

THE DIGITAL CHURCH:  
OPENING VIEWERS' EARS

A Paper Presented at the  
Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the

Association of Nazarene Sociologists & Researchers  
Kansas City, Missouri

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17 March 2006

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### Introduction

"I AM here, too." These four words resonated deeply in Glenn Chaffee's heart within minutes of his first arrival as a guest at New Hope Community Church of the Nazarene. Years after his first visit, Glenn still considers this the most direct impression he has ever received from God in over three-quarters of a century. When I first welcomed the Chaffees into our rented middle school cafeteria in 2000, I was certain their first visit would also be their last. After all, they were much older than nearly everyone in our small congregation and I highly doubted they would appreciate our church's styles of media, not to mention the volume of our music. My presumptions were incorrect in nearly every respect. Despite our differences, God's presence was evident in a church that was very different from any other he had known before. Over time, other senior adults like the Chaffees began attending New Hope Church with increasing regularity.

During my initial years at New Hope, I wrongly presumed that our worship style and commitments to technology connected almost exclusively with younger people. Instead, the church saw people of all ages embrace their faith in Christ through these multidimensional communication forms. This led me to wonder why older adults, who have lived most of their lives with a modern worldview, connected with my preaching when it intentionally adopted what I considered postmodern methods of delivery. My interest led me to consider during my doctoral studies at Asbury Theological Seminary's Beeson Center whether the essentials of preaching to younger generations today are really unique, or if they are in fact transgenerational.

Today the impact of media technologies permeates most of American culture, affecting not only those born since its advent. Despite these innovations, much of the Church's twenty-first-century preaching continues to center on the audio channel rather than utilizing a more interactive, multidimensional spectrum. To illustrate, *Preaching* magazine awarded its book of the year for 2001 to Graham Johnston's *Preaching to a Postmodern World*. Old habits apparently die hard since the book was subtitled *A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners*. Apparently, many in the Church find it difficult to conceive of preaching involving anything other than a speaker and hearers. Today, the majority of evangelical Christian preaching remains focused on the ears despite the fact that people appear to be less inclined than ever before to listen to an extended sermon from a talking head behind a pulpit.

This paper challenges preachers today to recognize that they are speaking primarily to a congregation of viewers, not simply listeners. Its findings grow out of lessons learned from my

dissertation research related to congregational receptivity toward the use of visual media in preaching. It asserts that if preachers hope to communicate the graphic message of the gospel to people of all ages, they must become adept at utilizing a broader visual bandwidth rather than mastering only the narrower audio spectrum.

#### Sacred Models of Visual Media

Scripture reveals God's passionate desire to communicate with the created order through the human senses of sight (Isa. 6:10; Matt. 6:26), smell (Job 27:3; 1 Cor. 12:17), sound (Gen. 4:10; Isa. 6:10; Matt. 11:15), touch (Ps. 144:5; 1 John 1:1), and taste (Ps. 34:8; Matt. 5:13). In his ministry, Jesus used a wide variety of methods to convey his message: he washed his disciples' feet, held up a little child before them as an example, broke bread before them, used coins and withered trees for object lessons, and at one point even wrote in the dirt to make his point. Whether he challenged his disciples to demonstrate childlike faith or lifted a cup and broken loaf as emblems of his shed blood and broken body, Jesus reminds the Church in a myriad of ways that while faith comes by hearing, it also comes by seeing.

Likewise, the Old Testament is rich with vivid imagery. In Exodus 35-36, Moses goes to extreme lengths in specifying construction details and the roles played by a wide variety of skilled artisans and extols a member of the tribe of Judah named Bezalel for becoming what might be called the patron saint of artists. By his example, Bezalel demonstrates that followers of the First Artist can honor God not only with folded hands but also with hands that are divinely inspired to carve, or weave, or cut stone.

When the First Artist uses words in the Old Testament, we find that God often combines them with graphic imagery. Isaiah 20 is a good case in point as God instructs the prophet to strip off his clothes and walk around naked for three years. Through this extreme example, God wants the people of Israel to see that they are about to be carted off to Assyria, stripped and naked, along with anyone else who fails to place their trust in God. Similarly, one of the most profound object lessons in the Old Testament comes in the eighteenth chapter of Jeremiah's prophetic book. Here, God leads Jeremiah to a potter's house where he offers a vivid object lesson through the artisan's work on the wheel. Only after the visual message is first communicated through the potter's reformation of his marred creation does God speak to Jeremiah: "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel" (Jer. 18:6b). In this example, words secondarily follow the primacy of images, not vice-versa.

Ironically, the Gospel of John begins with reference to a word that is actually an image: "In

the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning" (John 1:1-2). In this way, John introduces his gospel by affirming that Jesus is God in the flesh. Later in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul writes to the church at Colossae that Jesus "is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). The heart of the New Testament message is that a fleshed-out faith stands at the epicenter of Christianity, for as Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky note, "Christianity is the revelation not only of the Word of God, but also of the Image of God, in which His likeness is revealed" (27).

This understanding of God's image dwelling in human flesh is given the theological term Incarnation, literally meaning the "enfleshment" of God in human form. Robert Webber asserts the supremacy of Christ as God's incarnate metaphor: "The greatest of all metaphors is Jesus. He is, as Paul said, 'the exact likeness of the unseen God.' He brings the invisible into visible form and his death and resurrection become the metaphors for our death to sin and our resurrection to new life in him" (69). In beautiful prose, Frederick Buechner introduces his now classic book, *The Faces of Jesus*, with this observation of the Incarnation:

*He had a face. . .* Whoever he was or was not, whoever he thought he was, whoever he has become in the memories of men since and will go on becoming for as long as men remember him – exalted, sentimentalized, debunked, made and remade to the measure of each generation's desire, dread, indifference – he was a man once, whatever else he may have been. And he had a man's face, a human face. So suppose, as the old game goes, that we could return in time and see it for ourselves, see the face of Jesus as it actually was two thousand years of faces back. *Ecce homo*, Pilate said – *Behold the man* – yet whatever our religion or lack of it, we tend to shrink from beholding him and play our game instead with Shakespeare's face or Helen of Troy's because with them the chances are we could survive almost anything. . . But with Jesus the risk is too great; the risk that his face would be too much for us if not enough, either a face like any other face to see, pass by, forget, or a face so unlike any other that we would have no choice but to remember it always and follow or flee it to the end of our days and beyond. Like you and me he had a face his life gave shape to and that shaped others' lives, and with part of ourselves I think we might turn away from the mystery of life itself. With part of ourselves I think we might avoid meeting his real eyes, if such a meeting were possible, the way that at certain moments we avoid meeting our own real eyes in mirrors because for better or worse they threaten to tell us more than we want to know. (9)

The plenary message of Scripture is that God Incarnate stepped down into the human predicament. He spoke a human language. He embraced human culture. Likewise, he also embraced human suffering, grief, sin, and guilt. Leonard Sweet speaks of the Incarnation in everyday language: "God's dumbing down was for our wising up" (67).

The Incarnate Son was a master at using a wide variety of methods to communicate his message of God's love. The gospel writers note at least eleven occasions in twenty-two passages in which Jesus directly used physical object lessons to make his point. Furthermore, the New Testament gospels also offer broader evidence of the many other times Jesus alludes to metaphors involving people and/or objects that may have been present at the time of his preaching. Taken together, thirty incidents are cited by the gospel writers in fifty different passages, underscoring the impact of visual methodologies in Jesus' narrative preaching and teaching.

Following the example of Jesus, the Apostle Paul masterfully uses imagery not only in his writing but also in his preaching as well. His encounter with the Athenians at Mars Hill is a fine example of imagery turned idolatry and then used instructionally. In this encounter, Paul uses the Greeks' own idols in Acts 17:22-28 to point to the gospel message, demonstrating that the inclusion of visual elements in preaching and teaching can be keys that unlock believing.

Like Jesus and Paul, the early Church connected the human imagination to God in its worship and preaching using a variety of multisensory means. The liturgical use of incense in worship appeals to both vision and smell. Likewise, baptism engages worshipers through tactile, aural, and visual means. Perhaps the most dramatic example of the use of media forms other than the spoken word is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In a single setting, those who participate engage with God through all five senses simultaneously. Several clues indicate that the earliest generations of Christians used symbols in their worship and teaching. Bread, fish, and the *Chi-Rho* monogram appear frequently in ancient places of worship. The Roman catacombs of the late second and third centuries, as well as a baptistery in a Syrian house church called Dura-Europas provide important, yet admittedly elementary examples of pre-Constantinian evidence of an iconic aesthetic in the early Church. Although these graphic representations are simplistic, they are, nevertheless, figural representations of the Christian faith located in the context of their liturgical life. When Christianity became the official state religion as a result of Constantine's conversion in the fourth century, most of the populace was unable to read. Faced with the pressing need to communicate to an empire of Christians who had been converted by statute, the Church was forced to accommodate its teaching methods for those who were accustomed to visual representations as their basis for comprehension. Over the centuries that followed, Christian art and ecclesiastical architecture became vehicles for the indoctrination of preliterate catechumenes through the use of religious sculpture, stained glass, artwork, icons, friezes, doors, and furnishings. With the reign of the Holy Roman Empire, the visual arts took their ascendancy in the Church. Rich

mosaics and elaborate paintings became more than visual narratives only; instead, they were designed to reinforce the teachings of the faith by complementing the liturgy.

By the end of the sixth century, aniconic attitudes rose within the Church. As a result, Gregory the Great sanctioned the use of imagery while cautioning against venerating Christian art – an attitude that continues to shape Western Christendom. Defending the use of imagery, Gregory insisted that “icons are for the unlettered what the Sacred Scriptures are for the lettered” (qtd. in Clendenin 33). With the proliferation of inexpensive blockbooks that could accurately be called the “Poor Man’s Bible” of the fifteenth-century European Church, the *Biblia Pauperum* instructed the illiterate chiefly through biblical iconography and served as a transitory media form between hand-lettered manuscripts and books printed by movable type.

Beginning in the twelfth century and extending well into the sixteenth century, Gothic cathedrals were constructed in Medieval Europe as eloquent symbols of the majesty and power of the Christian faith. By the thirteenth century, Gregory’s influence cast a long shadow on Christian thought regarding religious imagery. Drawing from Gregory, Thomas Aquinas reflected that worshipers are not drawn to the images themselves but to the reality they represent. Thus Christ, rather than the image, is venerated. Late medieval preachers were also skilled in the art of movement, often drawing from a repertoire of gestures known to worshipers from popular forms of Christian art. Margaret Miles indicates that “[m]anuals of such gestures existed, providing a stylized body language that accompanied and heightened the verbal communication” (68).

