sinners justly deserve. As a result, God's wrath is satisfied, and sin is adequately punished. In Christ, sinners find redemption and are set free to live at peace with God and each other. Though it may seem that some sinners have escaped punishment, Obadiah point forward to a time when God will act against all unrighteousness at the right time and in the right way (Rom 12:19–21).

Sermon 4 – Micah 6:6–8

The sermon title for Micah 6:6–8 asked the question, “What Does God Want?” Although God needs nothing, and there is not a single thing humans can give God that He does not already possess, He does desire certain things for His people. Among these are freedom from sin and a heart that trusts in Him above all else. God intends to restore His people. Even though they may sometimes experience divine judgment, it is only temporary, whereas glory is eternal. God wants His people to live rightly before Him and each other, and to rest in His grace. The book of Micah ends on a note of longing and anticipation that God will finally and fully pardon sin and fulfill all that He has promised in times past. God’s purposes and His people’s deepest needs are ultimately met in Christ, who laid down His life for sinners.

Sermon 5 – Nahum 1:1–15

From its opening page, the book of Nahum is direct and intense. This text is a stark warning to Nineveh about God’s impending wrath. Nineveh had graciously been given an opportunity to repent under the ministry of the prophet Jonah. Although many people repented under Jonah’s preaching, following generations slipped back into their old sinful ways. Although the nation of Assyria was at the apex of its military and political power, God promised through Nahum that they would be utterly defeated. Although this was bad news for the Assyrians, it was good news for the people of Judah. Likewise, God has promised to put away all evil and to restore His people at the proper time. He has set this plan in motion already, and has guaranteed final victory through Jesus Christ, who has already triumphed over sin and death. Because of God’s faithfulness to His promises, His people can trust Him and serve Him confidently even as they wait patiently for the Lord to return and make right all wrongs.

Just as God was faithful to Israel, so too, NT saints can trust that God will yet be faithful by delivering His people from all sin and destruction. God judged Israel's great enemy in Nahum's day. In Christ, God judged the greatest enemy, even death itself. As a result of God's grace and favor, His people are equipped to live humbly before the Lord, to serve Him confidently, and to wait for Him patiently. Like Nahum, modern believers wait for the Lord to act against injustice. Both the OT and the NT guarantee that God will ultimately act to defeat all foes and take His rightful place as King of all things. What was promised in the OT is fulfilled through Christ in the NT.

Sermon 6 – Haggai 2:1–9; 20–23

God raised up the prophet Haggai to declare glorious future events that must have seemed like a faint hope to the people of Judah. He preached during a drought, which led to a poor harvest. Still, the Lord called Him to declare that God was going to bring about restoration and blessing like the people had never seen. A central focus of Haggai's prophecy was the temple at Jerusalem. Although the temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC, it was being rebuilt under the supervision of one of David's descendants named Zerubbabel. Titled, "God's Greater Glory," this sermon sought to demonstrate how Jesus ultimately fulfills all of God's promises to His people.

Just as the temple ruins reminded God's people of their failure to keep covenant, so too, believers often experience pain and loss in this life due to the effects of sin. Still, God promises to make all things right through salvation and judgment eventually. While His people wait for these things to unfold, they can trust in God's purposes and rest in His presence. By faith, believers can trust that God will someday fill heaven and earth with His glory. God has always been faithful to His promises and there is no reason to believe He will fail to do so now.

Zerubbabel is a reminder that God did not forget His promises to Abraham and David. God fulfilled His promises through Zerubbabel, who points the reader forward to One in whom all of God's promises are yes and amen (2 Cor 1:20). God reveals His greater glory through His greater servant, Jesus, who ultimately fulfills all of God's purposes and all of Israel's hopes.

Sermon 7 – Malachi 2:17–3:5

Up to this point, each sermon text was selected in canonical order. However, since the final Sunday of the sermon series fell on Palm Sunday, it was decided to reverse the order on the last two sermons. Given that Zechariah makes direct prediction of Jesus's coming into the city of Jerusalem humbly on the back of a donkey, it worked out perfectly to preach from this text on the Sunday that celebrates this occasion. The seventh sermon in the series came from Malachi and was titled, "Waiting Patiently for God to Act." Malachi was called to preach to people who were discouraged because God had not yet fulfilled His promises in the way they were anticipating.

By Malachi's day, the temple had been rebuilt, though it paled in comparison to Solomon's Temple. The people expected that God would bring about the final fulfillment of His promise to bless and restore Israel to prominence among the nations. Like the people of Malachi's day, believers today are waiting for God to accomplish all that He promised long ago. Though it may sometimes seem as if God has forgotten His promises, He is working to prepare the hearts of those who will forever reign with Him. God had restored the physical temple; now He was working to 'rebuild' the people's hearts to desire Him and follow His ways.

Christians look forward to the return of Christ, trusting that God is working all things for His good pleasure until that time. God's people are waiting for the Lord to act decisively in the world to bring to pass all that He has promised. God began a revival in Malachi's day with the

Levitical priests, and then all of the people. God made it possible for the people to rebuild the physical structures that represented their worship and civic life; next he intended to ‘rebuild’ their hearts to desire Him and follow His ways. Likewise, God is at work in modern times, calling sinners to repentance and faith. While NT believers wait, they must also understand that God is preparing His people for an eternal future in which they will enjoy Him free from sin and its effects. He accomplishes all of this through Christ.

Sermon 8 – Zechariah 9:9; 12:10–13:1

The final sermon in the series was titled, “A Humble Savior and A Mighty King.” It focused on Zechariah’s prediction that the coming king would enter Jerusalem mounted on a young donkey. Later in chapter 12, the prophet portrays God’s mercy being poured out through one who would be pierced. This sermon, more than any other in the series, demonstrated DeRouchie’s principle of direct prediction. This sermon served as a nice bookend to the Luke 24 sermon because it demonstrated in clear fashion how the OT anticipates the coming of Christ. Zechariah is careful show that God’s salvation is made available to men and women from many people groups. The mourning portrayed at the end chapter 12 is soon replaced with joy at the promise of a sin-cleansing fountain. Only Christ matches the descriptions presented in Zechariah’s prophecy, and only Christ can purify repentant sinners from their uncleanness.

Sermon Evaluations

Along with listening to the sermon series, participants were asked to complete three sermon evaluations. The researcher elected to implement the evaluations during weeks three, five, and seven. This gave the participants time to get a sense of what kind of sermons they would be hearing. It also helped spread the evaluations out so that people were not overwhelmed

by the task. By ending the evaluations at week seven, the researcher had ample time to collect any outstanding forms. The evaluation forms included four basic prompts and were delivered via email or as hard copies, depending on each participant's preference. Each sermon evaluation was identical to the others.

Once completed, the forms were collected and reviewed by the researcher. Responses helped the researcher identify areas that needed improvement in sermon delivery. They also helped him assess how Christ-centered expositional preaching from the Minor Prophets can improve believers' understanding of how the text applies to their lives in meaningful ways. In an effort to communicate clearly with the participants, the researcher emailed the first evaluation to each person the week before sermon three. The idea was to give them time to become familiar with what they were being asked to assess. However, it became apparent to the researcher that this was not the best idea.

Some of the participants chose to fill out the evaluation during the sermon. At least two people handed in their forms immediately after the service. The researcher became concerned that this could negatively impact the evaluation results. If a listener filled out a form while the sermon was in progress, there is a chance they could have prematurely marked a response. Their attitudes may have changed during the sermon, which is why it was important that the forms be completed after listening attentively to the sermon. The evaluations were intended to be a reflective exercise, not to provide immediate feedback. The researcher's lack of clear communication led to this misunderstanding. The researcher determined that it would be best to email evaluation forms on the Sunday afternoon or Monday morning immediately following sermons five and seven. This solved the problem and allowed the participants to focus on the sermon in real-time.

Final Survey and Focus Group Discussion

At the end of the intervention, after the seminars, sermons, and evaluations were completed, the survey instrument was readministered. By using the same survey that was given at the beginning of the project, the researcher was able to compare the scores. The results of this comparison will be explored in detail in the next chapter. It was expected that the comparison would show changes in participants' attitudes and understanding of the Christ-centered nature of the Minor Prophets. Any significant differences may then be used to show whether or not the intervention has successfully addressed the research problem.

Sensing has observed that any single research method will have its limitations.⁶ All research results are filtered through the researcher's interpretive lens. Therefore, it was necessary to include the focus group as a way of guarding against faulty conclusions. All eleven participants were invited to meet for approximately 1.5 hours at the end of the eight-week sermon series. However, only eight were available to join the focus group. The individuals who participated in the focus group completed a paper copy of the post-intervention survey instrument on the evening of the focus group meeting immediately before the discussion began. The other three people were given the final survey by email. These last three surveys were returned within one week of being administered.

The size of the focus group made it possible to gather in a different location than the room in which the workshops were held. The focus group meeting took place in a comfortable conference room on the second floor of the church. The space was intimate, allowing for everyone to gather around a large rectangular table. While the workshops occurred in a large space where participants were seated facing toward the researcher, the focus group met in more

⁶ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 72.

of a roundtable setting. It was believed that this would allow for more interaction between participants during the discussion, and therefore stimulate conversation among those in attendance.

