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Discussion of How to Effectively Communicate the Gospel Considering Generations, Cultures, and Paul's Biblical Example.

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DISCUSSION OF HOW TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL
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Chapter One - Introduction

The gospel message, when understood, is the most powerful truth known to man. It is for this reasons that individuals who desire to communicate this truth must consider the information presented in this paper. Generations, cultures, and the example of Apostle Paul, are all factors worth discussing when considering how to become a better communicator. Through a literature review followed by chapters on practical strategies, this paper will empower communicators with tools to relate to their audience and in turn, successfully deliver the message of Jesus Christ.

This paper will have two main focuses: generations and cultures.[1] The generations that will be addressed are the adolescent generation (ages 12-18) and the older-adult generation (ages 65+). At the conclusion of the section on generations there will also be a section on marketing. That section, though small, is purposed to enlighten the readers with some interesting information on how marketing strategies can have an impact on the message of the gospel and the way that it is delivered. Factors that influence cultures will be addressed in chapters three and five, followed by practical tools to place the acquired information into action. The study of culture will be done within the North American context due to the fact that the United States is filled with people of varying cultures and backgrounds. As opposed to addressing cultures within the context of the mission field, this paper will discuss the way that the mission field has come to North America and how the gospel message should be taught accordingly.

In order to clearly demonstrate the best way to approach the Gospel within the framework of the information listed above, this paper will be divided into several chapters. Chapter 2 is a Literature Review, with a section on generations as well as a section on culture. Chapter 3, which

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[1] Throughout this paper, *culture* will be described as a group of people with specific characteristics that defines them and sets them apart. These groups of people classified by characteristics are usually classified geographically and labeled as Hispanics, Asians, Americans, etc.

is titled, "Generations – Research Applied," will offer practical application of the research found in regards to the generations. Chapter 4, "Cultures – Research Applied," will provide practical steps for implementing the knowledge of culture that has been recorded in the literature review. Chapter 5 will provide a biblical example of these considerations by looking at the Apostle Paul. One of the most influential leaders of the early years of the Christian faith had a distinct ability to preach the Gospel. His example, taken from his letters in the New Testament, will provide the reader with a tangible demonstration of what it means to consider the audience being addressed.

The intended purpose of this thesis is to enlighten ministers with information that will improve their communication of the Gospel. Taking audiences into consideration is one of the most vital factors in any form of communication, and it is something that has been implemented by great communicators throughout history. Generations and cultures surround every minister; consequently, every minister should take the necessary measures to consider their audiences in multiple ways. Paul said it best, "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings." (1 Cor. 9:22b-23 NIV)

Chapter Two - Review of Literature

Communicating the message of Jesus Christ to different generational cohorts is a privilege as well as a challenge for preachers in today's society. Each generation has been and continues to be influenced by different factors, causing there to be slight as well as drastic differences in the way that each generation receives the message of the gospel. This literature review will be separated into two sections: generational considerations and cultural considerations. The first will specifically focus on comparing two generational cohorts: the adolescent generation and the older adults. These cohorts will be compared in terms of the impact that society has had and continues to have on them. This review will also include the way that these cohorts receive marketing today and how preachers can use marketing strategies to convey the message of the gospel.

The second section of this literature review will focus specifically on cultures and the way that ministers should consider cultures while communicating the gospel. This section will be different than the first in the type of sources that are used and the way that the information is interacted with. The section on culture contains less qualitative data, and more data from books written by authors who back up their information with Scripture and personal experience. Although this thesis focuses on the gospel being preached to a multicultural audience in a North American context, the sources that will be used for the culture section within the

literature review are mission-minded. Factoring in the information relayed by missionaries in the field will serve as an asset to all communicators who realize that a church within the United States can be a mission field within itself due to the amount of cultures that can be found in the North America.

Generations

Adolescents and Society

The 21st century has seen a high level of cultural change, particularly within the context of affluence both economically and technologically. When considering preaching methods for adolescents, it is important to take into account teaching methods for adolescents. Floud made reference to Durkehim when he stated that a teacher gains respect not because of his or her position, but because of his or her personal connection with the student. Floud addressed the fact that when a society grows affluently, the roles of teachers change. When there is an expansion of money and technology, the students expect, receive, and process information differently than the traditional way that the teacher is accustomed to presenting it. In other words, an evolving society can facilitate a gap between the student and the teacher.[2]

After considering the importance of a personal connection addressed by

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[2] Jean Floud, "Teaching in the Affluent Society," in *British Journal of Sociology* 13, no. 4 (December 1962), 299.

Floud, it is important to realize that it is not simply whether or not a connection

will be made, but how the connection will be made. Although Hashemi's article,

"A Comparative Analysis of Traditional and Modern Modes of Preaching," refers

to preaching as opposed to teaching, it is similar to Floud's on the basis of

accommodating to a changing society in order to communicate with the adolescent

generation. According to Hashemi, preachers should consider whether or not a

message should be delivered through the same channel and the same feedback be

expected, compared to changing the channel of communication according to the

changes in society. He stated that there is a traditional and a modern way to share

the gospel. The traditional way was described as face-to-face communication,

while the modern method was described as one that uses media. He further

explained that when modern methods are used, the audience feedback is limited

and the connection between the receiver and the initiator of the message is

removed.[3]

The article, "Parent-Adolescent Relationship Quality as a Moderator for the

Influence of Parent's Religiousness on Adolescents' Religiousness and

Adjustment" by Kim-Spoon (et al.), brought an interesting perspective on

responses of teenagers to religion. She addressed the influence that a parent-child

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[3] Seyed Zeia Hashemi and Mohammad Reza Javadi Yeganeh, "A Comparative Analysis of Traditional and Modern Modes of Religious Preaching," in *Asian Journal of Social Science* 37, no. 2 (April 2009), 274–283.

attachment can have on the child. Kim-Spoon assessed religiousness from both an

organizational and a personal aspect. Her study was conducted on 322 adolescents

ages 10-15 years old, and their parents. Both the religiousness of the parents and of

the adolescents were assessed through the use of different questionnaires such as

the Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality, and Jessor and

Jessor's Value on Religion Scale. The participants of the survey were primarily

assessed through the use of the Likert Scale when answering questions about their

religiousness. After her research, she concluded that when parents attempt to instill

religious values on their children as opposed to developing emotional support and

communication, internalizing problems can be caused for the child.[4]

In "Religious Reference Groups and the Persistence of Normative Behavior:

an Empirical Test," Roberts (et al.) addressed the importance of social bonds and

the role that they can play in sustaining the religious commitment of individuals.

He tested this theory, the Reference Group Theory, on a group of young people

ages 18-37.[5] 1,109 students were selected for the study and 339 questionnaires

were returned. The questionnaires focused on measuring three different dimensions

of religiosity: (1) current church membership, (2) subjective assessment of strength

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[4] Jungmeen Kim-Spoon, Gregory Longo, and Michael McCullough, "Parent-Adolescent Relationship Quality as a Moderator for the Influences of Parents' Religiousness on Adolescents' Religiousness and Adjustment," in *Journal of Youth & Adolescence* 41, no. 12 (December 2012), 1576–1587.

[5] Although this young age group is older than the one being addressed by this thesis, the research can add valuable information to this study.

of religious faith, and (3) beliefs about God, the hereafter, and salvation through Jesus Christ. The third dimension was measured by combining all three belief items into a Religious Beliefs scale which ranged from 3-15. Roberts concluded that people are influenced by their growing up years and reinforced by the influence of individuals in their current environment.[6]

Older Adults and Society

Timmerman addressed three older-adult generations and the way that each one was influenced by different events in society and history at particular times. His methodology was simply the combination of historical data and literature that addressed certain aspects of the generational cohorts discussed. He referred to the Leading-Edge Boomers (60-69yrs), the Silent Generation (70-83yrs.), and the GI Generation (83+yrs.) Timmerman noticed that the oldest generation was primarily influenced by World War II, causing individuals in this cohort to have a communal mentality, one that focuses on the good of the country as opposed to the advancement of the individual. The Silent Generation was divided into two sections: one that leaned towards the conservatism of the 1930's, and one that leaned towards the Leading-Edge Boomers. These Boomers were influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, Elvis Presley, and the first TV set. These Boomers were

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[6] Alden E. Roberts, Jerome R. Koch, and D. Paul Johnson, "Religious Reference Groups and the Persistence of Normative Behavior: An Empirical Test," in *Sociological Spectrum* 21, no. 1 (January 2001), 81–98.

more rebellious and liberal which resulted in a self-driven mentality as opposed to the communal mentality of the older generation.[7]

Giordano wrote a short article that primarily stated the fact that older adults between the ages of sixty-five and eighty-five have a positive attitude towards aging. These adults also seek for help with ways to improve the quality of their lives.[8] This article combined literature that primarily addressed social phenomena such as affluence, economic security, and education, and also addressed family life. In addressing family life, the author focused on marriage, divorce, remarriage, and the family network. To conclude, the author addressed the implications that all of these factors have on shaping the perspectives of older adults.

In the same way that the society where they grew up has established many perspectives for older adults, the current society has the ability to disengage the older members of the community. This is a point of view that Rahtz established when he mentioned the Disengagement Theory which states that aging causes mutual withdrawal between society and elders. He also brought to the table the Activity Theory which refers to older adults becoming disengaged from society because of societal pressures. In other words, the older generation can find itself with a loss of social roles which results in having to look for alternatives to fill the

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[7] Sandra Timmermann, "What a Difference a Generation Makes: How Our Life Experiences Shape Our Viewpoints and Behaviors," in *Journal of Financial Service Professionals* 61, no. 3 (May 2007), 25–28.