By the time of the Enlightenment, the Western Church was well on its way to embracing more rational rather than sensory expressions in worship and preaching. Clendenin states that “[w]hile the East wanted to *see* [original emphasis] the Word in images, the West insisted on *hearing* [original emphasis] it in the spoken word. Begun by a cadre of intellectuals, the Reformation placed tremendous weight on the written word” (33). Myron Gilmore clarifies the cultural transformation from visual to textual literacy and its magnitude on the advent of the Reformation:

The invention and development of printing with moveable types brought about the most radical transformation in the conditions of intellectual life in the history of Western Civilization. . . Its effects were sooner or later felt in every department of human activity. (186)

Arthur Dickens expands on the importance of Gutenberg’s press to the Protestant Reformation:

In relation to the spread of religious ideas it seems difficult to exaggerate the significance of the Press, without which a revolution of this magnitude could scarcely have been consummated. Unlike the Wycliffe and Waldensian

controversies, Lutheranism was from the first the child of the printed book, and through this vehicle Luther was able to make exact, standardized and ineradicable impressions on the mind of Europe. (51)

Coupled with its aim of connecting people to God, the evangelical Church grew out of Martin Luther's call to *sola scriptura* by placing its emphasis on Scripture over other hermeneutical sources. Likewise, John Wesley is well known for his passionate desire to be *homo unius libri*, a man of one book: the Holy Bible. Fueled by the modern era's power of the press, the Protestant Reformation became a "Religion of the Book," and over time a textual bias that presupposed the literacy of its people branded evangelical preaching. Authority centered on written rather than spoken words.

The Gutenberg press gave rise to the first mass medium, which brought literacy to the uneducated and changed the way people structured their religious, not to mention cultural, interactions. As it shifted from an emphasis on the centralized traditions of the Church and its liturgies to Scriptures that were increasingly accessible, the Bible became a centerpiece of Protestant worship. Over time, Western culture became print driven as common people learned to read primarily through a process of textual biblical education. Richard Jensen describes the effect of this transformation on preaching: "Gutenberg hermeneutics . . . created Gutenberg homiletics. Gutenberg homiletics . . . predisposes a didactic form of homiletics (7). In many ways, history validates Jensen's thesis, showing that the advent of modernism found its way into the world through the Church.

Thomas Troeger describes two innovations that accompanied the modern homiletic: the first came as the authority of biblical interpretation shifted from the clergy to the people; the second came with the translation of Scripture into the vernacular (13). This technical innovation led to the mass production of the Bible via the printing press. D. T. Max observes that the power of the press "replaced the hand-copied manuscript with a bloodless mass-produced object, the book" (20).

Across two millennia, Christian history reveals that the spread of the gospel has been directly tied to its convergence with different forms of technology. World history reveals that humanity has experienced three eras of communication: oral, written, and now electronic. Today people live on the forefront of the shift from the second to third era of communication. Prior to these present times, human civilization has only shifted its dominant communications media once, and that alteration reformed most of the world as it existed up until that time. McLuhan observes that "the 16th century Renaissance was an age on the frontier between 2,000 years of alphabetic

and manuscript culture, on the one hand, and the new mechanism of repeatability and quantification, on the other" (173). Today much of the second shift from print to electronic communication puts the world between the now and not-yet; even worse, many pastors and laypeople hardly seem to be aware of the enormity of change that is at hand. While illiteracy yet remains a challenge for too many in North America, a much larger number of people in our churches are not illiterate, but postliterate. By this, I mean that in increasing measure, people seem to prefer to gain information today by means other than the printed page. It is not so much an issue that people cannot read, but that they often prefer other more visual or interactive means. Despite this challenge, the Church must not lose heart, for Christian history records an uncanny ability by Jesus' followers to communicate his gospel in creative, compelling, and contemporary ways. Perhaps the Christian faith does not need to depend nearly so much on modern literate discourse to communicate its message. Despite the revolutionary shifts taking place today, the Christian Church is wise to recognize its remarkable ability to adapt to other media forms.

#### Secular Models of Visual Media

Those interested in sacred communication models have much to learn from secular media innovations, as these forms demonstrate a growing understanding of the power of visual imagery in our culture today. For example, Gannett newspaper group charted a new course when they set out to develop a daily publication for the growing segment of the American population who no longer read newspapers. In 1982, the first multicolored, graphic-laden edition of *USA Today* rolled off the presses into Baltimore news racks resembling nineteen-inch televisions. The paper's national focus and penchant for tightly written, easily digested stories made it an instant sell-out. More than two decades later, much of the skepticism that drove critics to label it "McPaper" has been replaced by general, if sometimes grudging, admiration. Its use of colorful graphics quickly became, and still remains, a driving design force in newspapers across the country. More than two decades ago, the nation's largest newspaper publisher recognized an uncertain future unless sagging readership rebounded. Presently, *USA Today* boasts more than 2.3 million readers with a median age of forty-two, making it the most widely read daily in the country (Gannett par. 22).

Likewise, the television industry continually reinvents itself in ongoing attempts to capture larger portions of its market. At times, these transformations have called even tried-and-true divisions within the industry to adapt. *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* is a case in point. On Friday, 22 May 1992, a record audience tuned in to see Johnny Carson, the undisputed king of late night, stroll onstage through his billowing multicolored curtain for the last time. It was the end of an era

in broadcast television. The following Monday, *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* aired for the very first time. When the new host strolled onto the star that marked his predecessor's place on stage, the set had been updated and a new band and musical score were in place, but little else had changed. In the year that followed, Leno's ratings tumbled. Critics doubted the new host's ability to resuscitate the late night program.

Leno wrestled with his producers for creative control of the show. By early 1995, Leno successfully argued for a much more intimate studio environment reminiscent of the comedy circuit he ruled prior to hosting the crown jewel of NBC's late night line-up. Carson's wide stage and billowing curtains were gone, replaced now with a shallow platform flanked by a video wall that Leno uses nightly to replay humorous clips from the news or take to the streets in one of his infamous "Jaywalking" features. Leno eliminated the moat of empty space that once existed between Carson and his audience. Today Leno strides into the arms of his adoring fans. He describes the transformation to PBS's Charlie Rose: "People used to say... 'I *listen* to your monologue every night.' And I said to myself, 'You know, everyone's saying they listen to it. It's not *radio*. You're supposed to *watch* it.'" ("Leading" 12). Despite the fact that these changes expanded Leno's market share of the coveted younger late night television advertising demographic, literally millions of Baby Boomers, Builders, and Seniors still tune in to watch his show.

#### Generational Considerations

Popular folklore says that a frog placed in a kettle of boiling water will instinctively jump out of its deadly environment. By the same token, frogs that are placed in cool water can be boiled alive if the heat is gradually increased because they are unable to differentiate incremental changes in their environments. Following this analogy, human beings often find it difficult to identify cultural changes with much precision when these changes creep incrementally into their lives. Today, preachers face the challenge of assessing the impact of cultural shifts such as postmodernism while they are in the midst of the transition. In spite of these shifts, social scientists and demographers stratify America's twentieth-century generations into five groups: Seniors, born before 1925; Builders, born between 1925 and 1944; Baby Boomers, born between 1945 and 1963; Baby Busters or Generation X, born between 1964 and 1980; and Millennialists, born after 1980.

The impact of both postmodernism and electronic media forms is arguably most evident among Baby Busters. After all, they are the first generation of adults to live entirely in the wake of

these influences. For them, the cultural kettle seems unchanged because they have known no other world. By the same token, Seniors, Builders, and Baby Boomers have also been affected by these cultural changes and have in varying degrees adapted to life in this emerging time kettle as evidenced from popular opinion polls and the fact that habitual television viewers can be found in every demographic stratum. Likewise, the use of the Internet continues to grow exponentially across the age spectrum. John Reid, Lesslie Newbigin, and David Pullinger describe how the emerging postmodern age affects more than just the youngest generations:

Christians, like others, rarely contain just one framework for living – in us are postmodernism, modernism and traditional or pre-modern elements. In this way we share the lack of integration, and fragmentation, that mark this period. Postmodernism and modernism come to us through culture. (46-47)

As an aspect of culture, visual technologies also impact people of all ages today. This research study takes seriously the preaching task and seeks to test whether or not the use of visual media in preaching connects better with those in a particular age demographic or with people of various ages who see themselves as predominantly postmodern and/or postliterate.

#### Research Methodology

My original dissertation study consisted of a researcher-designed, cross-sectional quantitative survey of attitudes toward the use of visual media in preaching. The survey employed a number of researcher-designed questions coupled with congregational responses to a short form of the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale (E) and questions adapted from two nonstandardized surveys of postmodernism. On Sunday, 21 September 2003, subjects were encouraged to remain after New Hope's morning worship encounter to complete the survey.

Five research questions provided the framework for this study. This paper will focus primarily on questions three and four. As an overview, the first question considered the openness of respondents to change based on their responses to the Modified Rokeach E, a proven standardized instrument in social research. The second question related to the degree to which survey respondents were either modern or postmodern in their orientation to culture. The third question inquired about the receptivity of survey respondents to the use of visual media in preaching. The fourth research question sought to explore the extent to which respondents were postliterate and how postliteracy relates to their receptivity to the use of visual media in preaching. Finally, the fifth research question explored other variables that might correlate with participant responses to the use of visual media in preaching.

This correlational study examines the relationship between congregational assessments

regarding the use of visual media in preaching and respondents' dogmatism and personal orientations toward postmodernism. The research project was an evaluative study in the nonexperimental mode utilizing a researcher-designed quantitative cross-sectional survey that incorporated a standardized dogmatism scale. No comparison group was used to evaluate the use of visual media in preaching at New Hope Church. Given the fact that I had already been using visual media in my preaching at the church for over four years, a cross-sectional design was necessary since a baseline was no longer available.

Since this study was done in the nonexperimental mode, there were no dependent, independent, or intervening variables as are used in an experimental study. Instead, this study examined the relationships between a number of variables including the degree to which respondents were dogmatic, their receptivity to the use of visual media in preaching, and the degrees to which respondents viewed themselves as both postmodern and postliterate. Other variables that might affect the outcome of the study were age, gender, church experience, church affiliation, and tenure at New Hope Church. Since the study utilized a cross-sectional survey, the treatment varied by respondent depending upon that person's tenure at New Hope Church.