The purpose of this meeting was to provide an opportunity for participants to give additional feedback on their experience. The meeting served as a sort of group interview and was a capstone to all of the intervention details described above. The researcher composed a list of open-ended questions designed to elicit conversation and discussion among the group members. The goal of the focus group was not to evaluate the preacher, per se, but rather, to evaluate the method of Christ-centered exposition that was taught and modeled. It was desired that focus group members would discuss how their understanding of the Minor Prophets has changed over the eight-week period. The focus group session was recorded so the researcher could go back and review the discussion.

The researcher posed three primary questions during the focus group discussion. Other questions arose, leading to further discussion about the Minor Prophets, but the following questions were the focus of the conversation:

1. How did your experience over the last eight weeks compare with your expectations?
2. How has your view of the Minor Prophets changed since we began this project?
3. What are some ways a project like this could be implemented in other ways in the life of the church?

The focus group session turned out to be a far richer experience than the researcher had expected. More will be said on the experience, along with responses to the above questions in the next chapter.

Summary

The intervention described in this chapter was designed to help members of FBC Greenville, KY, understand how the Minor Prophets point to Christ. The workshops introduced participants to important concepts that equipped them to evaluate an eight-part sermon series. These sermons emphasized a christocentric interpretive method that helps readers grasp the Christ-centered nature of the OT. The expository sermons sought to model this approach in order to demonstrate how the Minor Prophets still apply to believers today. Three of these sermons were evaluated to assess for how well the sermons had modeled the christocentric method of interpretation. The final step in the intervention involved a focus group, which allowed for debriefing and discussion between the researcher and the participants. Together, the elements of this intervention were aimed at helping God's people love and understand God's Word by helping them see how every part of Scripture may be read through the lens of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

It has been argued throughout this thesis that all of the Bible points to Jesus in one way or another. This includes more obscure or harder-to-understand texts, such as those found in the Minor Prophets. Expository preaching is essential for helping God's people understand how the Minor Prophets apply to Christians today. When paired with teaching, such as the workshops described in the previous chapter, expository preaching's effectiveness only increases. The research presented in the following pages demonstrates the effectiveness of targeted training, along with expository preaching, to equip people to understand better how to interpret and apply the Minor Prophets christocentrically.

This chapter outlines the results from the data collected during an eight-week research period. As a mixed-methods study, the chapter describes and illustrates both quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the eleven participants who made up the research cohort. This includes an analysis of participants' responses to twenty-five survey questions. The survey was taken prior to week one and again at the end at the end of week eight. These two surveys were identical. It is the comparison of the pre-and post-intervention test results will provide the quantitative data for this project. The chapter also includes qualitative analyses based on three sermon evaluations and one focus group discussion. The researcher will also share personal observations about the research experience and the feedback received during this phase of the project.

Process and Goals

Before describing the results of the research, it is necessary to reiterate the problem and purpose statements that have guided this project. The problem that gave rise to this study is that members of FBC Greenville, KY, do not fully understand how the Minor Prophets apply to modern Christians. The purpose of this DMIN action research project was to teach members of FBC Greenville, KY, to interpret and apply the Minor Prophets from a Christ-centered perspective through instructional workshops and a series of expositional sermons. The workshops were designed to introduce participants to the basics of biblical theology, elements of systematic theology, hermeneutics, and expository preaching. The final workshop focused on a particular christocentric approach to the OT espoused by Jason DeRouchie. The sermon series that followed over eight weeks was designed to model the kind of interpretation and application that was introduced in the workshops.

There were at least three desired outcomes for this project. The first desired outcome was that members at FBC would cultivate a deeper understanding of how the OT Minor Prophets point to Christ. By fostering this kind of learning, people will be able to see how the Minor Prophets apply to Christians more clearly today. This outcome will be evaluated based on the results of the pre- and post-intervention surveys, and also by considering feedback from sermon evaluations and the focus group discussion. The survey utilized in this project was a twenty-five-question instrument with Likert-style responses. These questions were designed to assess the participant's attitudes toward the OT and specifically toward the Minor Prophets. The questions were intended to ascertain a person's general disposition toward the Minor Prophets, and specifically to address the individual's perception of how these books apply to their lives today. The before and after results provide a way for the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of

expository preaching as a means of demonstrating the Christ-centered nature of the Minor Prophets.

A second desired outcome for this project was that God's people would come to possess greater affection for the Scriptures, and for the Christ who is central to the biblical metanarrative. This type of affection is most likely to grow as people better understand how all of God's Word speaks to His people. This project has proceeded on the basic assumption that every portion of God's Word points in some sense to Christ and is therefore important for contemporary Christ-followers. Helping people grasp how the Minor Prophets point to Christ is central to cultivating deeper affections for this portion of Scripture. Affection can be a difficult thing to assess, but it was expected that the survey responses would demonstrate attitude shifts, indicating a more positive outlook on the Minor Prophets over time. Written and oral feedback, along with the results of the surveys, make it possible for the researcher to say with some degree of certainty whether or not the project succeeded in this regard.

A third goal of this project was to improve the researcher's ability to teach and preach Christ from the OT Minor Prophets. While this is a deeply personal goal, it is also a goal that addresses the primary role of a pastor-shepherd as one who faithfully proclaims God's Word. Growth in this area has the potential to benefit the local church both now and in the future as God's people learn to read, study, and apply a broad range of OT texts from a Christ-centered perspective. The key concept here is application. As important as it is to help people grasp important theological concepts and exegetical methods, the ultimate goal is help them understand the Christ-centered nature of Scripture and how it applies to their lives. The sermon evaluations and focus group feedback provide ample information to evaluate whether or not the project has accomplished this goal.

Data Analysis

The first step in the research process was to have each participant complete a twenty-five-question survey. The survey was designed to assess participants' attitudes toward the OT, along with their beliefs in how the Minor Prophets do or do not apply to Christians. The same survey instrument was given at the end of the sermon series but before the focus group session. A comparison of the scores of the two surveys was expected to show a meaningful difference after the training and modeling. After scoring the two surveys, it was clear that there was a significant difference between how participants viewed the Minor Prophets at the end of the intervention when compared to the attitudes they displayed at the beginning. Before discussing these results in more detail, it will be helpful to consider group demographics.

Cohort Demographics

One of the initial goals for the recruitment phase of this project was to have a fairly even number of males and females, with at least ten total volunteers. Thirteen individuals showed strong interest in participating in the research. However, one male subject withdrew when he realized his travel schedule would interfere with the eight-week research period. There was also a female subject who decided shortly after the process began that she was not going to be able to dedicate the time required to participate fully. She politely informed the researcher about her decision to withdraw via text message. That left the cohort with a total of eleven members, eight of which were female, three of which were male. The youngest person to participate in the study was twenty-three years of age. All of the other participants were 50 years of age or older. The oldest volunteer for the study was a 79-year-old woman who was enthusiastic about the experience. A detailed breakdown of the demographics is depicted in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1. Research cohort demographics

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>% of Group</i>
Female	8	72.7
Male	3	27.3
<i>Age</i>		
21–50	1	9.1
51–70	8	72.7
71+		18.2
<i>Education Level</i>		
High School	-	-
Some College	2	18.2
Undergraduate Degree	6	54.5
Graduate Degree or Above	3	27.3
<i>Bible Study Teachers</i>		
Total	7	63.6
Full-time	5	45.5
Substitute	2	18.2

Another factor that contributed to the study outcome was the participants' level of education and life experience. As the above table demonstrates, the group was highly educated, with all but two participants holding at least an undergraduate degree. The group included a banker with bi-vocational ministry experience, a realtor who is a lifelong church member and Sunday school teacher, a medical doctor with a seminary degree, and two retired schoolteachers who are actively engaged in women's Bible study groups. Due to these factors, the researcher was initially concerned that the composition of the research cohort could skew the results. However, as the data show, the workshops and the sermon series made a surprisingly significant impact on participants' perceptions of the Minor Prophets.

The stated purpose of this project was to help FBC members better understand how to interpret and apply the Minor Prophets christocentrically. The context for this project was the ongoing discipleship ministry of a local church in western Kentucky. Therefore, it was desired that as many teachers and leaders as possible would be involved in the project. Training teachers and Bible study leaders to rightly interpret and apply the Minor Prophets has the potential to have a multiplying effect by indirectly reaching a larger portion of the congregation.

Approximately 60 percent of the congregation is active in regular Bible study through Sunday school. Additionally, 40 percent are involved in Bible study gatherings that occur on campus or at private homes as an extension of the church's teaching ministry. This 40 percent is, for the most part, included in the 60 percent who regularly attend Sunday morning Bible study, i.e., Sunday school.

