

CHAPTER FIVE: MINISTER INTERVIEWS ABOUT SERMON PREPARATION

RESEARCH QUESTION

RQ2: What is the actual process a minister uses to prepare a sermon?

DISCUSSION OF THE QUESTION CONTENT AND DATA REQUIRED

For the interviews, questions were selected to elicit answers about all aspects of sermon preparation, ~~dividing the interview into three sections. The interview format was divided into three sections.~~ ~~In t~~The first section of inquiry ~~of the interview,~~ ~~designed to allow each participant to freely describe his or her sermon preparation process in his or her own words without any leading questions or comments.~~, ~~the clergy walked~~ “Walk “me through the preparation steps of this week’s or last week’s sermon or ~~the [his/her] sermon you [he/she] most recently preached.”~~ ~~is designed to allow each participant to freely describe his or her sermon preparation process in his or her own words without any leading questions or comments.~~ As already discussed, not one process is normative for preachers. The first question of the interview provided ~~s~~ a base of information with which to follow-up in the second section of inquiry.

The second section of inquiry, ~~was~~ based on the preaching process discovered from the top homiletical textbooks, ~~touched~~. ~~These questions were designed to touch~~ on the subjects of prayer; choosing the passage, studying the passage, thinking about the audience, developing main points, introductions and conclusions, illustrations and media, and incubation. These questions ~~are were~~ designed to ~~ien~~duce more specific information by having the minister describe in greater detail ~~about~~ each step in the crafting of a sermon.

The third and final section of inquiry covered various miscellaneous questions about sermon preparation which are necessary when understanding prepared public oral addresses. The hours spent preparing sermons was included in order to compare all clergy participating and

Commented [KC1]: Is this needed? Of the interview? Makes this first part quite wordy.

~~a question~~ to confirm some previous research cited in the literature review. ~~To discover the validity of textbooks used in seminaries.~~ Clergy were asked a key question: ~~to discover the validity of the textbooks using in seminaries: A direct question about~~ What textbooks purchased from the preachers' seminary education did he/she use? ~~current usage of textbooks purchased from the preachers' seminary education was a key question in discovering the validity of the textbooks used in seminaries.~~ This section also included questions along the avenues of ~~practicing sermons before preaching and how one dealt with writer's block.~~ ~~Practicing sermons before preaching and also dealing with writer's block were also avenues of questioning.~~ Another direct question in this section was, "What specific role does the Internet play in the weekly preparation of your sermons?" (which is the key question ~~in answering to address~~ RQ3.) The final question ~~satisfied my curiosity,~~ "What is your biggest obstacle or struggle in preparing sermons?" ~~was a line of inquiry to satisfy my curiosity.~~

~~As these three sections provided all the data needed to answer the research question, and~~ ~~The scope of the interview was limited to these three sections.~~ ~~Also, these three sections kept interviews 30 to 40 minutes long.~~ ~~of questions for two reasons.~~ First, these three sections of questions provided all the data needed to answer the research questions. Second, these three sections provided an interview that would last from thirty to forty minutes which was an ~~enticement for participation.~~ As stated in the introduction, church ministry is a fast-paced, stressful industry in which ministers have many responsibilities, and it was assumed they would not participate if the interviews ~~lasted too long.~~ ~~were perceived as taking up too much time.~~ This assumption was proven correct given that before research on this dissertation began, a short survey was done of ten ministers in Tampa, Florida, in which they were asked what amount of time they would give for an interview on homiletics from someone they did not know. 90%

Commented [K2]: a question to what? I am unsure of its use here.

Commented [KC3]: I do not understand what you are saying here

(9/10) said they would give 30 minutes with one participant stating he would not give an interview to someone he did not know. Upon further questioning, 50% (5/10) said they would provide 45 minutes for an interview and only 10% (1/10) said they would give 60 minutes for an interview. Based on this initial assessment, a 30 minute interview was developed in order to garner the most participants.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROTOCOLS OF THE INTERVIEWS

The initial written questionnaire ~~asked for helped data collection by giving~~ basic contact information for the interviews, educational background, ~~and questions about details on~~ sermon preparation, creation of main points, and sermon conclusions, ~~which all aided in data collection~~. The questions in the interview were an extension of the written questionnaire and ~~are-were a~~ reflection of the homiletical textbook study.