I believe the generalizations of my dissertation, and more particularly, within this paper, will be increasingly hopeful to preachers as the postmodern era continues to emerge. This will likely be especially important for those who serve in intergenerational settings. Given the cross-sectional context for this study after more than four years of treatment, readers would be mistaken to presume that the inclusion of visual media in preaching would produce immediate results in a congregation that was not accustomed to its use. These research findings can only be generalized by other congregations to the degree they are similar to New Hope Church. However, I believe these findings offer hope for those who desire to engage intergenerational congregations visually.

#### Research Findings

While the purpose of my dissertation was to determine which factors relate to the use of visual media in preaching in an emerging postmodern cultural context, this paper will focus on whether one's receptivity to the use of visual media in preaching is generationally related and if it is more dominant in those who embrace what I call postliterate characteristics.

The first section of the study included some demographic information in the form of five selected-response questions. These multiple-choice items in the researcher-designed survey included details such as gender, age category, respondents' relationship with God, and attendance at New Hope Church. In addition, three hypothetical questions that called for respondents to

indicate their preferences for either text or imagery were included in this section. While these three questions were not demographic in nature, these questions were included at the end of the first section because they matched the format of the other questions. Readability of the survey was enhanced by including these questions in this section rather than with the other media-related questions, which utilized a seven-point Likert scale in the third section of the study.

The second section of the research instrument measured dogmatism or a respondent's natural receptivity to change. This section of the study measured a respondent's relative openness or closedness to change by utilizing a shortened form of the Dogmatism Scale developed in 1960 by Milton Rokeach. Rokeach E sets out to assess a person's general intolerance, which can be helpful when comparing responses to the more tolerant qualities often exemplified by postmodern individuals. Rokeach E is designed to measure any kind of dogmatism, rather than religious dogmatism only, and strives to measure a respondent's general belief system rather than the specific content of his or her beliefs. Peter Hill indicates that according to Rokeach, "people with closed belief systems are classified as dogmatic. They are characterized by viewing authority as absolute" (490). Hill explains further:

A person with a closed belief system is quick to reject any opinions or ideas that conflict with his or her accepted view. Such individuals tend to compartmentalize their beliefs in such a way that conflicting concepts from different sources of authority can exist in relative isolation from each other and therefore remain unscrutinized by the believer. (490)

By the same token, individuals who are less dogmatic on the Rokeach E are prone to assess information from authority figures in combination with material from other sources. Less dogmatic people have more open belief systems and are willing to consider perspectives other than their own. Hill observes that "[c]onflicting concepts are not kept in isolation from one another but are tested through application to resolve discrepancies. The open person does not understand the world as threatening" (490). For Rokeach, the primary distinction between open and closed belief systems is the degree to which individuals rely on absolute authority.

Having used visual media in my preaching at New Hope Church for over four years, I was already familiar with many of the arguments used by those who oppose the practice. Several of the questions in section three grew directly out of conversations I have had with those who oppose the use of visual media in preaching and centered on eleven statements arranged on seven-point Likert scales. The survey asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Four questions were negatively worded in support of the modern

view; the remaining questions were designed to find support by postmodern individuals. The face validity of the survey questions was supported in the pretest by the lack of any apparent confusion on the part of any of the pretest respondents.

Individuals who embrace postmodern cultural characteristics often exhibit an inherent disinclination toward categorization. This personal trait, influenced by culture, can make a researcher's task even more difficult in a study like this one. While postmodern people exhibit a wide variety of personal beliefs, this cross-sectional quantitative survey identified five cultural values often embraced by postmodern individuals: community, disillusionment, diversity, subjective experience, and the influence of media. I asked respondents to indicate their relative agreement or disagreement to each question using seven-point Likert scales. Survey questions were designed personally or adapted from two nonstandardized surveys related to postmodernism. Six questions were negatively worded to embrace a more modern worldview. The remaining ten questions were worded to affirm the postmodern vantage point.

The survey data were analyzed by the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* software (SPSS). Immediately following the data collection, the survey data were entered from each survey into an *Excel* spreadsheet (*Microsoft*). This information was then imported into the SPSS statistical package. Those who completed large print surveys were safeguarded from identification by having their anonymous survey data transferred by an impartial volunteer onto standard sized surveys. These surveys were then randomly shuffled into the mix with the other surveys prior to data entry. Negatively worded items were reverse scored in SPSS to correspond with positively worded items in each corresponding scale.

Analysis began with an examination of frequencies within the demographic material in the first section of the survey, followed by reliability analyses for sections two through four of the instrument. In some cases, Varimax rotations were used to identify statistically identifiable factors within particular scales. Crosstabs, Pearson Correlations, analyses of variance (ANOVA), regression analyses, and comparisons of group means by *t*-tests were also used in the analysis phase. The data were reported in a descriptive manner.

Of the 113 people who completed the survey instrument, 54 percent ( $n=61$ ) were women, and 46 percent ( $n=52$ ) were men. The research instrument asked respondents to identify their age according to the same five-item generational scale described earlier on page eight. Since only four respondents were born prior to 1925, I merged the Senior respondents ( $n=4$ ) with the slightly younger Builder generation ( $n=10$ ) who were born between 1925-44. By merging the survey

information from Seniors, they could still be analyzed as part of a larger body of data by accommodating for slightly broader age characteristics. From this point forward, Seniors and Builders were combined as one demographic group (n=14) for the remainder of the study, accounting for 12.4 percent of all respondents. The remaining generational groupings were as follows: Baby Boomers (n=50) accounted for 44.2 percent of respondents; Baby Busters (n=35) accounted for 31.0 percent of respondents; and Millennials (n=13) accounted for 11.5 percent of all respondents. One person declined to answer this particular question.

With regard to respondents' relationship with God, 78.8 percent of survey participants (n=89) indicated that they made a commitment to Christ prior to attending New Hope Church. Those who committed their lives to Christ after attending New Hope amounted to 17.7 percent of all respondents (n=20). Four respondents were unsure about their relationship with God, and no respondents indicated they had not yet made a commitment to Christ.

The fourth demographic question related to tenure at New Hope Church. The data indicate that slightly more than one in five respondents began attending New Hope in the past year (n=24). On the other side of the spectrum, nearly half of the respondents (n=55) attended the church for some time prior to my arrival as pastor in 1999. Two groups dominated the sample: those who began attending New Hope Church prior to my arrival (n=55) and a total of those who came afterward (n= 57). These two groups of near identical size were, therefore, used as distinct demographic groups for all subsequent assessments in reference to congregational tenure.

The final demographic question asked respondents to describe their attendance at New Hope Church for the previous six months. This question specified New Hope as the attendance venue given the church's use of visual media in preaching and its centrality to the research study. Nearly 70 percent of the respondents (n=77) self-described their attendance to be nearly every week. Roughly 2 percent of respondents (n=2) did not respond to the question.

The first research question asked the degree to which survey respondents were open or closed to change based on their responses to a modified version of the Rokeach E. The answer to this question provided a baseline for the comparison of respondents' dogmatism scores with their receptivity toward visual media in preaching. An analysis of reliability was calculated for every scale in the research instrument, including responses to the dogmatism scale as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Listing of Research Survey Scales (N=113)**

| Scale                   | Mean | SD   | Alpha |
|-------------------------|------|------|-------|
| Dogmatism               | 3.71 | .69  | .73   |
| Media Scale             | 5.49 | .94  | .86   |
| Pastoral Media Subscale | 5.97 | 1.21 | .89   |
| Media Imagery Subscale  | 5.10 | .97  | .75   |

The Cronbach alpha is a tool for assessing the internal reliability or consistency within a statistical scale and is helpful in determining the degree to which a scale measures a single construct. Items within a scale that correlate well with each other indicate they are measuring the same underlying construct. In these cases, Cronbach alpha increases. By the same token, a scale made up of a wide variety of constructs will result in a low inter-item correlation, reflecting a correspondingly low Cronbach alpha score. A reliability coefficient of .70 or greater is considered acceptable in social science applications.

Survey items related to dogmatism resulted in a Cronbach alpha score of .73, which is slightly lower than Troidahl and Powell's estimated reliability of .79 for the same twenty-item scale (Biggers 10). By the same token, dogmatism fell between Rokeach's own reported range of reliability coefficients from .68 to .93 on Form E (Hill 490). The alpha coefficient for dogmatism was within the accepted range for social science research applications of this type.

The mean score for all respondents (n=113) on dogmatism was 3.71 (SD=.69). Using a seven-point Likert scale, this placed the average for all respondents roughly in the middle of the continuum, indicating they were moderately dogmatic.

I was especially interested in the degree to which each generational group scored on dogmatism. Prior to the study, I hypothesized that younger respondents would likely score less dogmatic than older ones. This assumption bore out statistically with one exception. As a whole, Seniors and Builders (mean=3.93; SD=.78) were more dogmatic than Baby Boomers (mean=3.60; SD=.72). Likewise, Baby Boomers were, in turn, slightly more dogmatic than Baby Busters (mean=3.59; SD=.58). However, with respect to the Millennialists, the survey data revealed the opposite: this youngest generational group, who were born after 1980, scored higher on dogmatism than any other group with a mean score of 4.05 (SD=.49) on a seven-point scale. Standard deviations for the four generational groups increased from .49 with Millennialists to .78

with Seniors and Builders, indicating a tighter cluster of similar scores by younger respondents and a wider disparity of responses as age increased by generational group. Table 2 reports some of the research findings from my dissertation in greater detail.

**Table 2. Dogmatism Scores by Generational Group (N=112)**

| <b>Generational Group</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|---------------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|
| Seniors and Builders      | 14       | 3.93        | .78       |
| Baby Boomers              | 50       | 3.60        | .72       |
| Baby Busters              | 35       | 3.59        | .58       |
| Millennialists            | 13       | 4.05        | .49       |

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated to examine the statistical differences between the means of all four generational groups. The relationship between the mean and the likelihood of random error for each group indicates whether the difference between the two is statistically significant or not. An analysis of dogmatism between age groupings revealed no statistically significant difference between mean scores.

The second research question sought to explore the degree to which survey respondents were either modern or postmodern in their orientation to culture. My hypothesis was that postmodern cultural values are becoming transgenerational while still recognizing that these values are likely more dominant among younger adults who have been immersed in them. This research question sought to discern the degree to which all respondents embrace the postmodern cultural values of subjective experience, disillusionment, diversity, and the influence of media. Given the natural disinclination of postmodern women and men to be categorized, the second research question proved to be the most difficult one to assess. In addition, the sixteen-item scale used in Section Four of the research instrument failed to be statistically reliable, which is why this segment of my research is not included in this paper.