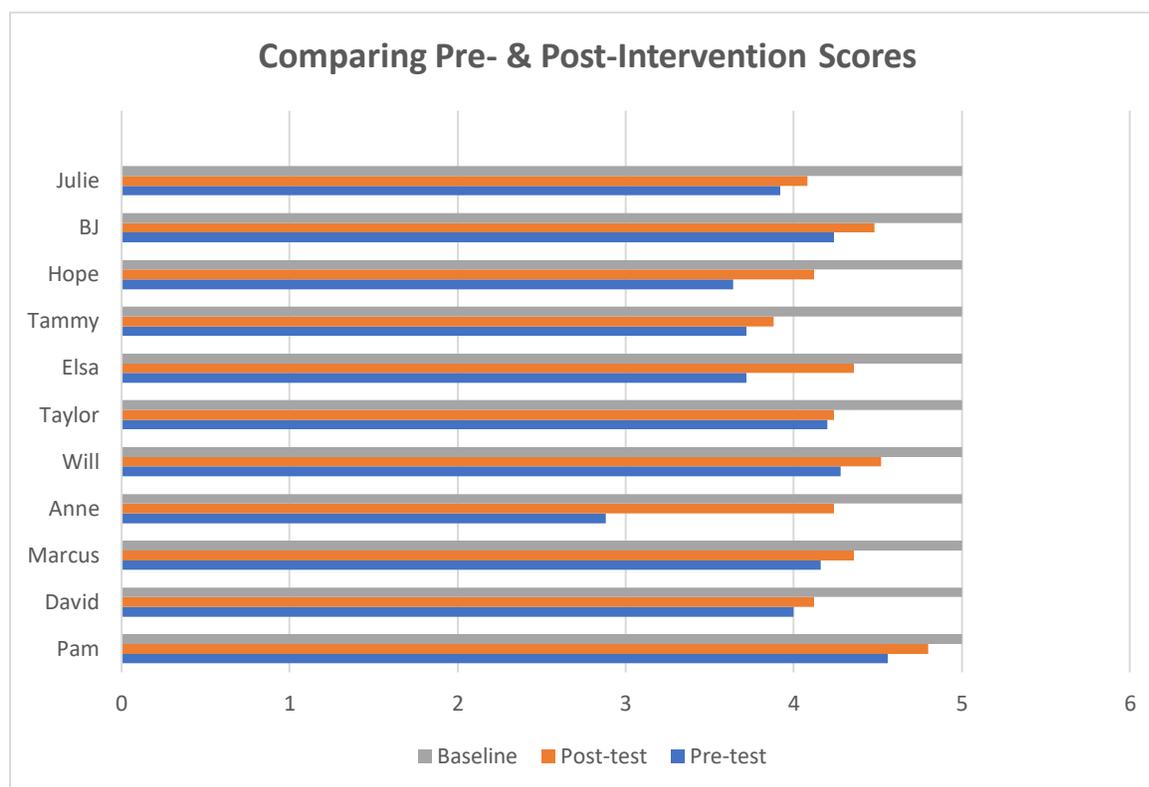
While the preacher has regular opportunities to proclaim the gospel through speaking and writing, teachers often have a chance to engage in deep discipleship that often occurs in a smaller group. Equipping the people who lead these kinds of groups for faithful biblical interpretation and application has the potential to help them prepare and teach Christ-centered lessons. Of the eleven people who completed the research phase, five individuals teach Bible study at FBC on a weekly basis. Two other individuals serve as substitute teachers in Sunday school classes. While these numbers are relatively small, they make up a significant percentage of the people who regularly lead Bible study classes at FBC. There was a concern that recruiting teachers could skew the project results to some degree. These individuals are presumably among those who possess the greatest biblical knowledge at FBC. The researcher initially wondered if including too many teachers could produce results that were not representative of the congregation as a whole. However, the desire to equip these teachers for more effective teaching ministry overrode this consideration. In the end, the participants showed significant growth in the targeted areas, demonstrating increased understanding in how the Minor Prophets point to Christ and therefore apply to modern Christians. If anything, the fact that several teachers were involved in this study underscores the significance of the findings. More will be said on this point in the following section.

Analysis of Survey Results Among Participants

The twenty-five survey questions were presented with a Likert scale ranging from one to five. An answer of one (1) on the scale indicates strong ‘disagreement’, while an answer of five (5) shows that the participant strongly ‘agrees’ with the statement. The survey included a few general statements such as, “The OT and the NT are equal in importance when it comes to understanding God’s plan of salvation,” and “I believe all of the Bible points to Jesus in some way.” It also included statements that specifically addressed the Minor Prophets. Among these are assertions such as, “The Minor Prophets are as important as any other portions of Scripture for Christians,” and “It is possible to proclaim Christ while teaching and preaching from the Minor Prophets.” An example of the survey is found in Appendix C.

Scoring was accomplished by giving a numerical value to each response. A reply of “strongly disagree” was given the value of one (1), while a reply of “strongly agree” was scored as a five (5). The scores were then averaged and set on a five-point scale. The average of all scores on the pre-test was 3.94. The lowest score on the pre-test was 2.88. The highest pre-test score was 4.56. The average of the other ten scores was 3.64, which demonstrates that neither the low nor high scores skewed the results in either direction.

On the post-test, the average of all scores was 4.29. The lowest score on the post-test was 3.88, while the highest score was 4.8. It is worth pointing out that the lowest score on the post-test was 3.88, while the average score on the pre-test was 3.94. Once all the scores were tallied, a one-tail paired t-test was performed to assess the statistical variance between the results of the pre-intervention assessment and the post-intervention assessment. Given a p value of 0.05, the t-test showed a probability of 0.00538673 that the findings are by chance. These results are shown below in table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Comparing pre- and post-intervention scores

It was expected that the results would show some measurable difference from before and after. However, the degree of significance from the beginning to the end of the intervention was surprising. The t-test demonstrates a high degree of significance in the findings. This suggests that the thesis posited here is valid. That thesis states that if people at FBC Greenville, KY, are taught to interpret and apply the Minor Prophets from a Christ-centered perspective, and if that method is modeled through expository preaching, then they will better understand how these books apply today.

One person referred to here as Taylor (all names have been changed to pseudonyms), showed only a marginal change in her understanding of how the Minor Prophets point to Christ. In fact, her pre- and post-test scores showed the lowest degree of change of anyone in the group. The points where she showed the most significant change are highlighted in her responses to two specific questions. In her answer to survey question eight, Taylor indicated that she enjoys

reading and studying the Minor Prophets more after the training than she did before. The question on which she scored the highest increase was question thirteen, which states, “I am confident in my ability to explain the overarching theme of the Scriptures.” She went from indicating a 20 percent level of confidence to reporting an 80 percent level of confidence in this single area. During the focus group discussion, Taylor expressed her appreciation for the training, saying, “I was impressed by how many of the themes from the Minor Prophets still apply today.” She further remarked that she was moved by, “The hope that those [OT] people had looking forward, and the hope that we have in Christ. It’s not so obscure; it’s entirely relatable.”

As illustrated above, the two participants who showed the most significant changes in their perceptions of the Minor Prophets were Anne and Elsa. The two women have been in church their whole lives and both currently teach Sunday school. What is interesting about these two is that they have substantially different educational backgrounds. Elsa has taken some college classes but does not hold a degree. She has a real estate license and still works part-time. Anne is a retired schoolteacher who grew up in a pastor’s home. She enjoys studying and teaching the Bible, especially to women. The drastic difference in their pre-and post-test scores suggests that educational level does not necessarily determine one’s outlook on the Minor Prophets. Anne’s scores showed the most dramatic improvement from start to finish. Also, her comments in the focus group meeting were consistent with the feedback received through the survey instruments.

Anne stated that her pastor-father did not enjoy the OT nearly as much as the NT, which suggests that the churches she grew up in may not have focused much on these books. She was both surprised and delighted to learn so much about how the Minor Prophets relate to the NT. At

one point during the focus group discussion, Anne stated that in the past she always understood the OT to be about God's judgment and wrath, while the NT is about God's love and grace. Based on comments made on both the sermon evaluations and in the focus group, Anne's attitudes have shifted substantially since the beginning of the project. This kind of change was generally observed across the group and can also be demonstrated by looking at responses to the twenty-five items on the survey instrument.