[8] Jeffrey A. Giordano, "Parents of the Baby Boomers: A New Generation of Young-Old," in *Family Relations* 37, no. 4 (October 1988), 411–414.

voids. This leads to the Socialization Theory which is when a person adapts to his or her society and in turn adopts particular skills. Rahtz also addressed the fact that due to the loss of social roles, marketers in television try to structure their products in a way that will fit the needs of the elderly who are looking for self-identification.[9]

A different perspective on the older generation was addressed in *Generativity among Young, Midlife, and Older Adults*, where McAdams studied three cohorts in regards to their generativity: young (22-27), midlife (37-42), and old (67-72). Generativity is the pursuit of an individual to establish the next generation. All of the subjects of the study lived in Evanston, Illinois in the fall of 1990. The study used several different methods of data intake including the Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS) which is a self-reported scale that is designed to assess individual differences in generative concern. Four scales from the Jackson Personality Research Form were also used as well as a behavior checklist, personal strivings measure, sentence-completion, three life experiences, and a measurement of life satisfaction. The study concluded that older adults care more about generativity than younger adults do, but midlife adults care more about generativity than both older and younger adults.[10]

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[9] Don R. Rahtz, M. Joseph Sirgy, and H. Lee Meadow, "The Elderly Audience: Correlates of Television Orientation," in *Journal of Advertising* 18, no. 3 (September 1989), 9–20.

[10] Dan P. McAdams, Ed de St. Aubin, and Regina L. Logan, "Generativity among Young, Midlife, and Older Adults," in *Psychology and Aging* 8, no. 2 (June 1993), 221–30.

Marketing

Now that the concepts of society have been explored in both the young and old cohorts, the following sources will analyze marketing, (The chapter titled "Generations – Research Applied" will explain the relationship between marketing and presenting the gospel.) Johnson's article, "From Religious Markets to Religious Communities: Contrasting implications for Applied Research," addressed the relationship between religion and the market in that there are religious rewards and costs that people look for. He also mentioned that people's orientations are both personal and communal; both sides of the spectrum must be considered when considering an audience. Another important point that Johnson made was that those establishing and presenting religion must learn preferences and create new preferences in order to reach consumers.[11]

In "A Guide to Consumerism," Day addressed consumerism from two different perspectives; that of Vance Packard, and that of President Kennedy. The former believed that consumerism was all about expanding consumers' needs and wants while declining the quality and service. On the other hand, Kennedy believed in establishing the rights of the consumers. These rights included safety, information, a choice, and a voice. In making these distinctions, Day addressed

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[11] D. Paul Johnson, "From Religious Markets to Religious Communities: Contrasting Implications for Applied Research," *Review of Religious Research* 44, no. 4 (June 2003), 326.

literature that revealed the differences between Packards' and Kennedy's perspectives and added what he believed to be the more efficient form of consumerism.[12]

Coleman's article evaluated three cohorts and their agenda-setting. This term, agenda-setting, refers to the mass media placing a focus on particular issues so that people find those issues more important than others. Coleman began his article with a literature review dealing with agenda setting, media use of young adults, political information and behavior in young adults, and generational differences and civic engagement. After the literature review, Coleman addressed his methodology. Coleman took a public opinion survey of 1,023 adults in Louisiana in 2004 and asked questions addressing the condition of Louisiana. He then asked the respondents "yes or no" questions focusing on news. He conducted a second study similar to the first. With the results from these studies he concluded that the level of media exposure relates to agenda-setting effects.[13]

Adolescents and Marketing

Moschis conducted a study of 806 adolescents from thirteen schools in seven towns and cities throughout Wisconsin. In his survey he directly assessed

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[12] George S. Day, and David A. Aaker, "A Guide to Consumerism," *Journal of Marketing* 34, no. 3 (July 1970), 12-19.

[13] Renita Coleman and Maxwell McCombs, "The Young and Agenda-Less? Exploring Age-Related Differences in Agenda Setting on the Youngest Generation, Baby Boomers, and the Civic Generation" in *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 84, no. 3 (September 2007), 495–508.

some variables by inquiring about attitudes toward advertising, brands, stores, prices, salespeople, and knowledge of consumer affairs. Indirectly, he assessed views on materialism, social motivations, and economic motivations. The final variable that he assessed dealt with self-reported consumer activism. Moschis concluded with three main points; first, adolescents develop resistance to marketing. Second, they understand marketing strategies, and lastly, they become sophisticated consumers.

Churchill conducted a study on 806 students in order to assess the way that different factors influenced students' perspective on consumer information.[14] He concluded that friends, television, and peers are all factors that affect the perspective of adolescents on consumer information.[15] *Television and Interpersonal Influences on Adolescent Consumer Learning* is an important article to consider with our topic because of the amount of influence that media has on the lives of young consumers.

Communicating the Gospel

Taking into consideration both the social as well as the marketing aspect of religion in the lives of both the adolescent and the older-adult cohorts, a general idea of different ways to communicate the gospel should also be addressed. One

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[14] Churchill and Moschis conducted this study together; the details mentioned above will not be repeated.
[15] George Moschis, Churchill Jr., and Gilbert A., "Television and Interpersonal Influences on Adolescent Consumer Learning" in *Journal of Consumer Research* 6, no. 1 (Business Source Premier), 23-35.

concept that can be grasped for communicating the gospel to both cohorts is the importance of laughter. Berk conducted a literature review and stated that laughter generates both physiological and psychological benefits. His emphasis in the article was that the older generation could benefit extremely from laughter because it could serve as aerobic exercise. Berk stated that the older generation should be equipped with this information so that humor becomes a more implemented part of their lives.[16] Regardless of Berk's emphasis on elders, humor and laughter is a factor that should be implemented in the communication of the gospel message for both cohorts.

Contrasting from Berk's more general factor in communicating, the next three articles addressed some specific ways to communicate the gospel to each cohort. First, Senter addressed the Sonlife Strategy's efficiency in communicating with adolescents and then shared some of the gaps that he found in Sonlife's approach after attempting to duplicate the Sonlife study. The Sonlife focuses on three main points in the gospel: (1) What did Jesus do? (2) With who? (3) When? Through the use of the harmony of the Gospels, the Sonlife creator, Dann Spader, established these three principles in order to better equip adolescents with the gospel message. Senter's points disagree with Spader's structure of the harmony of

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[16] Ronald A. Berk, "The Active Ingredients in Humor: Psychophysiological Benefits and Risks for Older Adults," *Educational Gerontology* 27, no. 3/4 (April 2001), 323–339.

the Gospels. His article concluded the addition of his own results after having attempted to duplicate Spade's study. Senter concluded with three actions that Jesus consistently took that should be the basis of presenting the gospel: (1) miracles and teaching, (2) modeling and mentoring, and (3) engaging and disengaging.[17]

Different from the Sonlife Strategy are the ideas established by both Bryan and Boling. Bryan addressed a spiritual model that he established on the basis of some biblical elders. His biblical model for the spiritual growth was divided into faith, prayer, and service. When working on his model, Bryan took into consideration Erik Erikson's epigenetic model and established that older-adults are seeking for a sense of integrity in comparison to a sense of despair.[18] Boling had a similar structure as Bryan did in regards to the spiritual formation of the older generation, but he developed it with several additional variables. He believed in relationship, worship, prayer, Bible study, showing the faith, and ministry or service. He established that the best work to reveal spiritual formation in the lives of older adults was to look for a demonstration of Galatians 5:22-23.[19] The main approach of these authors was the inclusion of literature reviews as well as

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[17] Mark H. Senter III, "Is the Sonlife Strategy the Strategy of Jesus? Replicating Dann Spader's Study of a Harmony of the Gospel," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2002), 23–48.

[18] William J. Bryan, "Lessons from the Exodus Elders," *Journal of Religion, Spirituality, & Aging* 21, no1-2 (2009): 17-35.

[19] Dan Boling, "Spiritual Formation and the Work of Older Person's in the Church," Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging 22, no.1/2 (2010):55-69.

personal testimonies from older people within their church.

Culture

As mentioned at the beginning of this literature review, sources primarily provide information on culture from a mission-minded perspective. Some of the information, such as the one discussed in the next paragraph deals with some psychological ideas and some sources will deal with some practical steps that should be implemented. It is important to keep in mind the thesis of this paper: how to communicate the gospel considering generations, <u>cultures</u>, and Paul's biblical example. As one reads this section of the literature review, it is beneficial to remember that these concepts are not limited to the mission field, rather, they can be applied to ministry within a local context.

One of the most important aspects of considering cultures within the context of a message is having a clear understanding of what is meant by the word *culture*. According to Lingenfelter, *culture* describes the sum of the different characteristics in a people's way of life. This is established through personal culture and shared culture. Personal culture is the combination of what an individual learns as a child (that he or she considers undoubtedly true,) and what the individual learns from experiences and time. Shared culture is what many times is distinctively noticed from one culture to the next, this includes common beliefs, values, and a way of life that is not only shared among individuals in a culture, but reinforced and taught

down generationally. Prior to addressing the distinctions among different shared

cultures, Lingenfelter enforces the idea of becoming incarnate within as culture is

the only way to effectively communicate to individuals within that particular

culture. This incarnation refers to that of Jesus becoming a human in order to

communicate a clear message to the world.

Once his idea of culture was established, Lingenfelter listed six elements

found in every culture that could create tension when not understood in the midst

of communication from one culture to another. These are: time, judgement,

handling crises, goals, and vulnerability. According to Lingenfelter, each of these

elements can be found in every shared culture and consequently, in the personal

culture of every individual. The author separates each of the elements listed above

into two orientations: time/event orientation, dichotomistic/holistic thinking,

crisis/noncrisis orientation, task/person orientation, status/achievement focus,

concealment of vulnerability/willingness to expose vulnerability. These

dichotomies will be addressed and explained within the context of communicating

the gospel in Chapter 4. After dedicating a chapter to each one of these

dichotomies, the author emphasized the importance of communicating to different

cultures in a way that considers each element.[20]

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[20] Sherwood Lingenfelter, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* 2nd ed. (Baker Academic, 2003).