The third research question explored the receptivity of survey respondents to the use of visual media in preaching. Section Three of the survey instrument was comprised of eleven researcher-designed questions relating to respondents' personal beliefs and observations of the use of visual media specifically at New Hope Church. A reliability analysis of the questions in this section of the survey revealed that this scale maintained the highest inter-item reliability of any in

the instrument, with a Cronbach alpha of .86.

The mean score for all respondents ( $n=113$ ) on the Media Scale was 5.49 ( $SD=.94$ ). Using a seven-point Likert scale, this score placed the average for all respondents on the high side of the continuum. Table 3 offers a more detailed breakdown based on generational grouping. To some extent, I was not surprised since many respondents in the congregation had been exposed to my use of visual media in preaching for over four years at the time of the cross-sectional research study.

**Table 3. Media Scale Scores by Generation (N=112)**

| Generational Group   | n  | Mean | SD   |
|----------------------|----|------|------|
| Seniors and Builders | 14 | 5.31 | 1.32 |
| Baby Boomers         | 50 | 5.50 | 1.00 |
| Baby Busters         | 35 | 5.55 | .76  |
| Millennialists       | 13 | 5.52 | .68  |

An interesting discovery came when comparing the Media Scale with those who had either made a commitment to Christ before or after attending New Hope Church. Those who indicated their commitment to Christ prior to attending New Hope scored a mean of 5.37 ( $SD=.98$ ) on the Media Scale while those who made a commitment to Christ subsequent to arriving at the church scored a mean of 6.01 ( $SD=.49$ ). A much lower standard deviation on the part of the second group indicates that responses were clustered more closely together than they were for those who came to New Hope after accepting Christ. A *t*-test for equality of means between both groups revealed a two-tailed significance ( $t=-2.80$ ;  $df=107$ ;  $p\leq.01$ ). By the same token, an ANOVA comparing mean scores revealed that the relationship between generational grouping and Media Scale scores was not significant.

After entering all eleven questions from the Media Scale into a factor analysis using a Varimax rotation, I identified two distinct factors, each with a high degree of inter-item reliability and Eigenvalues in excess of 1.00. The first factor, hereafter known as the Pastoral Media Subscale ( $\alpha=.89$ ), accounted for 47 percent of the variance. The second factor became known as the Media Imagery Subscale ( $\alpha=.75$ ) for the remainder of the data analysis. The second subscale accounted for 14 percent of the variance on the larger Media Scale.

**Pastoral Media Subscale.** Comprised of five items from the Media Scale, the Pastoral Media Subscale had a Cronbach alpha of .89. All five items were worded negatively and were reverse scored. After recoding, a higher score on this subscale reflected higher respondent receptivity to the pastor's use of media. Each item in the subscale related either directly or indirectly to me as pastor and, more specifically, to my use of visual media in preaching at New Hope Church. Table 4 outlines the five questions that made up the Pastoral Media Subscale and includes their individual factor loads.

**Table 4. Pastoral Media Subscale (N=112)**

| Question  | Factor Loading |
|---|----------------|
| Q3E Generally, I find the pastor's use of visual media distracting.                         | .85            |
| Q3F Using visual media in preaching today is a gimmick.                                     | .86            |
| Q3G I suspect the pastor likely chooses video clips <u>before</u> selecting his Bible text. | .75            |
| Q3I Often, the visual media used in the sermon do <u>not</u> relate to the Bible text.      | .80            |
| Q3K I wish the pastor would stop using visual media in his preaching.                       | .84            |

*Note: All items in this subscale were reverse scored in SPSS.*

The mean score for all respondents (n=113) on the Pastoral Media Subscale was 5.97 (SD=1.21). Using a seven-point Likert scale, the average for all respondents was quite high on the continuum. In fact, the mean for this subscale was the highest of any in the research study. A *t*-test revealed no statistically significant difference between the mean scores based on gender.

With respect to those who made commitments to Christ prior or subsequent to their attendance at New Hope Church, the survey data revealed that those who made a prior Christian commitment (n=89) scored 5.87 (SD=1.28) on the Pastoral Media Subscale, while those who committed themselves to Christ following their attendance at New Hope (n=20) scored 6.44 (SD=.53) on the same subscale. Individuals were more likely to score higher on the Media Scale if they also made a Christian commitment at New Hope. Likewise, the standard deviation for those who made a commitment to Christ at New Hope was considerably lower (SD=.53) than it was for those who made a prior commitment (SD=1.28), which indicates that the prior group tended to score more tightly in a cluster than the latter group. A *t*-test for equality of means between both groups revealed a two-tailed significance ( $t=-1.97$ ;  $df=107$ ;  $p\leq.05$ ).

The correlation analysis shown in Table 5 details the Cronbach alpha for each scale used in my dissertation and describes the relationship between each variable. Not surprisingly, a statistically significant relationship exists between the Media Scale and both the Pastoral Media Subscale and the Media Imagery Subscale. This is not noteworthy because the subscales come from the Media Imagery Scale. Likewise, the statistically significant relationship between the Pastoral Media Subscale and the Media Imagery Subscale are not noteworthy since both are closely related to the same construct. However, the analysis did reveal a statistically significant negative correlation between dogmatism and the Pastoral Media Subscale ( $r = -.22$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ). In other words, the analysis revealed that those who scored low on dogmatism tended to score higher on the Pastoral Media Subscale. Respondents who tended to be more open to change also tended to indicate a higher level of receptivity to me as their pastor and to my use of visual media in preaching. Likewise, those who were more dogmatic were also more likely to score lower on the Pastoral Media Subscale. This discovery indicates that those who were more closed to change were also more likely to negatively score those questions that related to me as a preacher and my use of visual media in preaching at New Hope Church. Since the Pastoral Media Subscale pertains to respondent attitudes specifically toward me as their pastor and my use of visual media in preaching at New Hope Church, it is an important tool for analysis in this study.

**Table 5. Correlation of Variables in Analysis**

| Scale                               | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Postmodern Subjectivity Subscale | (.60) |       |       |       |       |
| 2. Dogmatism                        | .03   | (.73) |       |       |       |
| 3. Media Scale                      | .11   | -.13  | (.86) |       |       |
| 4. Pastoral Media Subscale          | .05   | -.22* | .88** | (.89) |       |
| 5. Media Imagery Subscale           | .14   | -.01  | .87** | .52** | (.75) |

*Note: Values in parentheses are alpha coefficients for measurement scales;*

*n=113; \* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$*

The Media Imagery Subscale, as it came to be known, is composed of six items from the Media Scale that all relate to respondent attitudes toward the use of visual media in preaching. A reliability analysis on the Media Imagery Subscale revealed a Cronbach alpha of .75 ( $n=113$ ). Table 6 delineates each item within the subscale along with the corresponding factor loadings. The first item in the scale was reverse scored in SPSS, meaning that those who rated themselves high on this item tended to be textually oriented rather than visually oriented.

**Table 6. Media Imagery Subscale (N=112)**

| Question  | Factor Loading |
|---|----------------|
| Q3A Images are nice in sermons, but words really get the point across to me.        | .73            |
| Q3B A picture really is worth a thousand words, even in a sermon.                   | .68            |
| Q3C I have been emotionally moved by the use of visual media in a sermon.           | .62            |
| Q3D Jesus used the visual methods of his day in his communication.                  | .47            |
| Q3H My friends would likely find our church's use of visual media interesting.      | .67            |
| Q3J I like visual media because it is easier for me to see the screen than to read. | .60            |

*Note: Q3A in this subscale was reverse scored in SPSS*

The mean score for all respondents ( $n=113$ ) on the Media Imagery Subscale was 5.10 ( $SD=.97$ ). Using a seven-point Likert scale, the average for all respondents was high on the continuum and was consistent with the other two media-related scales in the study. A *t*-test revealed no statistically significant difference between the mean scores based on gender.

The fourth research question sought to determine the degree to which respondents were postliterate by exploring respondent preferences for textual or visual information through preferred media sources as well as memory triggers in everyday life and relation to sermon retention. The final three questions in Section One of the research instrument sought to determine respondent preferences toward either literacy or postliteracy. One question asked respondents to imagine themselves locating friends from school days in an old yearbook. Respondents were given a choice between two hypothetical options: an image-based postliterate option that involved looking at yearbook photos to trigger their memory, or a textually based literate option that involved scanning a list of names in the yearbook as a memory trigger. In every case, generational groups

overwhelmingly preferred image-based memory triggers rather than textually based ones. Approximately three-quarters of all respondents (n=85) self-described themselves as preferring image-based triggers, regardless of age. Age was not a determining factor of whether people preferred image-based or textually based memory triggers and the data were not statistically significant. Not surprisingly, the survey findings also indicated that those with image-based memory triggers were more receptive to the use of visual media in preaching than those with textually based ones.

The second item relating to postliteracy asked respondents to identify their preferred media form for news: newspapers, radio, television, and the Internet were the forced choices representing a continuum from literate to postliterate. On the one hand, the research findings for this question shown in Table 7 were not surprising: nearly two-thirds of all respondents (n=70) indicated that television was their preferred media form for news. On the other hand, I was fascinated to discover that Senior and Builder respondents (n=12) were the only generational group to select television unanimously as their preferred news source. As a whole, newspapers ranked last, or at least near the bottom, as respondents' least favorable form of news media. Baby Boomers (n=11) were more inclined to choose the Internet as their primary media form than any other generational group. Nevertheless, Internet users as a whole (n=18) still came in an overwhelmingly distant second to television (n=70). While television is a dominant media form in every generational group, the survey data revealed the lack of a statistically significant relationship between age and news media preference.

**Table 7. Crosstab on News Media Preference (N=110)**

|                      | Newspaper | Radio | Television | Internet |
|----------------------|-----------|-------|------------|----------|
| Generational Group   | n         | n     | n          | n        |
| Builders and Seniors | 0         | 0     | 12         | 0        |
| Baby Boomers         | 5         | 9     | 25         | 11       |
| Baby Busters         | 4         | 3     | 24         | 4        |
| Millennialists       | 0         | 1     | 9          | 3        |

By the same token, I was surprised to find that an expected relationship between dogmatism and preferred news media form did not exist in the survey sample. Prior to the study, I

suspected that respondents who scored higher on dogmatism would also be more likely to prefer more traditionally literate news media forms, especially the newspaper. This hypothesis did not bear out statistically. Instead, the data revealed in this instance that dogmatism increased with postliteracy as shown in Table 8. Likewise, standard deviations decreased as respondents chose more postliterate forms of news media. An ANOVA related to dogmatism and news media preference revealed a significant difference between mean scores ( $F=3.99$ ;  $df=3,107$ ;  $p\leq.01$ ).