Analysis of Responses to Survey Items

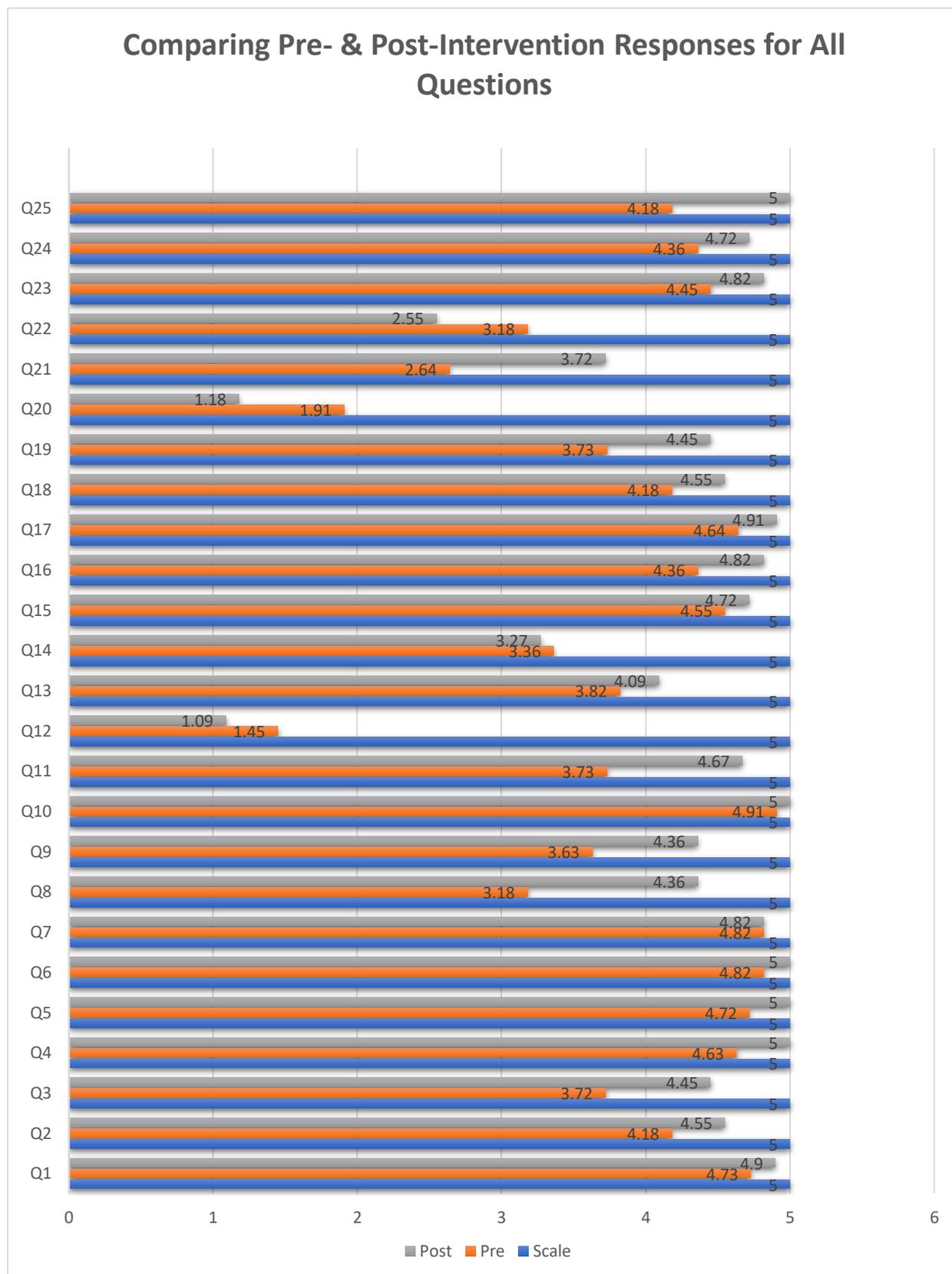
This thesis contends that expositional teaching and preaching increases understanding of and affection for the Minor Prophets as Christ-centered Scripture. It will be helpful at this point to consider some specific areas in which the project has accomplished this task. Survey item eleven (Q11) stated, "I understand clearly the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament." On the pre-intervention survey, the average of all responses was 3.73. The post-intervention survey showed marked change in this area of understanding, with the average of all responses totaling 4.67. The data suggests that participants' affection for the Minor Prophets increased along with their understanding of how these OT books apply to Christians. One of the biggest areas of improvement was on item eight (Q8), which stated, "I enjoy reading and studying the Minor Prophets." The average of all responses to this prompt was 3.18 at the beginning but grew to 4.36 by the end of the project. Similarly, the average response to item twenty-one (Q21) was 2.64 on the pre-intervention survey and 3.72 on the post-intervention survey. This demonstrates that as understanding of the Christ-centered nature of the Minor Prophets improves, positive attitudes and affections toward them increase significantly.

There were two survey items for which scores were lower on the post-test than they were at the beginning of the intervention. However, this is largely due to the phrasing of the prompts.

Survey item twelve (Q12) states, “The original message of the Old Testament no longer applies today.” On the pre-test, participants scored an average of 1.45. This lower number indicates that they had some awareness of the fact that the OT still applies to believers today. The post-test scores were even lower, averaging 1.09. This suggests that the group came to have greater confidence in the relevancy of the OT for modern Christians.

A similar shift in thinking was observed in responses to item twenty (Q20). This prompt stated, “The Minor Prophets are not as important as other portions of Scripture because they do not specifically mention Jesus Christ.” On Q20, the group averaged a response of 1.91 on the pre-test. The average decreased to 1.18 on the final survey. This shows that participants grew in their estimation of the importance of the Minor Prophets for their lives. This is perhaps most evident when examining responses to the final prompt (Q25). The statement declared, “It is possible to proclaim Christ while teaching and preaching from the Minor Prophets.” While many people strongly agreed with this statement on the pre-test, some were unsure of the validity of Q25. By the end of the intervention, every participant scored five out of five on Q25, demonstrating that they had come to understand how the gospel can be proclaimed from the Minor Prophets. Responses to individual questions are displayed below in table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Comparing pre- and post-intervention responses for all questions



Hearing and Evaluating the Expository Sermons

Beginning February 5, 2024, the researcher preached eight sermons on consecutive Sundays at FBC. The first sermon was from Luke 24, illustrating how all of the Law and the Prophets are Christ-centered in some sense. The remaining seven sermons were from selected texts in seven different prophetic books. These texts were chosen strategically based on the researcher's personal choice. As noted in the previous chapter, the church had already heard a series of sermons from Habakkuk in 2018, therefore this work was not included in the series. Also, Jonah is perhaps the most famous of the Minor Prophets and was therefore excluded from consideration. The books for the sermon series were chosen from among the most neglected prophets, including Joel, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

During weeks three, five, and seven, participants were asked to complete a sermon evaluation. A sample of the sermon evaluation may be found in Appendix D. Each participant was encouraged to attend services regularly so as to hear the sermon in person. However, an online option was made available through the church's Facebook page for those who had to miss for any reason. Most people were able to attend all of the eight services in person. Two of the participants had previously scheduled travel plans that made it impossible for them to be at one of the services. Both individuals watched the sermon online and recorded their responses on the evaluation form as instructed. The sermon evaluation asked each person to indicate how they heard the sermon, in-person or online. Likewise, the sermon evaluations were made available to individuals both in print and through email. Most people completed the forms manually and returned them by the following Sunday. Two people chose to scan the forms and send them back electronically.

The sermon evaluation forms were identical each time and made four simple statements that the individuals would then mark based on their level of relative agreement or disagreement.

For this instrument, a six-point Likert-style scale was used. The responses were strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), disagree somewhat (DS), agree somewhat (AS), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA). By using an even number of answer choices, the potential for ambivalence was removed from the equation. This type of answer required the respondent to clearly state their opinion, while allowing for a degree of subtlety in how they answered. As it turned out, none of the answers came in the middle range, using the two “somewhat” options.

Table 4.4. Format of sermon evaluations

Sermon Evaluation Items
<p><u>Prompt #1</u></p> <p>The sermon made application that was consistent with the methods previously taught in the workshops I attended/viewed.</p>
<p><u>Prompt #2</u></p> <p>After listening to this sermon, I have a clearer understanding of how this particular book of the Minor Prophets points to Jesus Christ.</p>
<p><u>Prompt #3</u></p> <p>After listening to the sermon, I have a clearer understanding of how this particular book of the Minor Prophets applies to my life.</p>
<p><u>Prompt #4</u></p> <p>Modeling biblical exposition and application through preaching is an effective tool to equip believers to properly understand and apply the Minor Prophets.</p>

Sermon Evaluation #1

The first sermon to be evaluated was “The God Who Judges Rightly” from Obadiah 1–21. In their evaluation of this sermon, participants noted that God takes sin seriously and that no

sin goes unpunished. Some stated that though they had seen the names Esau/Edom in OT texts before, they had not clearly understood the significant role the Edomites played in the OT. They commented that God's work in preserving Israel is part of the reason believers experience freedom from sin today. Christ became the eternal sacrifice for sin, just as God had intended from the beginning. One person stated, "I learned new insights about how God is faithful and just and He has an overarching plan of salvation!" One of the male participants observed that he already knew that God was in control and would make all things right at a future moment. However, he stated that he had never heard this message declared from the book of Obadiah and would not have fully understood the prophet's point without the aid of biblical exposition. Another individual commented that the expositional style of preaching was helping her make connections between the OT and NT she had not noticed before. She also stated that she sees now more than ever some of the ways that the two Testaments are connected, and that both are equally important.

Sermon Evaluation #2

The fifth sermon in the series and second to be evaluated was titled "When Bad News is Good News" from Nahum 1:1–15. By this second sermon, it was apparent that the participants were getting a better feel for what was being asked of them. Along with the four prompts each person was asked to respond to, there was room for them to write down any additional comments. There were more comments on the final two evaluations than on the first. Each of the prompts for this second sermon were answered with strongly agree (SA) or agree (A). One person stated that, "Nahum's message to his people is relevant today. It is a message of judgment. God's enemies will be destroyed, but because of Christ, his people will be delivered." People also began to identify some of the recurring themes in the prophets, while making

connections to what God has done through Christ. For example, one evaluator stated that, “Even in our worst times we know [those times] are temporary.” The individual commented that “While trials are temporary, all that we do for Christ is eternal.” As a result, this gives believers confidence to be bold for Christ while being patient while waiting on God to fulfill His promises. The same person later said, “Exposition shows us how any passage connects us to the rest of the Bible and ultimately leads us to Christ.”