The following source was also based on missions, but was founded on bringing together people of different perspectives and assembling the discussed information into the author's work. Gonzalez, similar to Lingenfelter, also emphasized the significance of incarnational ministry, but did so while considering different perspectives. Theologians from different ethnic minorities gathered together to discuss important topics found within Christianity from the perspectives of their individual ethnic backgrounds. This "roundtable" where they met, enlightened each of them with an understanding of Christianity from distinct perspectives. These conversations were the foundation for Gozalez's book on how to integrate cultures and one's understanding of the gospel. His book, along with the discussions that took place at the roundtable, focused on the doctrines of the Word, creation, salvation and ecclesiology. When the church's understanding of the latter doctrines are limited to one dominant ethnic group, the gospel can become distorted.

Along with the conversations that took place with theologians from ethnic minorities, Gonzalez based his study on an understanding of the gospel being presented through four distinct perspectives: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. He mentioned the fact that just like Scripture was developed through different witnesses, or accounts, it must be understood in a similar way. The author called this type of understanding of the gospel a "catholic" one, in other words, all-

encompassing. Throughout his book, one of his most implemental points is that Christ does not come to a people outside of culture; attempting to remove culture would make for a Christ who is not incarnate. After stating his perspective on the importance or presenting Christ through culture, Gonzalez pointed out that this does not mean removing one culture and clothing the gospel with another culture, rather there needs to be a weaving of cultures so that the full gospel can be obtained. When the latter is not understood, a dominant culture will focus so much on abstract topics, that they lose sight of the impact and influence that differing interpretations of the Christian faith could have on their own culture. Gonzalez ended this section with a warning against cultural romanticism. This term refers to the fact that in the midst of recognizing and acknowledging the input of different cultures on the gospel, it is dangerous to begin to think that a culture is in no need of redemption. A dominant culture who is ministering to another must consider and embrace said culture without allowing that culture to take so much control that it begins holding precedence over the gospel.[21]

Gonzalez spoke of several doctrines of the church that were addressed at the roundtable. His chapter on Ecclesiology not only mentioned churches abroad, but churches in the western world. He portrayed the way that the church in the United

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[21] Justo L. Gonzalez, "Introduction," and "A Vision of Catholicity," in *Out of Every Tribe & Nation: Christian Theology of the Ethnic Roundtable* (Abingdon Press, 1992), 13-37.

States can be limited to a dominant culture because of a lack of consideration for the minority cultures. Three of the several examples that he gave of differences between minority groups and the dominant western culture were: attending church of social purposes, the frequency of their attendance and their desire to belong.[22]

Fuller briefly approached the topic of cross-cultural ministry in one of the chapters of his book on missions. In order to best assess cultural tensions in the field of missions, Fuller conducted a review of literature that encompassed different missionary approaches to culture, approaches that have been seen throughout history. He did this by taking into account specific countries and the way that missionaries have impacted natives with the Christian message. One of the author's most concrete statements was that "Cross-cultural communication is the essence of missionary work."[23] One of the main points referred to was the idea of authenticity. People in the African culture (who he focused on in this chapter,) desired to preserve their culture as a sign of self-respect to the country and the people within it. He went on to mention that when missionaries focus so much on building a church, they can lose sight of the importance of sensitivity when bringing Christianity to a group of people who are different than the missionary.

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[22] Ibid., 100-104

[23] W. Harold Fuller "The Crucible of Culture," in *Mission-Church Dynamics* (William Carey Library, 1980), 145.

To finish off this section of his book, Fuller listed three things that can be said about Christianity and culture according to Gottfried Osei-Mensah who has pastored a church in Kenya. He mentioned that danger in adapting so much to culture that syncretism could take root. His understanding of this syncretism was based on the fact that all cultures are based on the culture of the sinful man. If the latter becomes intertwined with Christianity, it results in syncretism. The second point he mentioned was that the Word of God could become corrupted by the sinful man; man cannot add or subtract to the Word. The last point that he stated was that culture is constantly changing and for this reason, a higher and unchanging source must be recognized. Once Osei-Mensah's ideas were established, the author concluded with the understanding that man must return to God as opposed to returning to culture.[24]

Similar to the three sources mentioned above, Terry, Smith and Anderson dedicated some chapters in their book to the idea of communicating the gospel message in a missional setting. Their methodology was a literature review of other authors who addressed these topics as well as a breakdown of different strategies to be used in missional work throughout different countries. They began this section by defining culture as "the totality of human learned, accumulated experience

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[24] Ibid., 145-156.

which is socially transmitted within a given societal group. Culture is the shared and integrated patterns of behavior exhibited by a particular group."[25] Once the authors defined culture, they emphasized the fact that culture is the factor that drives a society in a specific direction. Due to the latter, the book further explained that since culture provides direction it can serve as a blueprint for society, or as *a way of life*. The authors emphasized that each culture can only be addressed as one way of life as opposed to the *only way of life*. The next point addressed was that of ethnocentrism which deals with people within a culture believing that their way of life is the only right way. Although it can be implied, the authors further explained that ethnocentrism does not only assume that they have the only correct way, but that any other way is backward or evil. As the authors continued to address the readers' understanding of culture, they clearly stated that culture is learned. Communication from generation to the next generation is the way that culture is taught within a society.

Once the authors established their view of culture, they transitioned to the importance of adjusting a message as well as church in general to a particular culture. This process was labeled as accommodation and the local culture who the

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[25] John M. Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson "Culture: The Milieu of Missions, and "Cross-Cultural Communication," in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions* (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 261.

missionaries communicate with was labeled the receptor culture. According to the text, this accommodation process includes a factor labeled contextualization which refers to the specific methods used by communicators in order for a message to be clearly communicated. Four principles were described in the text as tools for successful accommodation: 1) Remaining true to the biblical foundation, 2) maintaining the purity of the biblical foundation, 3) expressing the pure biblical message to the people in ways that are relevant, meaningful, communicative and acceptable, and 4) facilitating the people with methods of expressing the gospel message in ways that aligned with their own mannerisms, words, and terms.

Cross-cultural communication was addressed in the following chapter of the text through the lens of *identification*; using Paul's example as a cross-cultural communicator. The authors used this idea of identification to provide the viewers with the best way to effectively communicate with an audience. The first point made was that communication is always taking place, regardless of whether or not someone is speaking. The authors specified the importance of recognizing actions as being of equal value as words in the context of communicating the gospel. The next point made was that a communicator must share a beginning point with his or her audience. Another point made was that the communicator must be receptor oriented as opposed to being source oriented. Although this is done in many ways, one of the practical methods mentioned was the unproductive use of words that

only Christians would be familiar with such as: piety, doctrine, theological and sanctification. Although many other points were made, the last point from this book that will be addressed in Chapter 4 is the need for being just as willing to listen as one is to speak.[26]

Compared to the other sources used in this literature review, this source focuses on the more general idea of cultures coming together for the glory of God. Through the use of Scripture, along with his experience as a Native American, Randy Woodley devoted "Living in Color" to the idea of living in a multicultural world the way that God intended: through finding and restoring unity and identity between distinct groups throughout the world. Although his entire work is rich in information that could not only serve ministers of the gospel, but all people, his chapter titled "Getting Beyond "Getting Along," details seven steps that should be taken in order to bring biblical healing to areas where differences between people have been tolerated as opposed to being celebrated. Much of Woodley's writing in *Living in Color* dealt with the oppression that people groups have felt throughout the years, and it is through this consideration that he approaches the seven steps. The steps are: 1) sincere, devout listening, 2) confession of the wrong done, 3) repentance, 4) forgiveness of the offense, 5) restitution to the appropriate person(s), 6) healing land that has been defiled, and 7) renewed relationship

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[26] Ibid., 260-292

between the parties involved. Although all of these points contain enough depth for a book to be written about each, this review will address the main points provided by Woodley; points that will be applied in Chapter 4 of this work.

Woodley mentioned that listening, although hard, is necessary for a healing process to take place. He pointed out that many times, the dominant society is not very willing to listen because the individuals within these societies want to move past the pain that they or their ancestors inflicted on other groups. The author delved deeper into the issue by addressing the fast-paced society that we live in today. Due to the fact that everyone expects quick solutions and responses to their every problem and question, the willingness to listen is not prominent. In order to drive his point, the author mentioned that not only is it necessary to listen to people, but primarily, to have a keen ear to God. The problem between cultures, according to Woodley, begins not between people, but between individuals and God. There must be a willingness to commit to God and to all of his ways in humility. The second step, confession, just like the latter, begins with God and moves towards people's interactions. The author used Scripture as the foundation of his idea on God's emphasis on confession by including Matthew 5:23-24 which speaks of leaving a gift at the altar and reconciling with an offended brother.

The view of repentance established by the author is focused on bringing one's fault to both God and others as a way of standing in the gap for a community

who has caused another community harm. More precisely, he used John Dawson's phrase: identificational repentance. This idea deals with the fact that humans are guilty of like-minded thoughts and actions within people of their own community. The latter allows individuals to stand in front of God and other people identifying with the sins of their particular culture. The author's point on forgiveness was short and straight to the point; he referred to the importance of forgiveness with the biblical backing found in Matthew 18: we are to forgive others so that we ourselves might be forgiven. Restitution of the person, according to the author, leads to action being added to the repentance. In other words, one must not only apologize for what has been done, but replace what has been lost or taken. Again, the author supports his point through the use of Scripture by mentioning Zacchaeus' willingness to pay back the people four times what had been stolen.