**Table 8. News Media Preference and Dogmatism (N=111)**

| News Media Preference | N  | Dogmatism |     |
|-----------------------|----|-----------|-----|
|                       |    | Mean      | SD  |
| Newspaper             | 9  | 3.05      | .71 |
| Radio                 | 13 | 3.48      | .63 |
| Television            | 71 | 3.79      | .74 |
| Internet              | 18 | 3.83      | .26 |

A *t*-test for equality of means was also conducted to compare dogmatism and the Media Imagery Subscale on those who self-selected their preferred news media form as newspapers or radio. This test confirmed the ANOVA, revealing that those who preferred television or the Internet ( $n=89$ ) also scored higher (mean=3.80; SD=.67) on dogmatism than those who preferred more literate media forms ( $n=22$ ) like newspaper and radio (mean=3.30; SD=.68). The *t*-test revealed a two-tailed significance on this comparison ( $t=3.11$ ;  $df=109$ ;  $p\leq.01$ ).

The same *t*-test also revealed another statistically significant finding: those who preferred television and the Internet also scored higher on the Media Imagery Subscale (mean=5.21; SD=.94). While an ANOVA did not indicate significance as it did in the case above, a *t*-test revealed a two-tailed significance on this comparison ( $t=2.35$ ;  $df=109$ ;  $p\leq.05$ ). I was not surprised by this finding, confirming a relationship between television and Internet usage and Media Imagery Subscale scores.

I processed another crosstab defining individual responses by generational grouping to the final question in Section One. This question was specific to me and my congregational context at New Hope Church. It asked, "When you think about one of Pastor Jay's past sermons, which are you more likely to remember: stories he told in particular or a visual illustration he used to make his point?" During my residency in the Beeson program, I suspected that younger respondents

would more likely be visually oriented than their older counterparts. I presumed that younger respondents would be more likely to retain sermon information on the basis of image rather than story.

This assumption did not appear to bear out in my pastoral assignment and became, in essence, a catalyst for this research project. The crosstab for this question is shown in Table 9. The fairly even distribution of responses in every generational group validates my experience at New Hope Church rather than my original suspicion at Asbury. It also underscores the importance of context in respect to this question. One item in this section asks a similar question with respect to a more general memory trigger (i.e., visual or textual triggers in a yearbook), but this question sets the context specifically at New Hope Church. As shown previously, 85 out of 111 respondents overwhelmingly supported image triggers over textual ones. With regard to sermon retention, however, responses were more diverse. Slightly more than half of all respondents ( $n=59$ ) were prone to recall my past sermons by remembering a visual illustration, while 42.5 percent were more likely to remember a story ( $n=48$ ). Ironically, in every generational group except the Millennialists, respondents were more likely to remember my past sermons by recalling visual illustrations rather than stories I told in particular. Older respondents did not tend to favor stories over visuals more than any other generational group. The survey data did not support a clear connection between age and sermon retention and the findings were not statistically significant.

**Table 9. Crosstab on Sermon Retention (N=107)**

| Generational Group   | Stories | Visuals |
|----------------------|---------|---------|
|                      | n       | n       |
| Builders and Seniors | 5       | 7       |
| Baby Boomers         | 19      | 29      |
| Baby Busters         | 16      | 18      |
| Millennialists       | 8       | 5       |

I conducted a *t*-test for equality of means based on responses to sermon retention and the Postmodern Subjectivity Subscale, dogmatism, the Pastoral Media Subscale, and the Media Imagery Subscale. This test revealed three statistically significant findings, all of which resulted in negative correlations. First, the data indicated an inverse relationship between Postmodern

Subjectivity Subscale scores and respondent preference for textual triggers on sermon retention ( $t=-2.81$ ;  $df=105$ ;  $p\leq.01$ ), which was noteworthy. Second, an inverse relationship also existed between those who scored higher on the Media Scale and respondents' textual trigger preference ( $t=-2.83$ ;  $df=105$ ;  $p\leq.01$ ). Finally, given the previous finding, I was not surprised to learn of an inverse relationship between rankings on the Media Imagery Subscale and respondent preference for textual triggers on sermon retention ( $t=-3.05$ ;  $df=105$ ;  $p\leq.01$ ).

To investigate a possible explanation for the factors leading to receptivity toward visual media, I conducted regression analyses on both the Pastoral Media and the Media Imagery Subscales. In both cases, I controlled these analyses for age. By excluding selected variables, regression analyses may permit researchers to discover specific influences that contribute to variance in a particular research finding. At times, one influence will dominate an outcome; at other times, a regression analysis reveals multiple influences that contribute to a finding.

With regard to the Pastoral Media Subscale, I conducted a regression analysis controlling for age in reference to the following three variables: dogmatism, sermon retention, and the Postmodern Subjectivity Subscale. Using the stepwise regression feature, dogmatism was selected as a contributing factor in step two. This factor accounted for 11 percent of the variance in the Pastoral Media Subscale. The third contributing variable entered was a respondent's own preference for sermon retention (i.e., stories or visuals), accounting for 4 percent of the variance in the same subscale. The regression analysis indicated that the Postmodern Subjectivity Subscale did not account for much variance on the Pastoral Media Subscale.

This regression revealed that a respondent's dogmatism contributes more to variance within the Pastoral Media Subscale than any other variable. The degree to which people were postliterate in their retention of sermon information was also a unique contributing factor, although to a lesser degree than dogmatism. Table 10 demonstrates the regression.

Table 10. Regression on Pastoral Media Subscale

| Step   | Variable         | Beta <sup>a</sup> | T     | ? R <sup>2</sup> | ? F      |
|--|------------------|-------------------|-------|------------------|----------|
| 1  | Age              | .02               | .15   | .00              | .02      |
| 2  | Dogmatism        | -.34              | -3.62 | .11              | 13.10*** |
| 3  | Sermon Retention | .21               | 2.29  | .04              | 5.25*    |
| R <sup>2</sup> = .16; F = 6.31; df = 3,103; p ≤ .001 |                  |                   |       |                  |          |

<sup>a</sup>Standardized Beta for each step, \*p ≤ .05, \*\*p ≤ .01, \*\*\*p ≤ .001

A regression analysis was also conducted to investigate which factors contributed most to variances within the Media Imagery Subscale. As in the previous analysis, I controlled again for age. Using the stepwise regression feature, sermon retention was selected as a key variable for analysis. The second regression analysis determined no correlation between a respondent's Postmodern Subjectivity Subscale score and his or her ranking on the Media Imagery Subscale. By the same token, a respondent's dogmatism did not account for much variance in the Media Imagery Subscale. Instead, the data indicated that a respondent's preferred method of sermon retention (i.e., literate or postliterate) only accounted for roughly 9 percent of the variance on the Media Imagery Subscale. Apparently, many other factors, yet unknown, account for more variance than whether people tend to remember visual cues. This finding surprised me because I suspected that this factor would have a more direct impact on variance within the subscale. Table 11 illustrates the regression data on the Media Imagery Subscale.

Table 11. Regression on Media Imagery Subscale

| Step  | Variable         | Beta <sup>a</sup> | T      | ? R <sup>2</sup> | ? F    |
|---|------------------|-------------------|--------|------------------|--------|
| 1   | Age              | .05               | .51    | .00              | .26    |
| 2   | Sermon Retention | .30               | 3.13** | .09              | 9.80** |
| R <sup>2</sup> = .09; F = 5.04; df = 2,104; p ≤ .01 |                  |                   |        |                  |        |

<sup>a</sup>Standardized Beta for each step, \*p ≤ .05, \*\*p ≤ .01, \*\*\*p ≤ .001

The final research question considered other variables that might correlate with participant

responses to the use of visual media in preaching. As for gender, the survey data indicated that women ( $n=61$ ) scored slightly higher on the Media Scale (mean=5.52; SD=.91) than men ( $n=52$ ; mean=5.45; SD=.97). On the Pastoral Media Subscale, women (mean=5.98; SD=1.21) also ranked higher than men (mean=5.95; SD=1.21). Likewise, scores from the Media Imagery Subscale indicated that women (mean=5.14; SD=.90) scored higher than men (mean=5.04; SD=1.04). A  $t$ -test for equality of means by gender revealed that these findings were not statistically significant. Gender did not play a part in respondent receptivity to the use of visual media in preaching.

With respect to attendance, I speculated that those who attended New Hope Church most regularly would also prefer the use of visual media in preaching more than those who attended less frequently. Not surprisingly, the research data supports this hypothesis. I calculated an ANOVA comparing mean scores between attendance patterns and the Media Scale ( $F=5.38$ ;  $df=3,107$ ;  $p \leq .01$ ), Pastoral Media Subscale ( $F=4.49$ ;  $df=3,107$ ;  $p \leq .01$ ), and Media Imagery Subscale ( $F=3.22$ ;  $df=3,107$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ). The ANOVA for these mean scores indicated that all three were statistically significant.

Those who attended New Hope Church least frequently on holidays or other special occasions ( $n=10$ ) consistently ranked lowest on the Media Scale with a mean score of 4.52 (SD=1.04), the Pastoral Media Subscale with a mean score of 4.80 (SD=1.61), and the Media Imagery Subscale with a mean score of 4.32 (SD=.98). Not surprisingly, those who indicated their church attendance at nearly every week ( $n=77$ ) reflected the highest mean scores on all three scales: 5.65 (SD=.81) on the Media Scale; 6.16 (SD=.95) on the Pastoral Media Subscale; and 5.23 (SD=.92) on the Media Imagery Subscale.

Prior to the research study, I suspected a relationship between congregant tenure at New Hope Church and receptivity to visual media, namely, that those who attended New Hope for longer periods of time would tend to be more receptive to the use of visual media in preaching. A  $t$ -test for equality of means was conducted, which revealed two findings: first, that overall media receptivity was high on the Media Scale, the Pastoral Media Subscale, and the Media Imagery Subscale regardless of respondent tenure based on mean scores; and second, that those who attended New Hope Church prior to my arrival as pastor preferred visual media in preaching slightly more than those who came after my arrival in 1999 on all three media scales previously mentioned. Nevertheless, the  $t$ -test also revealed that none of the factors related to these outcomes was statistically significant.

I was also interested to learn whether a correlation existed between receptivity to visual media in preaching and the timing of a congregant's commitment to Christ. In other words, were people who had made a commitment to Christ prior to attending New Hope Church any less receptive to visual media than those who knew no other preaching model and, therefore, made a Christian commitment after coming to New Hope? An examination of the research data related to respondent commitment indicated statistically significant findings to this question on all three media scales. Those who made Christian commitments after attending New Hope Church consistently scored higher on all three media scales than those who committed themselves to Christ prior to their attendance at the same church. Table 12 outlines the survey data for the Media Scale ( $t=-2.80$ ;  $df=107$ ;  $p\leq.01$ ), the Pastoral Media Subscale ( $t=-1.98$ ;  $df=107$ ;  $p\leq.05$ ), and the Media Imagery Subscale ( $t=-2.94$ ;  $df=107$ ;  $p\leq.01$ ).