The questions ~~of the interview~~ were presented in a logical manner as a follow-up tool to the initial written questionnaire. The actual format of the interview followed some of the qualitative interview protocols outlined in Jacob and Furgerson's article in The Qualitative Report from 2012: "Writing Interview Protocols and Conducting Interviews: Tips for Students New to the Field of Qualitative Research." ~~What follow are the ten protocols for each interview:~~ *Protocol 1*. Research should guide your questions. ~~Guided by the homiletical textbook study~~. ~~The questions for the interview were guided by the homiletical textbook study.~~ Each question was phrased using ministry specific language common in the homiletics textbooks studied. For example, terms such as introduction and conclusion (ministry terms) were used instead of hook

and summary (public speaking terms). Some of the terms, such as “media” were often explained to include power points, movie clips, or internet related technologies.

Protocol 2. Collect consent. Each initial request for an interview included a request to contact the participants for research purposes. Each participant was informed interview reports would remain anonymous and ~~and informed them that each interview would be reported anonymously and that~~ contact information would be destroyed post-study.

Protocol 3. Use a script for the beginning and end of your interview. Each interview began with ~~two times being thanked~~ thanking participants for their time and participation in the research. The researcher then introduced himself by name and recounted that he was a “minister in Tampa, Florida, finishing up ~~my~~ [his] PhD in the area of sermon preparation. All of the questions asked today will be in the area of sermon preparation. We will talk for about a half-hour and that will be it.”

Protocol 4. The phrase “tell me about...” is a great way to start a question. ~~The beginning of~~ Each interview was begun started with this open-ended question in which the preachers were asked to explain their normal process of crafting a sermon each week.

Protocol 5. Be willing to make “on the spot” revisions to your interview protocol. Not all ministers have the same process and some ministers may be strong in one area or weaker in another. If a particular interviewee seemed strong in a particular area of sermon preparation, follow-up questions ~~would be were~~ asked ~~at the expense of~~ rather than not asking all pre-set questions, ~~for the interview in the time allotted.~~

Protocol 6. Don’t make the interview too long. As stated above, each interview had a target time of 30 minutes. The initial request for the interview, the written interview, and the message asking for the oral follow-up interview all included this timeframe. ~~This timeframe was included~~

on the initial request for the interview, in the initial written interview, and in the message asking for the oral follow-up interview. It was also communicated in the script at the beginning of each interview.

Protocol 7. Be sure that both you and the interviewee block off plenty of uninterrupted time for the interview. Unable to control others, the researcher blocked off 1 hour for each of the thirty minute interviews. Some interviews were scheduled back to back, but always using the 1 hour extended timeframe.

Protocol 8. Have genuine care, concern, and interest for the person you are interviewing. At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher (based on the context of all parties involved being clergy), ended the interview with prayer for each one interviewed. No script was drafted for this prayer, but rather was extemporaneous and from the heart.

Protocol 9. Use basic counseling skills to help your interviewees feel heard. Throughout the interview, affirmative tones, words, and comments were used to enable each person interviewed to feel heard. In addition to being polite, this also ensured that the minister knew the interview had not gotten disconnected given that many interviews were done via telephone.

Protocol 10. End with your script. In addition to the prayer mentioned above in the ending script, ~~I told each participant; each participant was informed.~~ "I will be doing interviews all summer long. I will be concluding them in August and writing up my results in August and September. Once I have finished, I will send a note and you can look at what I have put together." The ending script also included more thanks for the interview, though this was not a structured statement.

Commented [K4]: I have been avoiding changing all of your passive voice and using I because I understand that is not the practice of your department; however, your quote contains I in it, and it doesn't get to say each participant was informed, and then put a quote saying the exact thing you said including the Is. Down below I typed an alternative way to address this.

OR each participant was informed that interviews would take place all summer long, concluding in August, with results written in September. At the conclusion, each participant would receive a note to instruct him/her how to view what was put together.

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DISCUSSION OF DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Via regent.edu email account, participants received a message. Interviews were distributed via regent.edu email to each participant explaining the purpose of the interview and the research. This email was used rather than a personal email address to give credibility to the unannounced invitation to participate. In addition, the email included this researcher's student number with the university name was included for the same reason. The initial written questionnaires used an online form creator (PHPforms.net). Once completed, the initial questionnaire with answers was automatically emailed to this researcher and added to a database for backup provided by phpforms.net. Once a response was received Upon receiving a response, the researcher scheduled interviews in two week increments offering those who had participated opportunities for the follow-up interview. Participants were reminded of their initial questionnaire participation and the thirty minute target for the interview.

The following is a sample of the email invitation sent to clergy (see figure 2 below):