Healing the land has to do with humans pronouncing redemption over the very things that humans have cursed. The author made reference to John Dawson who mentioned that the cursing of the land is not necessarily based on the work of the demonic, but on a removal of God's favor over a land. Woodley responded to Dawson by mentioning his belief that in order for God's favor to be returned to the land, people who take God seriously must strive to close the divides that divide us as people. The last step mentioned by Woodley was the importance of a renewed relationship between those who have been affected by division. His belief is that

after the steps have been addressed and dealt with, relationships will be renewed as a result.[27]

This chapter has provided a review of literature written about distinct factors within generations as well as cultures. The first section interacted with sources that provide information about adolescents in society, older adults in society, marketing, and communication strategies. The second section engaged sources that dealt with cultures, primarily from the perspective of missions. Through this mission-minded perspective, the sources provided specific factors that can be seen throughout cultures, as well as certain strategies that can be used to best communicate with the individuals within them. Chapters three and four will interact with the information found in these sources by developing practical steps to be taken by communicators of the gospel.

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[27] Randy Woodley "Getting Beyond Getting Along," in *Living in Color: Embracing God's Passion for Ethnic Diversity* (InterVarsity Press, 2001), 162-180.

Chapter Three - Generations: Research Applied

Adolescents

Abu Bakr once said, "Without knowledge action is useless and knowledge without action is futile." The concept of understanding generations in order to best communicate the gospel message can seem overwhelming and perhaps impossible, but it is through the simple application of concepts found in research that clear communication can take place. Understanding adolescents is a feat in itself. If you have been one or are a parent of one, you might understand. How should ministers grasp the information in Chapter 2 and make it useful on a Wednesday youth service or a combined Sunday service? Although there are many factors to consider, there are three main areas that this section of the thesis will focus on: the preacher-adolescent relationship, the influence of parents on an adolescent, and the influence of society on an adolescent.

The first factor that must be understood is an adolescent's perspective of authority figures in their lives, such as a teacher or in our case a preacher. The information presented in the "Adolescents and Society" portion of the literature review displayed that students could have respect for authoritative figures above them due to two main reasons: the position or title of the older adult, and the relationship that is built between the adult and the adolescent. There is no question to the fact that each adolescent is different and that there are other reasons why adolescents show respect (or not) to figures of authority, but these two are very important for ministers to understand. Ministers must understand that although they usually have a title before their name such as Doctor or Pastor, this is not enough to gain the respect of adolescents. A relationship must be established. Although the title may gain the minister some rapport in the community or even respect from a youth group, it does not necessarily mean that the message of

the gospel is being received clearly or effectively because an adolescent stops texting when the *pastor* asks him or her to stop.

The idea of building a relationship can be understood in many different ways, but within the context of our research, it begins by understanding the generational gaps created by society between a student and the minister. When a minister considers these gaps, such as age difference or technology, they are wisely fighting to maintain the personal relationship that Durkheim and Floud talked about.[28] These societal changes can range from the structural framework of a family, to personal values, to social media; society is evolving daily. These are factors that pastors must take into consideration when preparing and delivering a message. A simple example of this could be a story that the youth pastor uses in order to introduce her sermon. If the pastor read this story in the newspaper, she could possibly lose her audience's interest due to the lack of relationship, in other words, the youth in her ministry might not be familiar to the story due to the fact that might not read the newspaper. This does not only translate to the concepts within a minister's message, but also to the methods of communication that are employed.

The best way to categorize communication strategies most common to communicators is by labeling them modern or traditional. In this paper, traditional refers to face-to-face interaction while modern mainly refers to the use media such as of electronics. Hashemi, whose research (2009) is more current than that of Durkheim (1963), wrote about the importance of traditional communication for a deeper connection between the audience and the speaker. Even though Hashemi is of the opinion that using modern forms of communication limits the response of the audience to the communicator, the communication might be even more limited by a traditional form of communication because adolescents might not be open at all to communicating in this

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[28] Despite the fact that the information provided by Durkheim and Floud dates back 55 years, the concepts are timeless and can be applied to the modern day as long as it is considered within context.

way, or perhaps not initially; strategies can evolve as relationships with audience members evolve. Initially, it is important to let the adolescent students know that as a minister one is willing to relate to them despite generational differences. [29] This could be implemented through the use of media, a hash-tag for the service, a funny quote from a common website, etc. These strategies might seem common or simplistic, but they can build a foundation for a deeper relationship to be established. Whether it is best to use traditional methods compared to modern methods when preaching to adolescents is a complex question, especially when taking Durkheim's view into consideration. If it is true that the best way to make student and teacher (or within the context of this thesis, preacher) communication efficient is through a personal connection with the student, a preacher must choose whether he or she uses traditional methods and opposes the inevitable changes in society, or uses the modern methods and loses the face to face interaction and possibly, the deeper connection with the adolescent. A third option would be for the preacher to intertwine both of these methods into his or her ministry, and in turn, create an atmosphere that creates room for effective communication.

The second factor that ministers must consider when addressing a younger audience is the influence that parents have on adolescents' view of religion. Information on this topic was addressed in the *Review of Literature* through Kim-Spoon's work. Deuteronomy 9:6-7 states, "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (NKJV). When God was giving Moses instructions to deliver to the people of Israel, part of His guidance was for parents to "diligently

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[29] It is vital to note that relating does not mean that ministers are to compromise the boundaries that restrict them from sin. In other words, communicators should relate to their audiences by participating in their lives and understanding their perspectives, but this cannot surpass the founding principle of pleasing God above all else.

teach," their children. Yet, it is important to consider the possibility of parents that are univolved with their children. This lack of involvement could result in a young person's internal battles for personal relationships as well as his or her search for truth. Not only are some parents uninvolved, but according to Kim-Spoon, some parents try so hard to develop religion in the life of their child that they lose sight of the importance of an emotional connection. When preparing the gospel message for this audience, the minister should communicate with messages that will reach the untouched and uncomfortable corners of the listeners' hearts in a comforting way. For example, presenting Jesus as one who hears us when we are lonely and cares about our innermost thoughts and anxieties. This message could begin with a scenario such as, "Picture a moment when you were surrounded by individuals but felt completely alone." This type of introduction is able to capture the attention of a young girl whose parents are not even aware that she sings in the youth choir, as well as the attention of the young girl whose parents mandated she sing in the youth choir. After her attention has been attained, the minister can then transition into the truth of the gospel and the way that it is able to heal and restore.

As much as some adolescents do not have the adequate emotional support from parents, there might be some in the audience who do, which is where preparing and delivering a message can become more complicated. A minister must be able to prepare a message that can reach the former and the latter. One way that this can be accomplished is by always providing a second or third option within the message. For example, maybe the minister can mention the statement about feeling alone in a crowded room full of people, followed by a statement like this, "Or maybe you are the one attempting to find that one lonely individual and provide a shoulder to lean on." Through these two short sentences, the minister has captured two completely different groups of adolescents.

The human brain and soul cannot be placed in a box; the complexities within every individual are part of God's intent. As a result, adolescents with uninvolved parents who set high expectations for them might not feel emotional support. In the same way, an adolescent that does not have a consistent parental presence might receive emotional support from mentors at school or other family members. Not only this, but parents' involvement or lack there-of, could also influence what adolescents think about religion. If parents spoke negatively of religion, or lived a hypocritical life, their students might be driven away from anything gospel related. Similarly, adolescents whose parents spoke of religion in a positive way and demonstrated it through daily living, might be more receptive to the gospel message. With this said, those who wish to minister the gospel through the Word of God must be aware of all of the possible individuals in their audiences, and simultaneously, not only be guided by statistics or facts, but by the voice of the Holy Spirit who knows every individual in the audience more than any preacher or teacher could. Psalm 139:13 states, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb" (NIV). As a minster, it is important to remember that God knows the audience members and that He yearns for the truth of the gospel to be engraved in their hearts more than any minister ever could.

Along with parents' influence on a student's view of religion also stands the influence of the environment or society. As Roberts studied, it is important to unite both the developmental years of the individual's life with the influence of society. Preachers should implement Robert's perspective of this unity when sharing the gospel message by not only taking into consideration the influence that parents' religiosity can have during the developing years of a person, but also understanding that an adolescent's current environment and friends in that environment can truly enforce or challenge the adolescent's perspective on religion and the gospel message. In other

words, adolescents' view of the gospel can be molded when the preacher recognizes where they come from and utilizes the friends (as one aspect of society) that are around them to shape the gospel message that is presented. A practical way of presenting the gospel is by teaching students that they are not the only ones going through particular situations. This can be accomplished through a simple anecdote of more than one person going through a temptation, a fear, or a regret, as well as through the use of scripture such as 1 Corinthians 10:13. Another way to use the environment to present the gospel message could be by creating space for small groups to take place in the culminating portion of the message. After presenting the audience with truth about Jesus, small groups can help adolescents feel connected to the message through their peers.

An entire library could be filled with books dedicated to understanding adolescents and their receptivity to religion, and consequently, their receptivity to the gospel message. For the purposes of this thesis, the main focus has been understanding the 1) preacher-adolescent relationship, 2) the influence of parents on adolescents' perspective of religion, and 3) the environment's influence on adolescents' perspective of religion. Understanding these three ideas can enlighten communicators of the gospel with methods to tweak their communication strategies for a more clear and effective message. Although this thesis is not meant to specify exact things that should and should not be done in order to assemble and deliver a perfect message, the culminating chapter of this thesis consists of examples that display a possible way to interpret the information that is presented throughout the entirety of this work. The next portion of this chapter focuses on the other generational cohort that this thesis addresses: older adults ages sixty-five and older.

Older Adults

"Son, when I was a part of World War II, I saw things that you young minds cannot even imagine." "Your grandpa and I were so rebellious; when you act out we are reminded of what it was like to be young." Phrases like these are heard around family dinners and in front of fires throughout the world; they demonstrate how much an adult of the older generations is continuously impacted by occurrences in their youth. Understanding the complexities of adults ages sixty-five and older can help ministers prepare and present the gospel in ways that will go past the wrinkles and the white hair and reach the hearts of individuals who have experienced so much in their lives and yet need the gospel as much as any other generation. In order to understand the older generations in a way that can strengthen the communication strategies of ministers, this section will focus on four areas: historical events, quality of life, social roles and generativity.