**Table 12. Commitment and Media Receptivity**

| Scales                  | Prior Commitment |      |      | Subsequent Commitment |      |     |
|-------------------------|------------------|------|------|-----------------------|------|-----|
|                         | n                | Mean | SD   | n                     | Mean | SD  |
| Media Scale             | 89               | 5.37 | .98  | 20                    | 6.01 | .49 |
| Pastoral Media Subscale | 89               | 5.87 | 1.28 | 20                    | 6.44 | .53 |
| Media Imagery Subscale  | 89               | 4.97 | .98  | 20                    | 5.65 | .70 |

#### Summary of Statistically Significant Findings

The following summation centers in most cases on research findings that were deemed statistically significant within my dissertation. In several cases, especially as they related to demographic characteristics, the lack of a statistically significant finding became an important validation because it contradicts several popularly held notions about preaching today. For purposes of review, the following summary collates eleven research findings into four broad categories based on demographic, parishioner, dogmatic, and postliterate characteristics.

##### Demographic Characteristics

1. Age was not a significant factor in accounting for differences between mean scores on dogmatism, the Postmodern Subjectivity Subscale, or the Media Scale.
2. Gender did not play a significant part in determining a respondent's score on any of the three media scales used in the study. While women scored slightly higher on all three media scales, these differences were not deemed statistically significant.

### Parishioner Characteristics

3. Those who made a commitment to Christ after arriving at New Hope Church scored significantly higher on all three media scales than those who made a faith commitment prior to attending the same church.

4. By the same token, no significant difference existed between mean scores on the same three media scales for those who attended New Hope Church prior to my introduction of visual media in 1999 and for those who began attending afterward.

5. Regarding attendance at New Hope Church, a significant correlation was found between respondent attendance patterns and mean scores on all three media scales.

### Dogmatic Characteristics

6. A statistically significant negative relationship was discovered between the Pastoral Media Subscale and respondent dogmatism. The analysis revealed that respondents who scored high on dogmatism tended to score lower on the Pastoral Media Subscale; likewise, those who tended to be more open to change at New Hope also indicated a higher level of receptivity to me as their pastor and my use of visual media in preaching.

7. The data revealed a surprising and statistically significant finding that dogmatism increased in relation to respondent postliteracy.

### Postliterate Characteristics

8. Based on responses categorized by age, no significant difference could be found to account for respondent preferences for either image-based or textually based memory triggers. Respondent age did not play a significant part in people's tendencies to trigger their memory either by images or text.

9. The survey data do not support a significantly clear connection between age and sermon retention. Respondent age did not account for any particular preference to recall my sermons by either visual illustration or story.

10. Not surprisingly, those who preferred news sources such as television and the Internet also scored significantly higher on the Media Imagery Subscale than those who preferred more literate media forms.

11. Significant inverse relationships existed between mean scores on the Media Scale and the Postmodern Subjectivity Subscale and the Media Imagery Subscale as they related to respondent preferences for textual triggers in sermon retention

## Major Findings

Examining demographic, parishioner, dogmatic, and postliterate characteristics, this section outlines the study's major research findings.

### Demographic Characteristics

Contrary to popular opinion, age was not a significant factor in accounting for differences among mean scores on dogmatism or the Media Scale. Based on the survey findings, preachers should not assume that age alone will necessarily cause worshipers to be either more or less dogmatic or receptive to the use of visual media in preaching. This discovery runs contrary to much of the popular teaching at pastors' conferences and articles in ministry magazines today. Preachers should be cautious about presuming that preaching forms utilizing visual media will be more or less attractive to particular age groups.

By the same token, no significant difference could be found, based on age, to account for respondents' use of either image-based or textually based memory triggers. As a cognitive function, memory triggers do not appear to be age related. Preachers should not necessarily assume that older worshipers will prefer textually based memory triggers nor conclude that younger worshipers will naturally prefer image-based ones. Despite age, the human creation remains far more dynamic than static. This presumption, while popularly held in postmodern preaching circles, lacks statistical support in this study.

Furthermore, the survey data do not support a significantly clear connection between age and sermon retention. Preachers ought not to assume that younger worshipers are more likely to remember a pastor's visual illustration, nor should they presume that older worshipers are more prone to recall a pastor's story from memory. In this study, retention defies narrow age or generational groupings since more than three-quarters of all respondents preferred visual memory triggers.

Finally, the research findings indicate that gender did not play a significant part in determining a respondent's score on any of the three media scales used in the study. While women scored slightly higher on all three media scales, these differences were not statistically significant. Given the survey findings, preachers should not consider gender a dominant factor relating to a worshiper's receptivity toward the use of visual media in preaching.

### Parishioner Characteristics

According to the research findings, those who made a commitment to Christ after their arrival at New Hope Church scored significantly higher on all three media scales than those who

made their faith commitment prior to attending the same church. Over time, this finding may lend support to McLuhan's mantra of media becoming the message. Preachers who use visual media in their preaching should carefully consider the appetites they nurture and feed. Ongoing attention should be given to the use of media as a conveyor of biblical metaphors rather than simply a popular preaching gimmick. Those who placed their faith in Christ at New Hope Church showed greater receptivity to visual media in preaching than those who made their faith commitments elsewhere; the preacher's challenge is to deepen the Christian experience for all worshipers in creative, compelling ways regardless of a person's background or experience.

By the same token, the survey data showed no significant differences between mean scores on the same three media scales for those who attended New Hope Church prior to my introduction of electronic visual media in 1999 compared with those who came afterward. Regardless of a person's tenure at New Hope Church, mean scores for all three media scales were fairly high. This finding may be due in part to the strong receptivity by those who came to Christ at New Hope, as well as those who attended the church prior to the my arrival in 1999 and came to appreciate its use. For many preachers, this finding offers hope to those who fear the introduction of electronic media forms in preaching will polarize an existing congregation. The research findings indicate the opposite: no significant differences in receptivity were found in relation to congregational tenure.

The final parishioner characteristic clearly demonstrates convergent validity: regarding attendance at New Hope Church, a significant correlation existed between respondent attendance patterns and mean scores on all three media scales. Those who attended New Hope Church most regularly were also most likely to be receptive to the use of visual media in preaching. Likewise, those who attended New Hope Church least frequently scored the lowest means on all three media scales. Given this finding, the research could lead one to believe that the use of media itself could be the cause for less frequent attendance on the part of these individuals. By the same token, the relatively strong respondent mean scores even for those with the lowest attendance patterns indicated a good deal of support in favor of the use of visual media in preaching, thereby refuting this speculation.

#### Dogmatic Characteristics

The research findings indicated a statistically significant negative relationship between the Pastoral Media Subscale and respondent dogmatism. This inverse correlation can be understood in this way: as dogmatism increased, support for the pastor's use of visual media decreased.

Likewise, those who tended to be more open to change also indicated a higher level of receptivity to me as their pastor and my use of visual media in preaching. On the one hand, a naturally closed individual may tend to embrace negatively worded questions like those used in this subscale more than a less dogmatic person would. On the other hand, the research indicated that those who were less dogmatic, which is to say those who were more open to change, demonstrated significant support for my use of visual media in preaching. In this case, the data reveal a negative correlation between dogmatism and respondent receptivity to the use of visual media in preaching.

#### Postliterate Characteristics

The final cluster of research findings relate in a variety of ways to postliteracy. One of the most fascinating discoveries from this study was that dogmatism increased in relation to respondent postliteracy. This finding was statistically significant. Not surprisingly, the initial data corresponded with material in my literature review indicating that males tend to rate higher on dogmatism than females, with both genders rated slightly less than moderately dogmatic. However, I was shocked to find every member of the Builder and Senior generations self-selecting television as their preferred source for news. This age group was the only one to select the same form of media by every member. Perhaps the fact that the television is more readily available and likely demands the least exertion from older recipients is a consideration. Likewise, newspapers may be more difficult for some older people to read; radio may be challenging for some to hear; and the Internet requires some degree of technical sophistication to probe for news. Clearly, television is the dominant media form across the age spectrum, and this preference will continue to impact the ministry of preaching well into the future. Preachers should not be surprised to learn that those who preferred more postliterate news sources such as television and the Internet also scored significantly higher on the Media Imagery Subscale than those who preferred more literate media forms like radio or newspapers.

Earlier in this discussion, I found that no significant difference could be found, based on age, to account for respondents to use either image-based or textually based memory triggers. By the same token, the research findings indicated that, in fact, significant inverse relationships between the mean scores on the Media Scale and the Postmodern Subjectivity and Media Imagery Subscale scores regarding respondent preference for textual triggers on sermon retention. In this study, a respondent's preference for textual memory triggers decreased as subjectivity increased. Likewise, respondents who scored higher on the Media Scale and Media Imagery Subscale were less prone to use textual memory triggers. While the final two findings have coherent validity, the

first finding bears further study. Why were respondents who were naturally more subjective also less likely to use textual memory triggers? The finding is not only statistically significant but also an interesting topic for further study.

#### Research Questions and Answers

The following section addresses each research question within my dissertation, offering a corresponding answer based on the findings of the study.

##### Research Question #1

How open or closed to change are survey respondents based on their responses to the Modified Rokeach E?

Research answer #1. The research data indicate that the mean score for all respondents on dogmatism was 3.71 (SD=.69), placing them near the middle of a seven-point Likert scale. According to Table 9 (see p. 22), Millennialists ranked most dogmatic, followed by Seniors and Builders. Baby Boomers came in third place, while Baby Busters scored least dogmatic of all generational groups. Validating an earlier finding in the literature review, men scored slightly more dogmatic than women.

##### Research Question #2

To what degree are survey respondents either modern or postmodern in their orientation to culture?

Research answer #2. Given the natural disinclination of postmodern individuals to be categorized, this question became the most difficult one to answer in the entire study. The lack of a statistically reliable postmodern scale made this even more challenging. Perhaps Lyotard's definition of postmodernism, which emphasizes a tolerance for ambiguity, exacerbates and illustrates the problem. An analysis of the Postmodern Values Questionnaire in Section Four of the research instrument indicated that it was statistically unreliable. However, a Varimax rotation identified one construct related to postmodern subjectivity with improved, yet still statistically weak, reliability. Nevertheless, I used the data from this newfound subscale to attempt an answer to at least one facet of the research question relating specifically to respondent subjectivity.