Sermon Evaluation #3

The seventh sermon preached and the last to be evaluated was from Malachi 3:17–24. The sermon was titled “Waiting Patiently for God to Act.” All of the responses on this third sermon evaluation indicated the participants either agreed (A) or strongly agreed (SA) with the four statements. In response to the first prompt about the sermon applying methods taught in the seminars, one person wrote that they, “loved hearing all of the little ways the OT points to Jesus!” The individual went on to say that they would not have made such connections before the training, but now feel confident in their ability to do so. Another evaluator stated that she had enjoyed the sermons from books of the Bible “that we may tend to skim over.” This statement spoke to two aspects of this project. First, it confirmed the research problem as stated above. This FBC member stated unequivocally that the Minor Prophets are books from which the church has heard little teaching and preaching. Secondly, this statement indicated that the person had profited from the training and modeling and that it had helped her appreciate the Minor Prophets in new ways.

Focus Group Discussion

At the end of the sermon series and accompanying evaluations, the research cohort was invited to participate in a focus group discussion. In order to guard against faulty conclusions, this researcher sought to add a layer of complexity to the research, thus enhancing its trustworthiness. By including multiple approaches, researchers can be confident that the results of a given project will provide a more well-rounded view of things. The various angles make it possible to get a clearer picture of what the research shows, helping the researcher as he evaluates the data at hand. For the purpose of this action research project, the third layer takes the form of a focus group discussion.

As the research methodology began to take shape, most of the researcher's focus for the project was on the other two data collection tools. It was expected that the survey instruments would provide an important way to quantify any changes that occurred across the timeframe of the intervention. It was also expected that the sermon evaluations would fill in any blanks regarding how the various participants changed their views over time. It may be an overstatement to say that the focus group discussion was an afterthought. However, it is not too much to say that it was considered by the researcher to be the least impactful of the three methods of data collection. This final assumption proved to be incorrect. The group discussion shed light on participants' experiences and highlighted some of the ways their attitudes toward the Minor Prophets changed over the course of eight weeks.

The focus group met on Sunday, March 24, 2024, at 6 p.m. All eleven of the participants were invited to join the discussion, but three people were unable to attend. The meeting included the researcher and eight of the eleven participants. Once everyone was seated and pleasantries had been exchanged, the group was informed that the meeting would be recorded so that the

researcher would be able to review the recording and makes notes from the discussion. Once each person affirmed their consent to be recorded, the discussion began.

The first question posed to the group was, “How did this experience compare to any expectations you may have had?” Two women were the first to chime in. Elsa stated that she liked focusing on the MP because it was unlike anything she had ever done before. It is worth noting that this comment comes from the oldest participant, a woman who has been a member of FBC for well over fifty years. She is also a long-time Sunday school teacher. She later observed that she felt she got more out of the sermon series because she was so focused on the content. She felt that the investment of time in the workshops, along with the knowledge that she would be asked to give feedback on sermons, helped her pay better attention. She was also one of the four participants who stated that they listened to the sermons both in person and online during evaluation weeks. This was both surprising and encouraging.

A second participant, a woman referred to here as Taylor, stated that the study was “much more interesting” than she thought it was going to be. Though she has studied the Bible regularly for many years, she acknowledged that she has never really focused on the MP and had never been taught to look at the OT through a Christ-centered lens. She was surprised to have learned as much as she did. Furthermore, she was surprised that she was surprised. It is not that she thought she knew all there was to know about the Bible. Rather, she did not realize just how deficient her understanding of the MP was.

One of the most surprising revelations that emerged during the focus group discussion was that some of the participants listened to the sermon twice. As mentioned above, at least four individuals reported hearing the sermon in person, and then listening to it again online during the following week. Those who listened twice were most likely to do this during weeks three, five,

and seven, when they were asked to complete sermon evaluations. This suggests that these individuals took their role seriously as part of the research cohort. It may also indicate that some of the material covered was new to them, and therefore required a second hearing for better understanding.

One participant, referred to here as Tammy, commented on her first evaluation form that the sermon was a little hard to follow when she heard it during the Sunday morning worship service. She reported that the sermon made more sense to her after hearing it a second time online. This feedback caused the researcher to consider whether he was communicating as clearly as desired. In future sermons, an effort was made to preach more clearly and concisely. The focus group also spoke to this experience. Some reported that the first sermon was a little dense, but that the sermons got better and better as the series progressed. This feedback, along with the overall experience of preaching through selected texts from the MP, helped the preacher work toward one of the key goals for this project, which was to improve as a biblical expositor and communicator.

The group was talkative, which was extremely helpful. At the beginning of the discussion, the researcher had an open laptop for notetaking purposes. However, it was decided that this could be a distraction for both researcher and the group. It also felt a bit impersonal to be looking down at a screen while people were talking and attempting to make eye contact. The fact that the session was being recorded allowed the researcher to relax and engage fully in the discussion. Focus group participants not only answered the questions posed by the researcher, but they also offered additional insights. This feedback helped the researcher evaluate the effectiveness of the interpretive method that was taught, while helping him identify areas of weakness that future studies might improve upon.

Summary of Results

Each church's situation is unique, so the kind of action research implemented should be tailored to suit particular needs. The purpose of this project was to help members of FBC Greenville, KY, interpret and apply the OT Minor Prophets in a way that is Christ-centered. There was a general lack of understanding of the MP in the church, especially in regard to how these books apply to modern Christians. To some degree this may be said of the entire OT. However, the researcher perceived that the MP were by far the most overlooked and underused books in the life of the church. This study has attempted to help the church live up to its stated commitment to living according to the Scriptures of the OT and the NT.

FBC's situation demanded an approach that allowed for both quantitative and qualitative data analysis to assess for meaningful change. The survey instrument utilized at the beginning and end of the research process was helpful in determining a degree of statistical significance in the outcome. While this data set speaks for itself in many ways, pairing it with the sermon evaluations and the focus group discussion has provided a more balanced information set from which to glean findings. This trio of data collection methods serves to accomplish triangulation, which increases confidence in the findings. At the beginning of the project, it was expected that the two most important components would be the survey results and the sermon evaluations.

The sermon evaluations provided participants with an opportunity to give written feedback that coupled the training from the workshops with expositions of specific texts from the MP. In a few cases, participants simply responded to the prompts on the evaluations, indicating their level of agreement or disagreement with a given statement. However, several of the participants took the time to provide additional comments. These expanded answers gave the researcher important information that provided a level of nuance that otherwise would not have

existed. Furthermore, the focus group discussion added an extra layer of communication that was extremely helpful.

Looking back on the experience, it is clear now that the focus group was much more than just a third spoke in the research wheel to provide additional validity for the project. While the evaluation forms allowed for written feedback from individuals, the focus group created an environment in which participants were able to interact with each other verbally. The give and take of the discussion time proved to be fruitful. Each person who participated in the focus group reported that the project had given them an entirely new understanding of the MP. When asked, “What did you think about the MP before we began this process?” one respondent said, “Nothing! Nothing. I did not really know what to make of them. I guess I always thought they were all about God’s wrath and the NT was where we learn about God’s grace.” Her candor was striking. Others also reported that they had previously thought of the MP as much more negative than other portions of Scripture. As a result, they struggled to see how these books could be applied today.

This project has been a meaningful experience for the researcher. It appears that the same could be said for those who participated in the research cohort. The Minor Prophets are an intriguing set of twelve books with a singular message, that God is holy, that sin must be judged, and that hope may be found only in God’s gracious provision of salvation. Although the MP do not refer to Jesus by name, they clearly anticipate the arrival of God’s chosen one who will fulfill all that God has promised. Studying these books, especially as it pertains to sermon preparation, has been edifying to say the least. After closely examining the books of the Twelve, one comes away with a renewed sense of God’s sovereign grace, and of His determination to accomplish His eternal plan through Christ.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This chapter includes a description of conclusions drawn from the action research. This is where all of the data detailed above coalesce with the information presented in Chapters One and Two to demonstrate why this project matters. It has been the researcher's observation in recent years that FBC Greenville has a limited grasp of how the OT and the NT are connected. The findings of the research have confirmed this perception. The specific problem addressed by this project was a perceived lack of understanding of how the Minor Prophets may be understood and applied by modern Christians. The purpose of this project was to determine if targeted training paired with clear, consistent expositional preaching has the potential to help fill such gaps in the life of the local church.

Research Implications

Much has been written in recent years about how the OT points to Christ. Varying methods, such as the Christotelic and Christocentric approaches, have been put forward to help Christians faithfully interpret the OT. One of the goals of this project has been to put that information into the hands of church members so that they will be better able to see how all of Scripture points to Christ. What a Christian believes will shape how he or she behaves. Therefore, it is vital that the people in the pews understand the Christ-centered nature of the Bible so they can read, study, and apply it to their lives. Proper application of Scripture has the potential to lead to personal growth, but it can also impact a church's overall health. People who have a clear sense of the Bible's Christ-centered message are more likely to be healthier

members of the local body. They will be better equipped to contribute to the life of the life of the church through worship, evangelism, ministry, and discipleship.