Similar to the way that adolescents are influenced by society, older adults were influenced by the events that occurred during their younger adult years. The main difference is that instead of being continuously influenced by society, they have had particular cultural values engraved in them over time as a result of the historical events that have taken place throughout their lifetime. With this in mind, minsters should consider these historical events in order to use certain values obtained from these moments to connect them to the gospel. The use of Timmerman's generational cohorts will facilitate in the understanding of important historical events in the lives of older adults that ministers might encounter in a service. The three cohorts that Timmerman assessed were the Leading-Edge Boomers (60-69 years old), the Silent generation (70-83 years old), and the GI Generation (83+ years old). Although there were many events that influenced each of these cohorts, the focus will only be placed on one or two events

in each, and the values from these will be applied to the preparation and execution of the gospel message.

The primary event that was occurring in the society of the GI Generation was World War II. The implications of this war and its impact on society are many, but one main factor that impacted this generation is that individuals developed a communal mentality. The focus of those in this cohort was on the good of the country as opposed to the advancement of the individual. This could be applied to the gospel message by presenting it as a benefit to the community that includes the individual as opposed to solely benefiting the individual. A minister could speak of the fact that Jesus constantly placed himself amongst a group of people and expressed the importance of uplifting those around him. A message on forgiveness of those who have hurt those in the audience could speak to their need for the restoration of lost community, which could then be compared to God's idea of restoring community with His people. Not only could this perspective of community be used for the content of the gospel message but also for the delivery of the message. Preaching in a way that unites the audience could make the older generation feel more connected to the message that is being taught. An example of this could be asking the audience to turn to someone next to them and encourage them or ask him or her a specific question. Perhaps invite the audience to think of someone who they have not talked with in a while and write them a letter after the service to thank them for a moment that they spent together. With strategies like these, the communicator enables the audience by using community as well as by challenging them to take action to better the community that they could strongly believe in. Above are just a few examples of the many opportunities that a communicator of the gospel has at his or her disposal with a cohort composed of individuals who find themselves within community.

The Silent Generation can be divided into two sections: one who leaned towards the conservatism of the 1930's, and one who leaned towards the generation that succeeded their own. The best way to understand individuals within this generation is by grasping the qualities of the preceding GI Generation and those of the following generation: the Leading-Edge Boomers. The latter generation was influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, Elvis Presley and advancements such as the first TV set. These type of influences resulted in a more rebellious and liberal generation who could be classified as self-driven compared to those of the GI Generation. This drive for personal gain is one that can be acknowledged yet challenged within the messages of ministers. Although it is important to connect with generations where they are at, it is also important to stay faithful to the true gospel of Jesus which teaches of humility and even denial of self to follow Christ. Perhaps a minster could begin a message by speaking of the feeling of starting a business or moving up in social status appealing to the individualistic mentality. This could then be followed by a challenge to the congregation of the importance of placing others first. This example not only reaches the Early Boomer Generation, but also speaks to the GI Generation because of the others-focused mentality. (The GI Generation must be mentioned again when discussing Boomers because of the Silent Generation in between. In other words, if a minister is preaching to a group with individuals from one of these generations, there is a large probability that individuals from the other generation might be present as well.) All of the values mentioned above reveal that differences are not only found between the young and the older generations, but within the older generation itself.

The following factor that must be considered is the older generation's pursuit for the quality of life. Giordano stated that older adults desire to improve the quality of their lives by seeking for help. This information should be considered in light of the many life events that older

adults have gone through once they reach the older years. Whatever these adults experienced, whether marriage, divorce, remarriage or other events within the family network, many of them seek for the quality of their lives to be taken to a higher level in their old age. With this in mind, communicators can address the gospel as an opportunity for individuals to truly find a better quality of life. Using a verse such as John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent," can encourage an older adult with the fact that knowing God here on Earth means that we can, in the present, tap into the beauty of what it means to have eternal life with Him. A minster could also teach on the fact that the things of Earth do not satisfy. This message, when prepared with the search for quality of life in mind, can impact an audience by stirring in them a hunger for true fulfilment. This search for fulfilment includes the following factor in the lives of the older generation: social roles

Similar to the way that social roles were firmly established in members of the older generation through current events in their younger years, individuals can become disengaged from these social roles because of the current society. The older generation then finds itself searching for alternatives to fill the voids that have been created by the lack of social involvement. This absence of social involvement could be a result of personal choice or of societal pressures. Regardless of how they arrived to this state of disconnection, this can be taken into consideration when preparing a message because a preacher can present the gospel as truth that can fill any and all gaps that may result from the absence of social roles. Messages prepared with this in mind could address the fact that identity does not need to be found in roles in society, but rather, in relationship with Jesus. Their frustrations can be acknowledged, but the bigger picture of a life with Jesus can then be established in order to place their situation in perspective. Perhaps the message of Jesus coming as a baby in a manger can reveal the beautiful and simple

yet powerful message of the gospel to a group of people looking for affirmation. The King of the world was satisfied with coming into a humble family and not being known for thirty years because He was in His Father's will, and in the same way believers can be satisfied in Him regardless of currant social roles.

The final factor that should be considered is that of generativity. The study discussed in the Literature Review showed that the interest in generativity of older adults varied among different age groups. With this in mind, ministers should seek to awaken generativity in the lives of older adults; those who have some generativity can be encouraged for more, and those who lack in it can be encouraged to develop a desire for it. Ministers should not only provide the gospel as a beautiful way to find truth for oneself, but also as a way to find truth for the generations to come. If an older adult grasps the value that the gospel holds not only for him but for his children and his children's children, then he might develop a yearning for it. An example of this could be using the passage in Acts 3:6 where Peter clearly defines spiritual provisions as more valuable than earthly provisions. After mentioning this passage, the minister could then compare Paul to his or her listeners by challenging them to leave an eternal impact on the ones they love, as oppose to a monetary, temporary inheritance. Another passage that could be used is that of the woman at the well found in John 4:14 where Jesus tells her that what He can give her will bring eternal satisfaction. Considering generativity as a factor in the lives of the older generation can serve as a powerful tool for preparing messages that have the potential of awakening those who feel like they have nothing left to give.

Marketing

Associating the gospel message with marketing can seem appalling or perhaps offensive when misunderstood. Although the idea of using marketing to approach the gospel message

might not be common, it is valuable to grasp marketing as a means to approach the way that the gospel message is communicated because of the simple fact that a message is being communicated. Although brief, this section will detail some interesting information that may at times be overlooked or undervalued within the context of ministry. First, some general marketing strategies will be addressed, followed by some specific ways that marketing particularly affects the younger cohort (due to the lack of media involvement of the older cohort, research in this area is very limited.)

The ideas discussed by Johnson are beneficial because they address rewards and costs which people constantly look for. When preparing a message, a minister could consider this point of view and relate the gospel message as something that is worth the cost that has to be paid. These religious rewards that Johnson wrote about could refer to providing the audience with the promises of hope, joy, peace, forgiveness, rest, etc. Alongside this information, the audience also must know that at times the gospel message might cost us relationships, money, fame, enjoyment, etc., but at the end, the costs will not compare to the rewards that will be received. The concept of orientation was also discussed in Johnson's article. He stated that people address the information provided through marketing in both personal and communal ways. This information could be used by ministers in the content of their messages as well as the strategies used to deliver them. For example, a pastor could preach a message and then invite people to get in groups of three and share ways that the message impacted their hearts. Through this simple step, the audience members' communal pursuit is met. The personal aspect can be addressed by a preacher by simply providing a time for retrospection or journaling; a time centered primarily on the personal orientation.

The comparison provided by Day between expanding the needs of consumers by

devaluing the product and establishing consumers' rights, is worth considering. As ministers of the gospel message, the primary focus of the message should be to establish the rights of our audience. In other words, the focus of a communicator should never be to impart so much information that the value of the information is diminished. Rather, a communicator should be willing to go deep into a few topics that will truly impact and benefit the lives of his or her listeners by equipping them with truth; every audience member has the right to truth.

Coleman's article on agenda-setting could serve communicators with a simple yet powerful tool; be familiar with media trends. Since media exposure relates to agenda-setting, when communicators are informed about media, they can be better aware of the agenda of their audiences. A practical example of this is politics. If the media is consumed with certain politics or politicians, a communicator can begin a gospel message with a story or quote from one of these politicians; creating a point of relationship between the audience and the communicator.

The final portion of the literature review which particularly addressed adolescents, as well as some practical ways to communicate the gospel were included for some extra information on these topics. Understanding the information such as adolescents' understanding of marketing strategies, or the importance of laughter in the lives of older adults, messages could be developed with these factors in mind.

Summary

Generations are complex and communicating cross-generationally can seem overwhelming when a communicator is not equipped with the necessary information. Specifically addressing the younger generation, ages twelve to twenty-five, compared to the older generation of sixty-five and older requires an understanding of each cohorts' social and

family dynamics, needs (whether spiritual or emotional,) and the way that information can be

relayed.

Chapter Four - Cultures: Research Applied

Culture is a concept that can be understood in multitude ways; a concept so multi-faceted that at times the discrepancies within it are ignored or misunderstood. This chapter will implement the information provided in the review of literature into practical steps that communicators can take to efficiently communicate the gospel. As stated in the introduction, this thesis will define *culture* as the different characteristics that are found within a particular group of people. In other words, when groups of people are referred to as Hispanics, African American, Asians, etc., their cultures (particular characteristics,) are being classified within the context of their geographical location. Although it would be narrow-minded to believe that all people within a culture are identical to one another, having a general understanding of cultures and their differences can help communicators address cultures as a whole as well as individuals within these cultures. Prior to understanding specific dynamics within cultures, and the way to apply them as communicators of the gospel, it is vital to have a clear understanding of the best and most relatable-to-all-cultures message that has ever been delivered: Jesus Christ.