The research data indicate that the mean score for all respondents on the Postmodern Subjectivity Subscale was 3.83 (SD=1.35), placing them very near the center of a seven-point Likert scale. Women scored slightly higher in subjectivity than men. Surprisingly, the Senior and Builder generations scored highest on the Postmodern Subjectivity Subscale, followed by the Millennialists, Baby Boomers, and Baby Busters. Since the majority of respondents were either

Seniors, Builders, or Baby Boomers, many would suspect that the Postmodern Subjectivity Subscale would be lower; however, the data seemed to indicate that the postmodern trait of subjectivity was sufficiently exhibited in each generational group surveyed.

#### Research Question #3

How receptive are survey respondents to the use of visual media in preaching?

Research answer #3. After more than four years of using visual media at New Hope Church, congregational receptivity to its use in preaching was quite high. The research data reported a mean score for all respondents on the Media Scale of 5.49 (SD=.94). Using a seven-point Likert scale, the average for all respondents was on the upper end of the continuum. Baby Busters scored highest on the Media Scale, followed by Millennialists, Baby Boomers, and the oldest generational group, Seniors and Builders. Those who made a commitment to Christ prior to attending New Hope Church scored lower on the Media Scale than those who made a faith commitment after arriving at the church.

#### Research Question #4

Fourth, to what extent are respondents postliterate and how does postliteracy relate to their receptivity to the use of visual media in preaching?

Research answer #4. According to the research findings, approximately three-quarters of all respondents self-described themselves as preferring image-based memory triggers, regardless of age. Likewise, nearly two-thirds of all respondents indicated that television was their preferred media form for news. The data indicate a surprising discovery that Senior and Builder respondents were the only generational group to select television as their preferred news source unanimously. As a whole, newspapers ranked last, or at least near the bottom, as respondents' least favorable form of news media. Baby Boomers were more inclined to choose the Internet as their primary media form than any other generational group, yet even in this case it still came in an overwhelmingly distant second to television overall. The data indicate that television is clearly a dominant media form in every generational group. Postliteracy is not only prevalent but also transgenerational.

Years before, I assumed that younger respondents would more likely be visually oriented than their older counterparts. I thought that younger respondents would be more likely to retain sermon information on the basis of image rather than story. This assumption did not appear to bear out in the research project itself. More than half of all respondents indicated their preference to recall my past sermons by remembering a visual illustration I used, while roughly 40 percent

were more likely to remember a story. Ironically, in every generational group except the Millennialists, respondents were more likely to remember my past sermons by recalling visual illustrations rather than stories I told in particular. Older respondents did not tend to favor stories over visuals more so than any other generational group.

The data also revealed a surprising finding in Table 8 (see p. 21) that dogmatism increased with postliteracy. A regression analysis revealed that a respondent's dogmatism contributed more to variance within the Pastoral Media Subscale than any other variable. The degree to which people were postliterate in their retention of sermon information was also a unique contributing factor, although to a lesser degree than dogmatism.

#### Research Question #5

What other variables might correlate with participant responses to the use of visual media in preaching?

Research answer #5. According to the survey findings, gender and congregational tenure did not play significant roles in respondent receptivity to the use of visual media in preaching. By the same token, statistically significant findings were identified in two areas: first, those who attended New Hope Church most regularly preferred the use of visual media in preaching more than those who attended the same church less often; and second, those who made a commitment to Christ prior to attending New Hope Church were less receptive to visual media than those who knew no other preaching model because they made their faith commitment at the same church.

#### Limitations of the Study

Every research study is a work-in-process offering observations and analyses from a particular historical and cultural context. As such, each one offers both strengths and weaknesses. This study is no exception. Undoubtedly, I believe this study could have been strengthened by using a longitudinal pretest-posttest design in the experimental mode rather than a nonexperimental cross-sectional analysis as was used in this study. Given the fact that I began using electronic visual media in my preaching at the outset of my ministry at New Hope Church in 1999, a baseline measure was no longer available for use in my ministry context, necessitating a cross-sectional design methodology rather than a more longitudinal one consisting of a baseline, treatment, and assessment. A one-year longitudinal study in a congregation that was initially unfamiliar with the use of visual media could offer researchers additional insights into any potential changes that occurred within respondents during the course of their research, particularly if a series of mid-tests were also introduced after three, six, and nine months. These insights could

offer even greater insight into the ways respondents change in response to a preacher's use of visual media in preaching.

Another limitation of this study relates to the low reliability coefficient for the Postmodern Subjectivity Subscale and the even lower Cronbach alpha on the Postmodern Values Questionnaire in general. As a result of these dissertation findings, this aspect of my research was not examined in depth in this paper. My dissertation could have benefited greatly from a stronger scale related to the constructs comprising postmodernism. The scale used in Section Four of the survey instrument did not have sufficient internal consistency to support a reliable analysis. Further testing and development needs to be done to develop a suitable scale for use in studying postmodern attributes. The lack of a reliable scale is not only a limitation of the study but also a great opportunity for future research and is discussed at greater length later in this paper.

#### Implications of the Findings and Practical Applications

The implications of this study will likely become increasingly pertinent to the practice of ministry as the postmodern cultural era continues to emerge. This discovery may be particularly true for those who serve in intergenerational ministry settings and those who may be tempted to believe that preaching that employs visually oriented elements is best suited for younger audiences primarily. In such cases, the findings from this study offer preachers some surprising insights to several commonly held assumptions about the uses of visual media in preaching. Building on the findings of this study, I hope that twenty-first-century preachers will find encouragement and counsel in the following practical applications related to the inclusion of visual media in preaching. I offer three applications for preachers who wish to benefit from the findings of this study.

#### Media as an Apostolic Successor of Image Bearing

First, preachers should recognize that the use of electronic visual media in preaching is a contemporary extension of the developing use of imagery in the ongoing history of the Christian Church. In the same way that Old Testament artisans like Bezalel fashioned artistic symbols to inspire Israelite worship, or Jesus himself used everyday objects like fish, bread, and water to communicate divine truth, or the Apostle Paul communicated his missionary message by finding positive points of contact within the worldview of his audiences, twenty-first-century preachers follow in an apostolic succession of image bearers, inspiring men and women to bare their hearts to God and welcome the imprinting of his image on their lives. This study reminds even the most imaginative preachers today that their creative work is not new; twenty-first-century preachers are the torchbearers of two millennia of men and women before them who used every creative means

possible to communicate the Creator's great message of good news. Like Glenn Chaffee, who was introduced earlier in this paper, everyone needs to hear the divine reminder, "I AM here, too." This study underscores the prevenient creativity of the First Artist. It offers inspiration to twenty-first-century preachers who carry the torch of creative communication on behalf of those who have gone before them and for the benefit of those they presently serve.

#### Media as a Contextual Carrier of Biblical Metaphors

Second, this study offers a word of caution to preachers who may be prone to believe that the addition of technology alone can somehow make preaching more powerful, attractive, or contemporary. The discoveries gleaned from this study refute this popular assumption in no uncertain terms. Instead, the data indicate that preachers themselves are likely to exert more influence over congregational receptivity to the use of visual media in preaching than anything else. I suspect that pastors who weave visual media into the warp and woof of not only the sermon but also the entire worship encounter are more likely to find correspondingly higher Postmodern Media Subscale scores than those who simply use visual media for illustrative purposes. Likewise, preachers must recognize the importance of contextual coherence in both their sermons and visual media forms or they run the risk of elevating media over message. Those who use visual media in preaching must never forget this inherent danger of imagery: often, more than one story is caught by the viewers' eyes. Context is critical, both scripturally and visually. Preachers who are not visually attuned should learn to strengthen this area of weakness in themselves before attempting to preach with electronic visual media. Those who take the bait of the "PowerPointers" and assume that a projector and screen will somehow make their preaching come alive will likely become discouraged, ultimately disappointing the very people they sought to inspire. Technology alone will not make poor preachers good. Likewise, technology offers no hope of making good preachers great unless the power of a biblical metaphor finds dominance in the sermon, in the corresponding visual message that is being communicated, and in the communicators themselves. Sermons driven by a dominant biblical metaphor have power in a visually-attuned congregation. Media can communicate biblical truth as modern-day counterparts to ancient stained glass. Those who use media because it is trendy, or for presentation purposes only, will do so at great risk to themselves, their ministries, their message, and their congregations. I cannot emphasize this implication any more vehemently.

#### Media as Cultural Language

Finally, this study denies the commonly held notion that visual media is primarily a method

for connecting with younger generations or that it is better suited for those who are not yet followers of Jesus Christ. The research data indicate that, contrary to popular opinion, men and women of all ages can be receptive to the use of visual media in preaching, regardless of their years of church experience. Preachers today cannot afford to choose either a model that connects only with those who are left- or right-brain hemisphere dominant. Babin's admonition of stereo catechesis is an appropriate example of preaching in the emerging postmodern age (6). This study found that most men and women, regardless of their age, indicated a relatively high level of receptivity to the use of visual media in preaching in the researcher's own ministry context. Most of these individuals never experienced preaching with electronic visual media prior to their exposure to it at New Hope Church. Contrary to popular opinion, receptivity to its use was not dependent on age, gender, or church experience.

#### Contributions to Research Methodology

The greatest contribution this study makes to research methodology involves the use of the Pastoral Media Subscale and its implications both for future research and for the task of preaching in an increasingly visual culture. This subscale was serendipitously discovered during the data analysis phase of the project rather than by my intent or design. It indicates that pastors themselves play a key role in influencing congregational receptivity to the use of visual media in preaching. The research findings indicate that congregational receptiveness to contemporary preaching forms still hinges in large measure on the integrity and commitment of the preacher; no amount of technology can make up for this vital factor. Preachers cannot give their media teams an outline or manuscript for their sermons and simply expect them to build visual presentations in support of them. Preachers who have such expectations yet continue to preach in a preferred modern or literate style that is geared primarily to a speaker and listening audience will likely face personal disappointment and congregational frustration. Those who fail to recognize their key role as personal integrators of both the biblical message and communication methodology risk conveying dissonance and incoherence because of the bifurcation of what is seen and heard. Failure to recognize this truth can lead to congregational misinterpretation of the biblical message, or the visual media form, or both. Instead, preachers who desire to develop a visual homiletic must first identify a central biblical metaphor as part of their exegesis for use in their preaching and graphic representations. Without this, the preacher runs the very real risk of eisegesis. The Pastoral Media Subscale underscores the importance of the preacher and his or her role as a personal agent of communicating the central message of this graphic gospel in creative, compelling, and

contemporary ways.