The results of this action research project showed a strong correlation between the workshops/sermons and participants' growth in understanding of what the Minor Prophets are about and how they apply today. Given the fact that the research cohort was made up of mostly older, educated adults who have spent a lot of time in Bible study, these results are especially promising. It is expected that similar trainings of a broader spectrum of the church population would benefit the congregation significantly. When people are equipped to understand and apply the Bible for themselves, they will be less likely to be intimidated by passages such as those found in the Minor Prophets.

Preachers often urge their people to spend more time in the Word. Faithful shepherds fervently desire that the flock will be nourished by their teaching and preaching. They also hope to see disciples take ownership of their own spiritual well-being. It is assumed that church members generally recognize that the Bible is important. In order to help people enjoy spending time in the Scriptures, church leaders will do well to help them understand what they are expected to read. However, significant portions of the Bible may not make sense to the average person in the pew. As observed in chapter two, a modest dose of biblical theology coupled with training in how to interpret the Minor Prophets christocentrically has the potential to remedy this problem. Indeed, it was surprising during this project to see just how a little training in theology and hermeneutics went such a long way.

FBC Greenville is full of wonderful people who love the Lord and are committed to the idea that the Bible is God's Word. However, there are many who have struggled to grasp how the OT and the NT are interconnected completely. The church's history suggests that preaching

has something to do with this. Over the years, there has been a lack of preaching from harder-to-understand texts like the Minor Prophets and very little expositional preaching that works through entire books of the Bible. This kind of preaching helps a congregation understand big themes within a book and helps them make whole-Bible connections that point to Jesus Christ. Making these kinds of connections is not only consistent with the NT pattern of interpretation and application, but it is also essential for helping modern believers grasp the ancient text of Scripture. As important as expositional preaching is for the life and health of the local church, there is an opportunity to increase understanding and cultivate deeper affections for God through teaching that augments the weekly sermon.

The data collected for this project underscores the need for ongoing training in the life of the church to supplement what may be gleaned from Sunday to Sunday. The kind of training described here focuses on helping church members understand how the Minor Prophets apply to Christians today. Recent scholarship has underscored the fact that the OT points to Christ in a variety of ways. This project has bridged a gap in the literature by proposing a scheme for helping church members see Christ in all of the OT. The lack of interest in studying books like the Minor Prophets may be attributed in large part to a lack of understanding of how these books relate to Christ's work and to the ministry of the local church. This project has demonstrated that supplemental instruction, such as workshops, are a meaningful way of complementing expository sermons.

As the project unfolded, there were some key themes that emerged. First, the eagerness with which participants engaged in the action research shows that there are people in the local church who earnestly desire to grow in their understanding of God's Word. Pastors must guard against the temptation of assuming that people desire the milk of the Word rather than the meat.

What may be taken as disinterest may actually be genuine ignorance. As people come to understand how the Bible's various parts are related, and how the whole Bible points to Christ, they are more likely to express interest in studying the Scriptures.

Having said that, it must be stated that there are two categories of people in churches that will likely respond quite differently to the kind of methods presented here. The first group is interested in Bible study, but ignorant of how certain portions of the OT relate to the NT. They are ready to learn but lack the skills necessary for desired growth. The second group is more apathetic to Bible study and therefore has minimal concern for connecting the two Testaments. This last group is without doubt the hardest to reach. Participants in this project have shown a willingness to engage in deep study, often entering uncharted territory in their quest for new knowledge. They have also expressed a desire for more people in the church to know God better through the study of His Word. It is hoped that their enthusiasm will foster greater involvement in future projects such as this one. They are perhaps best poised to shake disinterested brothers and sisters out of their apathy.

A second theme that emerged from the research was an increased awareness of how a church's educational ministries can work in concert with expository preaching to foster spiritual growth. This suggests that pastors should take a keen interest in what people are studying in Sunday school and other discipleship settings. In most churches, there is no direct link between the Sunday school hour and the preaching hour. This means that the weekly Bible lesson may have little or no correlation to what the pastor will be sharing in his sermon. While it is always a good thing for God's people to spend time in His Word, creating direct connections between a church's teaching and preaching ministries has the potential to help people learn to love the Scriptures more deeply. This is not only an important consideration for preachers, but also for

those involved in the design and implementation of church education programs. More will be said on specific applications of these ideas below after describing some the surprises that arose during the action research.

Identifying Surprises

Two of the most surprising takeaways from the project may be discussed in terms of emotional reactions to the process. First, it was surprising to observe the trepidation shown by some subjects who expressed concerns about their ability to contribute to the project. For example, one woman volunteered to help, but stated, “I am not sure I am smart enough for this, but I am willing to help if you need me.” A follow-up conversation revealed that she believed she should already know certain things before joining the research cohort. The researcher assured her that she was an excellent candidate for the project and helped her better understand the purpose and goals of the research. This may suggest that the researcher did a poor job of initially explaining the scope of the project. However, it seems that at least part of her reservation came from a sense of inadequacy when it comes to understanding the OT.

As noted above, these kinds of concerns may reflect a degree of poor communication during the recruiting process. If indeed, the researcher did a poor job of explaining things during the recruitment phase, this would account for the kind of fear described above. This does not mean the researcher did not relay pertinent information about the project. More likely, it seems that the researcher may have explained things in a way that were too technical, giving others the sense that they were inadequate for the task. Whether one or both of these is true, it is apparent that clear communication expressed in everyday language is vital for recruiting and for making potential volunteers feel welcome and confident.

A second comment at the end of the project shed additional light on participants' views of the OT. During the focus group discussion, one of those in attendance stated that she was surprised how much she enjoyed being part of the project. She found the material and the sermons much more interesting than she had thought they would be. Her remark drew agreement from the majority of those gathered around the table that evening. She stated that she had previously thought of the OT as being all about law, while the NT is all about grace. She was pleasantly surprised to learn just how deeply the thread of God's redeeming grace runs throughout the Scriptures. The fact that she learned something along the way confirmed both the need for this project and the effectiveness of the project design. The fact that she experienced joy during the learning process was music to the researcher's ears.

The researcher was surprised at the joy with which participants engaged with the Minor Prophets. The one-day workshops covered a lot of information in just a few hours. The three sessions were intense enough that three participants jokingly asked about receiving college credit for the day. Once the research process got started, the group began to become more comfortable with what was being asked of them. It was helpful to begin the sermon series (modeling phase) the day after conducting the workshops. This gave the participants an opportunity to observe in practice what they had discussed in theory. Some individuals wrote comments on their sermon evaluations that expressed excitement about what they were learning. The most enthusiastic responses came during the focus group meeting, as individuals reflected on the experience and commented on how it impacted them.

Research Applications

The study presented here served a specific purpose as part of an action research project. One question that must be asked is, are there other ways to apply the methodology utilized in this

project to educate and edify the folks at FBC? A second question that emerges is whether or not this kind of research has any other applications in other settings. In the following pages, the focus will be on ideas about how the research may be applied in other ways at FBC Greenville. Later on, some of the ways the research might be replicated in other contexts will be discussed.

Going from Theory to Practice

The most immediate way to engage church members in the kind of instruction described in this project is for the pastor to lead workshops that address gaps in biblical understanding. Another way is to train teachers and leaders in the church for faithful biblical exposition. In larger churches, it might be beneficial for a pastor to invest in a few individuals who could then teach the material to others in small groups at regular intervals. This would create a multiplying effect that would allow the pastor to equip and then supervise highly-trained individuals who are capable of helping others see how the OT points to Christ. If church leaders can get this kind of buy-in from key leaders and teachers, the researcher speculates that this type of training could have a significant positive impact on health of the church. This suggestion is based on the belief that the Bible is the church's one sure foundation for doctrine and practice. Orthodoxy should always lead to orthopraxy. Sound theology informs healthy doxology. In the end, God is glorified, and God's people are edified when they grasp the full scope of God's redeeming grace from all of Scripture.

When the participants for this study gathered for the workshop sessions in February 2024, they all came with the conviction that the Bible is God's Word and that it matters to their lives. What they were lacking was an understanding of how certain portions of the OT, such as the Minor Prophets, apply to twenty-first century believers. It was surprising to learn that some people did not know basic concepts such as the meaning of the name 'Minor Prophets'. It was

also surprising to learn that in many cases, participants either had not read the Minor Prophets or had never heard sermons from some of them. In a few cases, both of these were true. People sometimes fear what they do not understand. It became clear from those early sessions that many of the participants were nervous as they approached the Minor Prophets because they had not been taught to interpret and apply these texts christocentrically. This lack of understanding gave rise to uncertainty that led them to avoid texts they could not make sense of or explain.

By the end of workshop sessions, people were already beginning to see more clearly how and why the Minor Prophets matter. This was even more true after the intervention was completed. On the night of the focus group, the participants had a much more relaxed disposition. This may be explained in part by the informal nature of the gathering and the fact that they had achieved a new level of comfort with the Minor Prophets. They no longer looked at them as obscure and unrelatable; rather, they saw these books for what they are: timeless texts of Scripture that speak of God's glory and sovereignty, of human sinfulness and the need for repentance, and of God's gracious salvation and restoration.