According to Scripture, Jesus came as a man to this earth to be to all people the image of God among humanity: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:6-8, NIV). It is this idea of incarnational ministry that ministers should firmly grasp if the goal is to reach people with the truth of the gospel. Not only is the idea of incarnational ministry biblical, the instruction for Christ-followers to do the same is scriptural as well. This can be seen in Philippians 2:5 where it states, "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ

Jesus…" Imitating Jesus in His incarnational ministry also means imitating Him in the way that He reached people. The fact that Jesus came as a baby and lived on this earth until his adult years clearly displayed His desire to show humanity how to live as well as to be amongst us. This beautiful and powerful truth is one worth exploring and imitating within the pursuit of communicating the gospel to people of varying cultures.

Practically speaking, every communicator will have a platform that faces a particular audience; contingent on the place where the communicator is relaying the message of the gospel. Within a North American context, a communicator of the gospel must be prepared to deliver a message to a congregation that includes Indians, Russians, Hispanics, and Americans. This might seem like a strange people group to place together, but it is important to consider a variety of audiences if we wish to consider the true gospel. Matthew 28:19 states, "Therefore go and make disciples of <u>all nations</u>, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit…" Although not all may be called to go into the mission field, all should be prepared to communicate clearly when the mission field comes to them in the form of a multi-cultural congregation. Due to the fact that the primary foundation of this thesis is a review of literature, the first topic that will be addressed is the analysis of the six tensions listed in *Ministering Cross-Culturally.* Lingenfelter lists these tensions as primary to all cultures; ones that "examine experiences in interpersonal relations, using a conceptual model that will provide an understanding of our underlying priorities or values and those of the people with whom we interact."[30]

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[30] Sherwood Lingenfelter, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* 2nd ed. (Baker Academic, 2003), 28.

Tensions Between Cultures

At first glance, the following tensions might appear simplistic, but when understood and applied to the ministry of communicating the gospel, the nuances within each will become apparent and potentially, life-impacting. Although Lingenfelter's intensions for writing her book were mission-minded, the truths found within each can be applied to cultural interactions within a North American context. The cultural tensions that will be assessed in the following paragraphs are tensions: about time, regarding judgement, associated with handling crises, regarding goals, about self-worth, and regarding vulnerability.

According to the author, cultures can be driven by time or driven by event. On the one hand, an individual or culture that is time-oriented is more focused on the punctuality of an event as well as the efficiency of the time spent during the activities at the event. On the other hand, someone who is event-oriented, might be more focused on the success of an activity regardless of the time that it takes, or focused on participation that was not scheduled. Within a North American setting, this tension could surface when a minister is beginning his or her sermon and notices that a significant amount of consistent individuals are not in the crowd, yet they walk in twenty minutes into the service. Although this may seem disrespectful to the individual ministering the message, it could be an acceptable factor within a certain culture. If a minister knows that his or her congregation is multi-cultural, he might attempt a different order of service, where the main points of his or her message are not provided at the beginning of the message. Another thing to consider is the way that a certain point can be best penetrated in the hearts of individuals within a congregation. Perhaps a time-oriented communicator can tap into an event-oriented mentality and dwell at a particular point longer than planned in order to allow the congregation to get a deeper revelation of it. Although it may seem that the time vs. event-

orientation does not directly correlate to the topic of delivering a message, it is important to understand that communication is not always verbal, and that by understanding this tension, a communicator can better develop a relationship with his or her audience, consequently, welcoming a more receptive ear to the message of the gospel.

The second tension is that of judgement. In most cases, an individual's judgement will either be dichotomistic or holistic. Those who think in dichotomies are more driven by the parts of a situation while those with holistic thinking tend to be driven by the bigger picture. This tension can be interestingly and beautifully applied to the message of the gospel because one idea can be preached in both ways. For example, with a holistic perspective one might say that Jesus came to this earth to forgive us of our sins by living among us, dying on a cross and coming back to life; giving us a brand new start and a changed life. This general understanding of the gospel might awaken someone to change their life because of the big picture of forgiveness, and then, the communicator could break down specific areas in individuals' hearts that need freedom. Although this is beautiful, a dichotomistic point of view on this same message could begin with the different areas of brokenness and emptiness in one's life, and the need for those areas to be filled. This could be followed by God's willingness and ability to fill all of those empty areas and replacing those feelings with joy, peace, strength, etc., through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus.

The way that crises are handled is an interesting tension because someone can either be crisis oriented or non-crisis oriented. This simply means that an individual within a culture that is crisis oriented probably has a list of steps to take in the case of a given crisis. On the other hand, a culture that is not crisis oriented is less likely to prepare for a crisis because there is a smaller expectation for a crisis occurring in comparison to the former perspective. This tension is

valuable to keep in mind because the message of the gospel could be delivered with both of these

perspectives in mind. An example of this could be a message on the parable of the ten virgins

found in Matthew 25:1-13 which states,

> At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and
> went out to meet the bridegroom. [2] Five of them were foolish and five were wise. [3] The
> foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. [4] The wise ones,
> however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. [5] The bridegroom was a long time in
> coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.[6] "At midnight the cry rang out:
> 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'[7] "Then all the virgins woke up and
> trimmed their lamps. [8] The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our
> lamps are going out.'[9] "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you.
> Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for ourselves.'[10] "But while they were on
> their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with
> him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. [11] "Later the others also came. 'Lord,
> Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!'[12] "But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know
> you.'[13] "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

The minister communicating this message could address the fact that Christ followers are to be

people that are prepared for anything that might come their way. The above passage could be

preached on the premise that it would be a crisis for all who are not prepared but a day of

rejoicing for those who are.

Goals are individual to each person, but people's perspective on goals can be understood

and classified within the context of cultures. According to Lingenfelter, cultures' perspectives on

goals can be divided into task-oriented and people-oriented mindsets. Although this tension

might not deal directly with the way that a message is communicated, similar to the first tension

dealing with time, understanding the tension on goals could help ministers change their

perspective on the way that they see the preparation and/or delivery of a message on the gospel.

Ministers that find themselves leaning towards being event oriented might benefit from their

ability to organize a service and prepare an intricate message-things that people-oriented

individuals might miss at times. In the same way, those who are people-oriented might be able to

consider their audience's perspective on a tender topic as opposed to addressing bullet points on a page. Both of these orientations are beneficial and should be considered by ministers when preparing an efficient, cross-cultural message.

The fifth tension mentioned in *Ministering Cross-Culturally* is that of self-worth. The tension of self-worth can either be status focused or achievement focused. In other words, individuals within cultures that find self-worth in status believe that prestige is ascribed to individuals through their place in society, and that consequently, the amount of respect that they receive is fixed. In contrast, those who believe that prestige is attained hold to the idea of earning others' respect through hard work and achievement. This is an interesting tension for ministers to understand because an individual's view of self-worth could have a significant impact on their understanding of God's view of them. Perhaps an individual who grew up in a lower income community could feel that God loves them less or is less willing to use them because of their situation. To this individual, a communicator could present the gospel from the lens of Romans 8:15 which states that we have been adopted as children of God. On the other hand, an individual within a culture where achievement is the basis of self-worth could learn from a message on Isaiah 64:6 which states that all our good deeds are to God as filthy rags, and consequently, we are to receive His grace and understand that it is not about how good we can be, but about how good He is. Understanding both of these perspectives and allowing them to intertwine in preparation of a message on the gospel can provide ministers with a more efficient way to reach areas of the heart that can at time be left unreached.

The last area addressed in Lingenfelter's work was that of vulnerability. The two perspectives on this tension, which vary among cultures, is concealment of vulnerability compared to a willingness to expose vulnerability. This variance can be seen in different areas of

an individual's life and is a factor that must be considered by communicators of the gospel in order for the uncomfortable but necessary aspects of the gospel to be portrayed. "Persons who feel that failure and vulnerability are weaknesses also strongly defend their positions and behavior… Persons who are willing to expose their vulnerability are relatively unconcerned with error; whether in themselves or in others."[31] A minister of the gospel should take both of these perspectives into account in order to reveal both aspects of vulnerability from a biblical standpoint. In one way, concealing vulnerability can be wise so that discretion is used when sharing particular areas of one's life. Simultaneously, a willingness to expose vulnerability in front of God and certain people, is necessary for change to take place.

Practical Tools

Once these six factors have been addressed and understood, there are several specific tools that can be used for effective communication of the gospel. The first tool that should be considered is accommodation through contextualization to the receptor culture, as mentioned in the review of literature based on the text *Missiology*. When communicating the gospel message to different cultures, the biblical foundation must be present. One must ensure that the gospel is the foundation of a message as opposed to the culture being the foundation. Once the purity of the biblical foundation has been established by a communicator, biblical foundations must be expressed in ways that contain relevance, meaning, are communicative and acceptable, this is when the contextualized accommodation is incorporated. In order to make this happen, one should take into consideration the six factors listed above as well as the information on generations that was addressed in Chapter 3. The communicator must establish the biblical foundation to his or her message, and then frame and accommodate it to the particular culture.

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[31] Sherwood Lingenfelter, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* 2nd ed. (Baker Academic, 2003), 103-104.

The following factor is one that should be considered by all communicators who truly wish for the gospel to spread and for God's kingdom to be advanced. Individuals who are receiving the message of the gospel should not only be taught the gospel, they should also be equipped with ways to communicate the gospel to others, according to their own cultural ways. Through considering the different cultural tensions, communicators of the gospel should be mindful to encourage their audiences with ways to share the truth that they have learned in ways that seem attainable to them. Apart from all of the research and studying that can be done on this topic, having a relationship with an individual is a personal method to equip them with truth to share. Once a pastor or minister knows the areas of strength and comfort in the lives within his or her congregation, he or she can specifically guide that congregation to the next level in their Christian walk not only knowing truth, but being able to share it.