### Suggestions for Further Study

Without question, the challenge related to the development of a scale for postmodernism is daunting, especially given the inherent reluctance of postmodern individuals to be categorized. Despite this assessment, future research in this area could be aided by the development of a statistically standardized scale that addresses postmodernism as a general category. More likely, further research would first need to center on the underlying constructs that make up postmodernism, exploring issues like community, disillusionment, diversity, subjective experience, and the influence of media in greater depth. I hope that the Postmodern Subjectivity Subscale used in my dissertation could serve as a foundational tool upon which a more reliable scale could be built.

I also hope that all three media scales from this study, each of which evidenced high degrees of reliability, could serve as a foundation for further study in this dynamic area of social research in pastoral ministry. The use of visual media in preaching is not likely to wane in my opinion; more and more churches today recognize a need to engage more of the senses in worship and preaching. However, churches and the pastors who lead them need to do more than simply “get a screen” or “go digital.” I hope that the media scales developed for this study could help churches recognize their own potential receptivity to visual media based on their own level of dogmatism. In addition, the Pastoral Media Subscale offers potential for understanding congregational perceptions about a preacher’s commitment to the use of visual exegesis in his or her preaching and also helps these preachers themselves to discover if they are personally communicating a faithful integration of the biblical message through visual elements in their preaching to those who are not simply hearers, but viewers also.

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## APPENDIX A

### The Research Instrument

#### Cover Letter

21 September 2003

Dear Members and Friends of New Hope Church,

Most of you are aware that I am moving into the final stages of my doctor of ministry studies at Asbury Theological Seminary. This survey incorporates my residential course work at Asbury from 1998-1999 as well as my experiences at New Hope over the past four years. Upon a successful defense of my dissertation, I will graduate in May 2004.

A primary element of my research focuses on a survey of our congregation's receptivity to the use of visual media. By visual media, I mean the use of video clips and graphic art presentations that are projected electronically on our large format screen. I am curious which factors in people most affect receptivity to the use of these forms of visual media in preaching.

One of the ways I will determine this receptivity is by measuring a person's relative openness to change based on responses to the survey. In section two, you will find twenty questions addressing this issue. This section in particular asks some questions that may initially catch you by surprise, including several standardized questions that relate to political concerns. Keep in mind that your survey will remain anonymous and no effort will be made to identify respondents. Please do not second-guess these questions even though most of them are not related to spiritual issues or even to the use of visual media. Nevertheless, your responses to these well-tested questions, in particular, will help me measure our congregation's relative openness to change.

The third section of the survey includes ten questions based on your observations of my use of visual media in preaching here at New Hope. Please answer each question as honestly as you can. Do not try to answer the questions the way you think I, as your pastor, would like you to answer them. Just offer your best responses. Keep in mind that your first impression will often be your most honest response.

The final section of the survey raises sixteen questions addressing your personal beliefs about a number of cultural value statements. In each case, remember that I am not looking for any particular answer. Instead, I simply would like to know the degree to which you either agree or disagree with each statement. Your responses to these questions will help me assess the degree to which our congregation embraces popular culture.

The information provided through this survey will be presented to my dissertation committee at Asbury, so please do your best to answer every question as honestly as you can. All responses will be confidential, and no individual will be identified with their responses. In order to preserve everyone's confidentiality, please do not provide your name on this survey. You must be at least fourteen years old to participate. Submission of this survey indicates your consent to participate in the study.

In a recent pretest, most people completed the survey in less than fifteen minutes. You may complete it more or less quickly depending on the amount of time you choose to spend on each question. Please do not hurry your way through the survey; remember that this is not a race. Instead, you will help me most by giving yourself adequate time to answer every question as honestly as you can. In Section One, please place a check mark in the box corresponding to your preferred response. In sections two through four, circle the number that best applies to you. Use the number "4" to indicate if you are unable to answer a question. Should you change your mind on an answer, please erase it or place an "X" through it before changing your response. If possible, please answer every question in the survey before placing it in the offering basket in the back of our worship centre.

Your thoughtful responses are essential to the success of my research. With your assistance, this survey data may be useful in helping other preachers learn more effective ways to communicate to people of all ages. Upon final completion, I will make several copies of my completed dissertation available should anyone want to review my research findings.

Thanks again for all your help. I appreciate it so much!

Sincerely,



Jay Akkerman

## Section One

**Section 1:** *Please respond to the multiple-choice questions in this introductory section by placing a check mark next to the answer that best describes what is true for you. All answers will remain confidential. If you need to change an answer, please erase it or place an "X" through it and then check your preferred answer. If possible, please answer every question in the entire survey.*

| Questions  | Answers   |
|--|---|
| A. Gender  | Female.<br>Male.  |
| B. When were you born?   | Before 1925.<br>Between 1925-44.<br>Between 1945-63.<br>Between 1964-80.<br>After 1980.   |
| C. Please describe your personal relationship with God.  | I committed my life to Christ <b>before</b> I began attending New Hope Church.<br>I committed my life to Christ <b>after</b> attending New Hope Church.<br>I have <b>not yet</b> made a commitment to Christ.<br>I am <b>not sure</b> about my relationship with God. |
| D. Approximately how long have you attended New Hope Church?   | I am a first-time guest.<br>Less than a month.<br>One to six months.<br>Six months to a year.<br>One to four years.<br>Prior to Pastor Akkerman's arrival in 1999.  |
| E. Please describe your attendance at New Hope Church in the past six months.  | Nearly every week.<br>Twice a month.<br>Once a month.<br>On holidays and special occasions.   |
| F. Presuming that you had a yearbook, if you were trying to locate friends from school days whose names you forgot, would you most likely. | Look for their class photos in the yearbook to trigger your memory?<br>Scan for their names in the yearbook to trigger your memory?   |
| G. If you wanted to learn about the news later this afternoon, which <u>one</u> method would you prefer to use?                            | Read a newspaper.<br>Listen to the radio.<br>Watch television.<br>Check an Internet site.   |
| H. When you think about one of Pastor Jay's past sermons, which are you more likely to remember?   | Stories he told in particular.<br>A visual illustration he used to make his point.  |

Section Two

**Section 2:** Please circle the best answer to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following twenty statements related to your relative openness to change. Please answer every question as honestly as possible. If you are unable to decide an answer, please circle the number “4.” If you need to correct an answer, place erase it or place an “X” over the wrong answer and try again.

| Questions  | Strongly Disagree |   |   |   |   |   |   | Strongly Agree |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| A. The United States and Iraq have just about nothing in common.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| B. The highest form of government is a democracy, and the highest form of democracy is a government run by those who are most intelligent.               | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| C. Even though freedom of speech for all groups is a worthwhile goal, it is unfortunately necessary to restrict the freedom of certain political groups. | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| D. On our own, we are helpless and miserable creatures.  | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| E. Most people just don't care for others.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| F. I'd like it if I could find someone who would tell me how to solve my personal problems.  | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| G. In a discussion I often find it necessary to repeat myself several times to make sure I am being understood.  | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| H. It is better to be a dead hero than a live coward.  | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I. While I don't even like to admit this even to myself, my secret ambition is to become a great person, like Einstein or Beethoven or Shakespeare.      | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| J. The main thing in life is for a person to want to do something important.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| K. It is only when people devote themselves to an ideal or cause that life becomes meaningful.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| L. Of all the different philosophies that exist in this world, there is probably only one that is correct.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| M. To compromise with our political opponents is dangerous because it usually leads to a betrayal of our own side.                                       | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| N. There are two kinds of people in this world: those who are for the truth and those who are against the truth.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| O. My blood boils whenever people stubbornly refuse to admit they are wrong.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| P. Most of the ideas that get printed nowadays aren't worth the paper they are printed on.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Q. In this complicated world of ours, the only way we can know what's going on is to rely on leaders or experts who can be trusted.                      | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| R. It is often desirable to reserve judgment about what's going on until we have had a chance to hear the opinions of those we respect.                  | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| S. The <i>present</i> is all too often full of unhappiness—it's only the <i>future</i> that counts.  | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| T. Most people just don't know what's good for them.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Section Three

**Section 3:** Please circle the best answer to each of the following questions based on your personal beliefs and observations of the pastor's use of visual media (e.g., video clips and graphic images) in preaching at New Hope Church. Remember that your first impression is often your most honest response to each question.

| Questions  | Strongly Disagree |   |   |   | Strongly Agree |   |   |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|---|---|
| A. Images are nice in sermons, but words really get the point across to me.                | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              | 6 | 7 |
| B. A picture really is worth a thousand words, even in a sermon.                           | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              | 6 | 7 |
| C. I have been emotionally moved by the use of visual media in a sermon.                   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              | 6 | 7 |
| D. Jesus used the visual methods of his day in his communication.                          | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              | 6 | 7 |
| E. Generally, I find the pastor's use of visual media distracting.                         | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              | 6 | 7 |
| F. Using visual media in preaching today is a gimmick.                                     | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              | 6 | 7 |
| G. I suspect the pastor likely chooses video clips <b>before</b> selecting his Bible text. | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              | 6 | 7 |
| H. My friends would likely find our church's use of visual media interesting.              | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              | 6 | 7 |
| I. Often, the visual media used in the sermon do not relate to the Bible text.             | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              | 6 | 7 |
| J. I like visual media because it is easier for me to see the screen than to read.         | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              | 6 | 7 |
| K. I wish the pastor would stop using visual media in his preaching.                       | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              | 6 | 7 |

Section Four

**Section 4:** *For this final section, please circle the best answer to each of the following questions based on your personal beliefs about the following cultural value statements. Thanks for your candid responses.*

| Questions  | Strongly Disagree |   |   |   |   |   |   | Strongly Agree |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. I believe honesty is always the right policy, even if the truth hurts.        | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| B. Just give me the facts.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| C. I am optimistic about the future.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| D. Having friends to rely on is very important to me.                            | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| E. Truth can vary based on the individual.                                       | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| F. For news, I prefer a newspaper over a television.                             | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| G. I always consult my friends when deciding between right and wrong.            | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| H. Show me, don't tell me.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I. It is difficult to be certain about much of anything today.                   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| J. It is impossible for a juror to be objective.                                 | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| K. It is alright for men and women to share the same cologne fragrance.          | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| L. I prefer to say that something is "appropriate" rather than if it is "right." | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| M. I'm not much of a reader.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| N. I am confident that the world's complex issues can be worked out.             | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| O. I am the same person I was yesterday.   | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| P. For information, I prefer the Internet rather than the television.            | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

*Thanks! Please place your completed survey in the offering basket in the back of our worship centre.*