Going Deeper

One thing that became apparent during this action research is that there are people at FBC who love Bible study and are willing to commit to going deeper. It was observed earlier that one of the primary motivations for participants who joined this study was to encourage their pastor in his academic pursuits. However, there is more to it than that. Participants showed a spiritual hunger that the researcher had not seen before. Even though they were encountering new material in a compressed timeframe, people at the workshop sessions expressed their appreciation for the content and relished the opportunity to get the kind of training that was provided.

During the focus group time, at least two people indicated that they would like to do something similar to this project again in the future. An idea that came up during the discussion was to basically do the same kind of workshops at a later time, making them available to anyone who wants to participate. Future workshops would focus on a particular book or genre and be related to an upcoming sermon series. The participants expressed their appreciation for how the workshops were directly tied to the sermon series. They showed interest in doing this kind of training in the future, even suggesting an ongoing strategy of intensive instruction offered throughout the year. Such ongoing instruction would occur as little as once a year or as often as quarterly. This is somewhat reminiscent of David Platt's idea for Secret Church.¹ The success of Platt's intensive teaching sessions is further evidence that there is a need for deeper discipleship and that there are those who are willing and eager to engage in it.

A similar suggestion was to plan weekend training sessions for Sunday school teachers with the idea that they would then instruct their classes using the same curriculum. This has the potential to be impactful because it would likely involve more people. Teachers, such as those who joined the research cohort, are more likely to be interested in this type of training. While many church members may not attend a special workshop, they would get at least some of the benefits of the training by sitting under the instruction of their Sunday school teachers and small group leaders. This strategy also has the advantage of training a select group of individuals who would then share what they have learned. This is the basic pattern of discipleship and ministry and has the potential to promote a more robust teaching ministry and a healthier church.

¹ Secret Church is a 6+ hour Bible study hosted by Dr. David Platt each spring. It began in 2006 after Platt's experience teaching through the entire OT and NT in an intensive format to brothers and sisters in restricted countries. The teaching is an intensive study of a particular topic or book of the Bible. For examples, this year's Secret Church was over six hours of teaching on the book of Ruth. See <https://radical.net/secret-church-events/>.

Devotional and Discipleship Curriculum

An additional strategy that could engage FBC members involves creating devotional content that touches on themes that will be addressed in upcoming sermons. These devotional articles could be included in the church newsletter, which is mailed to over 100 homes each month. It could also be sent out through the church email system. This idea has its limits as it would require short articles to be distributed on a regular basis, either daily, weekly, or monthly. Its effectiveness also rests on the fact that people who receive the content would have to be disciplined enough to read it in order to benefit from it.

Perhaps a better strategy would be to create Sunday school material that goes along with a sermon series for one month or up to one quarter. This is different from the above suggestion of training teachers and then having them teach the material in their classrooms. Instead, it calls for creating new material that teachers can use instead of standard Sunday school lessons. The teaching material could cover a longer time period if the pastor decided to preach through a large book of the Bible. This kind of content would require buy-in from teachers, but it has the potential to impact a greater number of people on a consistent basis. In this regard, it would be much better than the devotional material. Furthermore, having people study themes that overlap with the sermon during the hour before the worship time would ensure that the information is fresh on their minds. This would help them remember what they learned in Sunday school and what they heard in the sermon.

Sunday School Strategy

During the focus group, one participant suggested another strategy that would ideally be implemented each week during the Sunday school hour. She suggested that the pastor take one or two months, preferably during the summer, to teach a class in a large-group format. The class

could meet in the fellowship hall. This format would allow people to be together who are not normally in the same Sunday school class. This has the potential to enrich the church's fellowship, as well as their knowledge of Scripture.

The curriculum for these sessions would be made up of supplementary texts or background information on the book of the Bible through which the pastor chooses to preach. This would give regular teachers a much-needed break, would give the pastor more time to spend in the Scriptures with the flock, and would augment the sermons during this period of time. The pastor would have an opportunity to explore important information related to the day's text. He could explain important theological terms, explore historical or archaeological data, or teach broader theological themes that shape the book through which he is preaching. This would provide a solid foundation on which to build during the regular sermon time.

Caswell has noted that people who are deficient in their understanding of how the Minor Prophets point to Christ are often excited to learn how to read, study, and apply them to their personal lives.² Those who teach on a regular basis have also reported enthusiasm about taking this information into their classrooms, where they hoped to help other people grasp the Christ-centered nature of the OT prophets.³ The results of the current project run parallel to what Caswell discovered during his action research. The fact that both Caswell's study and the present project have arrived at similar findings, suggests that it is well worth the time and effort to equip laypersons who teach in the local church. Furthermore, the enthusiasm expressed by participants in both studies shows that this kind of project addresses a real need and that people value this type of equipping ministry.

² Caswell, "Teaching Leaders of Redeemer Church," 92–93.

³ Ibid.

Helping Church Members Become Christ-Centered

The goal of this project has been to bridge the gap between the more academic nature of the existing research and the needs of the local church. Who better to build that bridge than the pastor of the church? Pastors are well-positioned to impact others for fruitful study and faithful exposition. Those who preach regularly have the opportunity to set the tone for how a congregation views the Scriptures. A gospel-oriented pastor who preaches Christ-centered sermons sets an example for his people, showing not only what is important, but why it is important. As stated above, the goal of possessing more biblical information is that hearts and minds will experience gospel transformation. As Grimké observed in the last century, “The true mission of a church in the community where it is located is to preach the Gospel, with the double purpose, first, of winning men to an acceptance of Jesus Christ, and second, of building them up in faith and holiness.”⁴ Pastors are chiefly responsible to oversee this kind of ministry. They are primarily charged to edify their people through faithful gospel proclamation. This kind of preaching is marked by teaching and reproof, identifying how to live for Christ while lovingly correcting error. Ultimately this kind of ministry will help God’s people understand the Scriptures by showing them how all of the Bible points to Jesus Christ.

Research Limitations

This project was limited in a number of ways. Perhaps the most obvious limitation is its scope. As action research, this project was designed to address a specific problem in the life of a particular church. It is assumed that similar projects at other churches would present unique results. However, while the uniqueness of the church setting is an important consideration, it

⁴ Francis James Grimké, *Meditations on Preaching* (Madison, MS: Log College Press, 2018), 25.

should not alter the big-picture findings of the research. As the comparison with Caswell's research indicates, there is enough continuity in the findings to warrant replication. There is also ample evidence to suggest that this kind of training program can be successful in a variety of locations.

If this project was limited in terms of the setting it addressed, then it must also be said that it is limited in the portion of Scripture it treated. The particular focus of this thesis project has been the Minor Prophets. As noted throughout this project, these are some of the most overlooked books in the biblical canon. The results of the project showed significant growth in participants' ability to understand and apply the Minor Prophets christocentrically. The data show great promise for additional training that targets other portions of Scripture, such as the Major Prophets and apocalyptic literature. While the researcher chose to limit this project to focus on the Minor Prophets, it is expected that similar research in other areas would yield similar results.

As much as every pastor might wish his people would respond favorably to the kind of action research presented here, the fact is this may not reflect reality. Not every church member will want this kind of training. Pastors who preach regularly may expect that some congregants will resist appeals for their involvement. Indeed, as reported in chapter three, approximately 10 percent of FBC's regular attenders volunteered to take part in the research. At least some of those who participated may have done so out of a sense of obligation to support their pastor rather than because they were genuinely interested in the topic. Some may find this kind of project boring. Others may not have sufficient time to give to such things.

If church members may be reluctant to participate in projects like this, then the same may also be said for pastors and other church leaders. Pastors have busy schedules with many

pressing demands. Some may struggle to find time to prepare the kinds of lessons implemented in this intervention. With weeks filled with sermon preparation, visitation, counseling, and committee meetings, pastors may have a hard time prioritizing the kind of training described above. Furthermore, not all preachers have the training or gifting necessary to accomplish such a task. As noted in chapter two, there several reasons why many preachers choose to focus more on the NT. Among these are the fact that the OT is more ancient and can be harder to understand. This means sermons and lessons from OT texts generally require more time to prepare. This can also make it more difficult for pastors to write anything more than a sermon manuscript. Many seminaries do not equip pastors to produce original content other than sermons. Unless a person feels uniquely called and equipped to address significant gaps in biblical understanding, they may hesitate to engage their people beyond regular preaching and teaching opportunities.

These challenges can seem daunting. Indeed, taken all at once, the suggestions mentioned above are a bit overwhelming. Pastors are in a position to know what is most needed in their ministry setting. The disciplined pastor who chooses to incorporate some or all of these suggestions can adapt the methodology proposed here for purposes that best serve his needs and those of his people.

Further Research

Due to the brief timeframe covered by this action research, it is impossible to state with any certainty what the long-term effects of the training and modeling will be. One would hope that the things learned during the eight weeks of teaching and preaching will continue to aid participants long into the future. Further research is needed to determine whether or not such hope will be realized. Such a study should cover a larger time to see how well participants retain what they have learned. It would also be helpful to implement the survey instrument after

another six months or a year in order to measure retention among the original participants. Will attitudes toward the Minor Prophets continue to trend in a positive direction or will old ways of thinking creep back in? This is a question for another project.