After accommodation has taken place, the following tool is identification. Distancing the discussion from the message of the gospel, identification refers to the distinct decisions that a pastor or minister can make to best identify with an audience, and in turn, facilitate a desire or even a willingness in the audience's hearts to receive what the minister is communicating. This identification can best be accomplished through one principle realization; namely, communication is always taking place. Regardless of whether or not a message is being preached; communication takes place through actions. Communicators must realize that their everyday decisions are parallel to a platform and microphone. Kindness, patience, a gentle answer, and everything that resembles the God who we preach is what we must work hard to demonstrate through every decision. Once this idea of nonverbal communication is grasped by the communicator, it is important to understand that a beginning point must be shared between communicator and receiver in order for a connection to take place and a message to be efficiently

delivered. This beginning point will vary depending on the congregation as well as the communicator, but it will always be within the context of a generation and a culture. This connection can be as simple as a communicator beginning their message with a story about a Hispanic restaurant that he or she visited, or as personal as the loneliness and emptiness that he or she might at times feel in his or her heart. This connection will help the audience members have a keen ear to what the communicator has to say because they might be encouraged by the fact that the one presenting the message actually believes it.

A final way for communicators to identify with their audiences is by being just as willing to listen as to speak. If not careful, communicators can become so focused on what they have to say that they forget the importance of listening to what others have to say. James 1:19 states it clearly, "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry..." Although this verse deals primarily with character and not allowing anger to take over, it is one that should be remembered when preparing a message. It is important for communicators to be aware of the topics of conversation among their congregants. If the communicator addressed the items of life that are already being addressed among the people, the starting point mentioned above can be achieved. Choosing to listen before choosing to speak is a practice that can be overlooked, a practice that can bring a sense of connection and unity between the communicator and his or her audience.

After accommodating and identifying, the final tool to apply is the celebration as opposed to the toleration of differences. As stated in the literature review, there are many people who tolerate differences among people groups as opposed to embracing them and celebrating them. Most of the differences between cultures can be classified under the tensions listed at the beginning of this chapter, but the practical way out of this hostility is forgiveness. Although

Woodley mentioned seven specific steps that should be taken in order for the celebration of differences to take place, there is one consistent thread: forgiveness. As listed in the literature review, his steps were: listening, repenting, forgiving, bringing restitution, healing the land and renewing relationships. Although each of these could be discussed in depth, forgiveness must be grasped in order for any of these to be applied. As forgiveness is communicated to an audience, it is vital to emphasize God's forgiveness extended to people prior to people's ability to extend forgiveness to others. If individuals would grasp the undeserved forgiveness of God for their lives, their view of one another would change. Not only this, but forgiveness is cross-cultural. Any communicator can stand on a platform and preach on the power of forgiveness and immediately make a connection between people of different cultures. It is after forgiveness is understood, that a communicator, as well as his or her audience, will be able to celebrate the differences that tend to divide people as opposed to uniting them.

Dangers

Grasping cultures and the value of communicating in a cross-cultural way is necessary and powerful. In the same way, there are certain perils that must be avoided when considering cultures within the process of preparing the message of the gospel. Before these dangers are addressed, Gonzalez's point on a catholic gospel should be recognized. Separate from the general understanding of the word catholic, in this context it means an all-together gospel, or one that encompasses all. Using Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as a guide, Gonzalez expressed the value of uniting different opinions in order to best understand the gospel. This catholic understanding is beneficial for cross-cultural preaching of the gospel because knowledge of all cultures can be used; establishing a more holistic understanding of the gospel, and consequently, of who God is. Although this all-encompassing perspective is valuable, when falsely understood,

it can be the planting ground for danger: syncretism.

Fuller states that all cultures need redemption. "The culture of sinful man, insofar as it enshrines his cherished ideals, beliefs, and practices, his way of life, is not neutral, but fallen. There can be therefore no 'whole-sale,' uncritical adoption of any culture by Christianity (i.e. by the church)."[32] The decision to understand or address the truth of the gospel through the lens of cultures, without being flexible to challenging certain areas that need redemption could result in people-pleasing, but not kingdom-advancement. Along with considering cultures for the communication process, ministers should be aware to not put culture over God. Regardless of the amount of training, research and preparation that could take place, ministers must be in tune to the voice of God through the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures in order to test and approve what aligns to the will and Word of God, and what is solely satisfying cultural needs. Syncretism, or the idea of merging different beliefs together to create one, is easier to do than most people realize, and in turn, must be a danger that all communicators take precautions to avoid. A second danger to consider is similar to that of syncretism: adding or subtracting to the Word of God. The above information on syncretism can be applied to this area as well. Communicators must be careful to preach the Word of God with cultural considerations but primarily with truth. Fear of offending a culture cannot take precedence over the God-appointed duty of communicating unreserved truth.

Finally, a communicator of the gospel must consider that cultures change constantly. This is valuable information to keep in the foreground of ministry because if not, cross-cultural ministering can become aggravating and frustrating. A pastor might ask himself how he or she is

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[32] W. Harold Fuller "The Crucible of Culture," in *Mission-Church Dynamics* (William Carey Library, 1980), 154.

to communicate to an audience full of cultures that fluctuate, the best way is to consider all of the information listed above as general guidelines. People and cultures change, but the founding principles of relating to people stay the same. As communicators of the gospel, ministers should keep in mind the general tensions that are found between cultures, the practical tools that can be used to address the gospel in the midst of these tensions, and the possible dangers of placing cultures above God. Above all, ministers should rest in the fact that God is faithful and knows cultures more than any communicator could. He is able to bring clarity and direction to the message of the gospel in a way that changes people's eternity. As ministers we must hold true to the fact that God does not change, and remember Jeremiah's words with a desire to say the same, "Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, 'I have put my words in your mouth.'" (Jer. 1:9 NIV)

Chapter Five: Paul – Biblical Example

Why Paul? The Bible is composed of sixty-six books, each filled with individuals who have done mighty things for God and lived as a light in a broken and dark world. With this in mind the question stands: why Paul? Out of all of the apostles of Jesus Christ, Paul is consistently signaled out as an excellent communicator; one who consistently carried forth the message of the gospel within cultural contexts and without reservations. Evaluating Paul's preaching strategies can equip modern day communicators with the adequate tools to preach a message that intentionally take the preacher's audiences into consideration. In order to best understand and apply Paul's communicative skills and the reason why he was signaled out as an outstanding communicator, this chapter will be divided into three main sections: Insight on Paul's life, general strategies used by Paul, and the way he addressed Jewish audiences versus Gentile audiences. God's words in reference to Paul were "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name," it is this man who we will observe.

The first step to gaining insight on Paul's life is understanding when his ministry began, and the possible reasons for Paul being chosen to carry out the evangelistic work that he did. In Acts 11:19-30, the author informs the reader that Christ-followers have scattered due to the persecution that took place when Stephen was killed. These scattered individuals travelled carrying the gospel among the Jews. Strangely (to those of the time,) some of these scattered individuals were spreading the Word to the Greeks as well. The main church in Jerusalem heard of these occurrences and decided to send some people to see what was happening; preaching to Greeks was not a regular custom. The biblical text reads:

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30 NIV).

Recognizing the beginning of Paul's ministry is necessary in order to gain a better understanding of the person of Paul.

Ministry to the Gentiles needed to be conducted by someone who could consider both the Jewish and the Gentile point of view. Although Paul was born a Jew, he was also thoroughly familiar with the culture and language of Greek cities. Not only this, but Paul was a Roman citizen which allowed him to go anywhere in the world.[33] Considering the way that Paul's upbringing was an asset to his ministry could serve as an encouragement for communicators of the gospel to become accustomed to the cultures of the individuals in their audiences as if the communicators belonged to the cultures. Although a communicator's upbringing might not be the same as that of their audience, being intentional about learning the culture, or in regards to our third chapter, learning the generations could result in more effective communication.

Apart from the cultural aspect of Paul's life, there were several general strategies that he used while communicating which can be implemented by present-day communicators of the gospel message. Although many strategies could be addressed, there are five strategies listed by

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[33] William Barclay, "First in Antioch," in *Ambassador for Christ* (Richmond: Outlook Publishers, 1974), 60.

Kent Johnson that can be used as umbrellas for much of what Paul did. According to Johnson, Paul was: knowledgeable, dialogical, caring towards his students, purposeful, and faithful to the gospel.[34] The author further explains each of these points in interesting and applicable ways all stemming from the premise consistently found throughout his book: Paul as teacher. Paul's ability to communicate with audiences everywhere he went was due to his knowledge. This can be seen in passages such as 2 Corinthians 11:6 which states, "I may indeed be untrained as a speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way" (NIV). Another passage that highlights Paul's knowledge is found in Acts 22:3, "Then Paul said: I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today." (NIV)

A second strategy used by Paul was that he was dialogical. His use of dialogue allowed for his audience to better understand the message of the gospel. In Acts 17:2 it states, "Then Paul, as was his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures…" (NIV) Johnson argued that this verse displays a discussion occurring between Paul and his audience. This can apply to present-day communicators in any setting where an audience is present; audience members should be given the chance to communicate in response to what is being taught.

Along with listening to his audience, a third reason why Paul's ministry is admirable is that he truly cared about his audience. Whether an audience that listened to him, or one that read his letters, Paul cared. Johnson noted the passage in Colossians 2:1-7 where Paul warns the people of false teachers. The passion with which Paul wrote was of letting his audience know

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[34] Kent Johnson "Paul's Teaching Style," in *Paul the Teacher: A Resource for Teacher in the Church* (Augsburg, Publishing House, 1986), 109-124.

that his message was urgent for their lives. This can also be seen in 1 Corinthians 4:14 where

Paul wrote, "I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you"

(NIV).