Similarly, the present research does not address the immediate impact of targeted training (i.e., workshops) and modeling, such as a sermon series, on daily devotional habits, such as Bible reading. Further research is needed to understand whether a project like this might translate into a more enjoyable experience when reading through the Minor Prophets. This question is closely related to the one stated in the last paragraph. It seems likely that better retention of information would result in more positive attitudes toward the Minor Prophets, and therefore would be an aid for personal Bible reading. If this is the case, then church members may find themselves reading through daily Bible plans with enthusiasm and improved comprehension. Perhaps future research will be able to address this question.

Conclusion

This project has been enriching experience from start to finish. Preaching has been an important part of the researcher's life for over thirty years. As many sermons as those years represent, there are still areas of much-needed improvement. There is no moment at which one 'arrives' in ministry, and there is no moment at which a student or a pastor masters the Bible. The best one can hope for is to be mastered by the Bible, and by the glorious Savior who is at the heart of biblical teaching. Reading, writing, and perhaps most of all, engaging with the people to whom God has called this shepherd has rekindled a passion for pastoral ministry.

There is a great need for scholars who do research and produce the kind of literature cited in this thesis. However, there is also a great need for action research, the kind of research that examines issues from ground-level and joins a group of people who, together, actively seek

solutions to real-world problems. In this case, the goal has been to address the problem of a lack of understanding of how the Minor Prophets may be applied in the lives of members at FBC Greenville, KY. The results of this study have shown that targeted training, such as workshops, have a role to play in helping people love and understand God's Word. These kinds of trainings are only part of the equation. God has ordained preaching as a means of His grace. As the Bible is faithfully preached and taught, it will continue to change lives as people are captivated by the glory of the Christ who central to all of Scripture.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: Establishing a Christ-Centered Expository Approach to the Old Testament Minor Prophets at FBC Greenville, KY

Principal Investigator: John Michael Galyen, Doctoral Candidate at Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

Invitation to be part of a research study

You are invited to participate in a research study. As a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Theology at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the Doctor of Ministry degree. Participants for this study must be people who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and are members in good standing of FBC Greenville *or* non-members who regularly attend the morning worship service. You must be at least twenty-one years old to apply. Those who teach Sunday school or lead a Bible study group, or who teach children on Wednesday nights or during VBS are especially encouraged to apply.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of this research is to better understand how expository preaching can help worshipers, teachers, and leaders understand and apply the Old Testament Minor Prophets from a Christ-centered perspective.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in an anonymous survey both before and after a series of sermons is preached. These should 30–45 minutes each.
2. Participate in a one-day, three-part seminar that will be scheduled on a Saturday morning with lunch provided. This should last for a total of 5–6 hours, not including time spent eating lunch.
3. Complete three sermon evaluations in weeks two, four, and six. Each of these should take approximately 30 minutes to one hour.
4. Be willing to take part in a focus group for further discussion. If you are selected for this, you can expect the meeting to last for 2–2.5 hours.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive compensation or other direct benefit from taking part in this study.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

All information gathered for the purposes of this research project will be held in confidence by the researcher. The records of this study will be kept private. Names will be omitted from questionnaires and published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While sharing personal details from the group meeting is discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group. Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and/or in a locked file cabinet. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted and/or all hardcopy records will be shredded.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with First Baptist Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is John M. Galyen. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Brandon Pugh, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty

researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the research using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE RECRUITMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Recruitment Letter/Email

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my research is to understand better how to help believers understand and apply the Old Testament Minor Prophets in a way that is Christ-centered. I am writing to invite you to join my, study, as we strive to help believers better understand how the Old Testament points to Jesus Christ. You will be helping your pastor, your church, and perhaps other believers outside our congregation, learn to love and appreciate the OT in new ways.

Participants must be at least twenty-one years of age and have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They should be actively involved in the life of the church as a member or regular attender of the Sunday morning service. Participants will be asked to take two anonymous, online surveys (one at the beginning and one at the end of the research), listen to eight sermons, complete three sermon evaluation forms, and, if selected, take part in a focus group. It should take approximately 12 hours over a period of eight weeks to complete the procedures listed. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please click here (*hyperlink to online survey to be inserted later*) to complete the initial survey. If you meet my participant criteria, I will contact you to confirm your enrollment in the study. A consent document will be provided to you if you meet the study criteria and will be given to you one week before the project begins. The consent document contains additional information about my research.

Because participation is anonymous, you do not need to sign and return the consent document unless you would prefer to do so. After you have read the consent form, please click the link to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study. If you choose to participate, you will be presented with consent information prior to the initial survey.

Sincerely,

John M. Galyen
Pastor & Doctoral Candidate



Recruitment: Verbal Script (Phone or In Person)

Hello [Potential Participant],

As a graduate student in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a DMIN degree. The purpose of my research is to understand better how preaching can help people understand how the Old Testament Minor Prophets point to Jesus Christ, and if you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be 21 years old and be a member and/or actively attending the Sunday morning worship service at FBC Greenville. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a survey at the beginning and end of the project, will participate in a one-day workshop, and will listen to and evaluate eight sermons. Some participants may be asked to participate in a focus group. It should take approximately 12 hours to complete the procedure listed. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

Would you like to participate? [Yes] Great, could I get your email address so I can send you the link to the survey? [No] I understand. Thank you for your time. I would appreciate your prayers as I work on this research project. I'm praying that it will help me be a better preacher and will help our church understand some parts of the OT that are often overlooked or misunderstood.

Consent document is provided as part of the initial survey, or I can provide a paper copy for you that includes some additional information. Because participation is anonymous, you do not need to sign and return the consent document unless you would prefer to do so. If you would like to participate, you simply click on the link to complete the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE PRE-/POST-INTERVENTION SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Please read the following statements carefully and mark each one according to the number that most closely matches your response as follows:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Q1. Both the Old and New Testaments were given by God to help His people understand His plans and purposes.

1 2 3 4 5

Q2. I have read through all 12 of the Minor Prophets at least once in my lifetime.

1 2 3 4 5

Q3. I can provide a basic definition of what biblical exposition is.

1 2 3 4 5

Q4. The Bible has one central theme uniting both the OT and the NT.

1 2 3 4 5

Q5. The Old Testament still applies to believers today.

1 2 3 4 5

Q6. I believe all of the Bible points to Jesus Christ in some way.

1 2 3 4 5

Q7. God has revealed Himself progressively throughout human history.

1 2 3 4 5

Q8. I enjoy reading and studying the Minor Prophets.

1 2 3 4 5

Q9. When I study the Bible, I focus on getting at what the original author intended to communicate before looking for ways the text applies to me.

1 2 3 4 5

Q10. Knowing and loving Jesus is the most important thing for my spiritual life and health.

1 2 3 4 5

Q11. I understand clearly the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

1 2 3 4 5

Q12. The original message of the Old Testament no longer applies today.

1 2 3 4 5

Q13. I am confident in my ability to explain the metanarrative of Scripture.

1 2 3 4 5

Q14. The Old Testament is primarily about the law, while the New Testament is primarily about grace.

1 2 3 4 5

Q15. The Old Testament contains many examples foreshadowing and pictures that point to Jesus Christ

1 2 3 4 5

Q16. Jesus is the central figure of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments.

1 2 3 4 5

Q17. The Bible's main storyline is God's redeeming work in and through Jesus Christ.

1 2 3 4 5

Q18. It is impossible to fully grasp the truth of the Old Testament apart from God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

1 2 3 4 5

Q19. There are basic rules and principles that can help a person read and understand the Old Testament.

1 2 3 4 5

Q20. The Minor Prophets are as important as any other portions of Scripture for Christians.

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE SERMON EVALUATION FORM

This form is designed to help you evaluate the sermon you heard most recently. As you read each statement, please consider how the sermon did or did not accomplish what is being described. Your answers are completely confidential and will only be read by the researcher.

Date of Sermon: _____

Sermon Text: _____

Sermon Title: _____

How did you hear the sermon? (Circle One) **In-person** **Online**

Directions: The following statements are intended to help you to provide an evaluation of the sermon using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree. Please circle your response.

1. The sermon made application that was consistent with the method previously taught in the workshops I attended.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comments:

2. After listening to this sermon, I have a clearer understanding of how this particular book of the Minor Prophets points to Jesus Christ.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comments:

3. After listening to the sermon, I have a clearer understanding of how this particular book of the Minor Prophets applies to my life.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comments:

4. Modeling biblical application through preaching is an effective tool to equip believers to properly understand and apply the Minor Prophets.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comments:

Additional Comments:

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IRB Approval Letter

Date: 12-14-2023

IRB #: IRB-FY23-24-876

Title: Establishing a Christ-Centered Understanding of the Minor Prophets at First Baptist Church,
Greenville, Kentucky

Creation Date: 11-21-2023

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: John Galyen

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

		Decision No Human Subjects
Submission Type Initial	Review Type Exempt	Research

Key Study Contacts

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