A fourth strategy is similar to the one stated above; Paul was intentional about his

audiences. In other words, Paul always looked for opportunities to teach a life principle through

an everyday life situation. "A mob scene in Jerusalem, an earthquake in Philippi, an

imprisonment in Rome, or the curiosity of a Roman governor were all opportunities, in the

perception of Paul, to teach. He seized them when they came with an enthusiastic and daring

intentionality." [35] Paul's willingness to share in the midst of any situation should translate to

today's culture; any and every moment should be an opportunity for the truth of the gospel to be

shared. For this reason, having a firm grasp on ideas about culture and generations can facilitate

a communicator with tools to apply at any situation that presents itself as an opportunity for

God's Word to be shared.

The fifth, and last, general strategy that will be discussed is that Paul was faithful to the

Gospel. According to 1 Corinthians 4:12, Paul was confident of pushing through any obstacle

that came his way until his responsibility to serve Christ was accomplished. The verse states,

"And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we

endure;" Paul was willing to remain faithful. As communicators who wish to learn from Paul, it

is important to that this idea of faithfulness is not a form of escaping from all methods of

preparation. In other words, faithfulness is not an invitation for laziness from the communicator;

it is through preparation and hard work that we are able to be as faithful to the calling of God as

possible.

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[35] Ibid., 151.

Now that some general strategies used by Paul have been observed, the third main point of this chapter on Paul is a comparison of the way that he communicated with Jewish audiences and the way that he communicated with Gentiles. These differences will be observed by looking at two biblical passages, one for each culture. When speaking to a Jewish audience in Acts 13:16-41, Paul refers to Israel's history, to God's promise, and to Jesus as salvation to all. Through referencing Israel's history, Paul found a point of connection with his audience's culture.[36] He began his message in verse seventeen by stating, "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it." According to Schnabel, "Paul explains to the Jewish listeners that Israel's history was planned and ordered by God, that the promised coming of the Savior had taken place, and that this Savior is Jesus." [37]

In order to help his Jewish audience understand the promise of Jesus as Savior, Paul made references to Old Testament Scripture that his audience would be able to connect to. "When Paul speaks before Jewish listeners who regularly attend the synagogue services where Scripture is read and explained, he uses the techniques of the rabbis who explain Scripture with Scripture. The quotations from Scripture also demonstrate Paul's intention to integrate the life of Jesus into the course of the history of Israel."[38] This use of Old Testament Scripture was another way that Paul built rapport with his audience.

Finally, Paul further explained salvation through Jesus Christ, but he went deeper into this topic with his Jewish audience by making it clear that salvation through Jesus was for the Jews as well as the Gentiles. Although he was speaking to a Jewish audience, he knew that the

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[36] Similar to the idea of sharing a starting point as expressed in the "Practical Tools" section of Chapter 4.
[37] Eckhard Schnabel "The Missionary Message of the Apostle Paul," in *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (USA, InterVarsity Press, 2008), 159.
[38] Ibid. 160

message of salvation would apply to the few Gentiles who were sitting among the Jews as well as God-fearers and Gentile sympathizers.[39] During this section of his passage, Acts 13:38-41, as Paul taught of Jesus as Savior for the Gentiles, he also quoted Habakkuk as a way to warn the Jews away from despising what God was doing on their behalf. The verse he referenced states, "Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though one were to declare it to you" (Hab. 1:5, NIV).

Similar to using Old Testament Scripture when addressing his Jewish audience, Paul used the culture of the Gentiles to address them. One of the passages that exemplifies this is Acts 17:22-31. In this passage Paul stands up in the midst of the Areopagus and recognizes that his audience is religious, and that in the midst of their religion, they have an unidentified God. "Paul quotes several familiar poets and philosophers, such as Aratus and Epimenides, as 'testimonies' to strengthen the argument that this unknown God is none other than the Creator God who 'made the world and all that is in it' and who 'is not far from anyone of us.'"[40] After recognizing their religiosity, and pointing out their lack, he used Stoic philosophy to explain his point. For example when he states the phrase, "in him we live and move and have our being," in verse 28, he is quoting a Greek philosopher. Paul's ability to meet the crowd in their place of philosophical knowledge and still challenge them to believe something else is a way of communication that all gospel communicators must consider. In the same verse, Paul makes the important decision to say "we" as opposed to "you." This small detail welcomed his audience to understand a concept together with him as opposed to signaling them out as if Paul was better than them. As modern day communicators prepare to share the gospel message to multi-cultural and cross-generational

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[39] Ibid. 161

[40] vanThanh Nguyen, "Paul's Sermon at the Areopagus: Preaching Accross Cultural Boundaries," The Bible Today 52, no. 4 (July 2014):217.

audiences, it is important to build trust between the audience and the communicator by paying attention to those small details.

Another point to note about Paul's communication with Gentiles is that just as Paul communicated with his audience at the Areopagus, he often did not begin with Scripture (because they would not have known it) but rather with what they could see in the natural world. In his book, Kent Homer wrote of Paul's missionary trip to Lystra found in Acts 14:6b-20. In this trip, "Paul's speech was appropriate to his audience. He made no appeal to the Scripture, but built upon the knowledge they had from the natural world. (Rom. 1:19-20). He stressed the evidence in nature of a supernatural Creator, and showed the folly of idolatry."[41] Paul's difference in preaching style from preaching at the Areopagus to preaching at Lystra displays the importance of preparation and variety in the ministry of a gospel communicator.

Considering Paul's background, the general strategies that he used, and the way that he communicated to Jews and Gentiles displays the power and efficiency of being a communicator who considers cultures and generations. One of the most important points about understanding Paul was his passion and commitment. If communicators would be willing to increase in knowledge and to go beyond what they are used to in order to truly relate to their audiences, and do so with passion and commitment, the gospel message would be delivered more effectively, and in turn, the kingdom of God advanced.

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[41] Kent Homer "Paul's First Missionary Journey," in Jerusalem to Rome Studies in Acts (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1972), 117.

Conclusion

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8 NIV) The commission from the Lord to every Christ follower and believer is powerful and complex. The Good News of Jesus is so simple in that He has done it all, yet so intricate in that we are to communicate it to every individual. The intention of this thesis was to provide communicators of the gospel, within the North American context, with information on how to effectively communicate the gospel considering generations, cultures, and Paul's biblical example. It is important to understand that this study is not meant to provide communicators with absolutes or non-negotiables, rather, it is meant to provide general tools, guidelines, and suggestions for communicators to use within the context of their ministry. Audiences will be different throughout, and communicators will each have their unique styles of communication, but the principles that have been effective in many distinct settings will remain consistent.

The only ultimatum that must be agreed upon before these principles on cultures and generations can be applied is that God and His Word must be the foundation of every gospel message. This may seem obvious or unnecessary to mention, but if one is not careful, the gospel can be slightly changed (at times even subconsciously) in the name of a "better" message. This must be avoided. The best way to prevent this is by seeing the gospel message as a road, and the way of communicating it as the street lights that allow people to see the path in front of them.

When discussing generations, we have learned that for the younger generation (ages 12-18), it is important to keep three factors in mind: the preacher/adolescent relationship, the influence of parents on adolescents, and the influence of society on adolescents. On the other hand, when communicating with the older generation (65+), a communicator must consider

historical events, quality of life, social roles, and generativity. When preparing a message, the communicator can keep these generational factors in mind in order to prepare a message that is diverse and capable of reaching hearts cross-generationally. The beautiful complexity of people is that once all of these generational factors have been considered, the communicator must note how differently these factors would look across cultures. In other words, a seventeen year old who was born in Brazil and brought to American at the age of thirteen could be sitting in an audience three rows away from a seventeen year old who was born in Florida who has never crossed past United States' boundaries. It is this type of dynamic that should be kept in mind when evaluating the information that this thesis has provided on culture.

In this paper *culture* is defined as a group of people with specific characteristics that defines them and sets them apart. These groups of people classified by characteristics are usually grouped geographically and labeled as Hispanics, Asians, Americans, etc. With this perspective of culture, it is important to consider a principle necessity: cross-cultural ministry must be incarnational. Communicators of the gospel must be willing to understand cultures (as well as generations) the way that Jesus did. Once a communicator is willing to embody the incarnational ministry that Jesus exemplified, the three factors that were described in Chapter Four can be applied: the six tensions found in every culture, practical tools, and possible dangers. Most of the information provided in Chapter Four was based on missional ministries because North American ministers must consider the reality of the diversity of cultures within the United States; the mission field often comes to ministers in North America.

Once ministers grasp the unity between generations and cultures, considering a biblical example can serve as an asset, regardless of the audience being considered. Observing insight into the life of the apostle Paul, some of his general communication strategies, and the

differences in the way that he tailored his messages to Jews and Gentiles can bring a sense of clarity in terms of applying the truth that has been learned. Paul had much success in his communication of the gospel, but when considering all that he did, his passion and commitment to the call of God on his life seemed to be the founding principle of everything that took place.

Becoming an excellent communicator of the gospel and impacting the lives of one's audience with truth will take time, learning and commitment. Taking into consideration the information provided in this thesis, not as fragments but as a unit that works together, can empower and equip communicators to effectively convey the Good News. But setting this entire discussion aside, communicators must realize that ultimately God is the One who can transform hearts and change minds. All that His people are to do is to obey and work with diligence to reach the goal set before us. People all around us are perishing without the knowledge of truth, and as a result, God has called us to impact souls for eternity.

> The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me,
> Because the LORD has anointed Me
> To preach good tidings to the poor;
> He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
> To proclaim liberty to the captives,
> And the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound;
> To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,
> And the day of vengeance of our God;
> To comfort all who mourn,
> To console those who mourn in Zion,
> To give them beauty for ashes,
> The oil of joy for mourning,
> The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;
> That they may be called trees of righteousness,
> The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified (Isaiah 61:1-3, NIV).

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